

## Total Depravity Romans 3:9-20

### I. Introduction and review: The universality of sin. v. 9-10a

- A. What is the spiritual condition of mankind? Healthy, sick, or dead? Eph. 2:1f
- B. Paul summons all mankind to the bar of God's justice. 3:9
- C. Scripture bears witness to human depravity. v. 10a Ps. 14:1-3 5:9 10:7 Isa. 59:7-8
  1. Sin affects every person: The universality of sin..
  2. Sin affects every aspect of human nature (TOTAL depravity).

### II. All mankind is guilty. v. 10-18

#### A. The character of sin. v. 10-12

1. No-one meets God's standard of righteousness. v. 10 3:23 Ps. 14:3 Ecc. 7:20 Isa. 64:6 Eph. 2:1f Heb. 11:6 I Co. 10:31
  - a. How can Paul say this in light of all the good things people do?
  - b. God's standard is much higher than man's. 3:23 Mt. 5:48 22:36-39 Ro. 14:23
  - c. Your best deeds are no better than filthy rags in His sight. Isa. 64:6 Phil. 3:8
  - d. We possess *none* of the righteousness God requires.
2. No one has spiritual understanding. v. 11a Ps. 14:2 55:3 I Co. 2:7,14 Eph. 4:18 Mt. 13:15 Mark 4:12 John 8:43 12:39-40 Acts 28:26f II Co. 4:3-4
  - a. Paul is not saying that unbelievers are incapable of coming to an intellectual knowledge of the truth.
  - b. What men lack is spiritual discernment of their sinful nature and of God's righteousness. I Co. 2:14
  - c. Such discernment comes only by the work of the Spirit. Mt. 16:17
3. No one truly seeks God. v. 11b 8:7-8
  - a. How can Paul say this when there are so many people who seem to be seeking God in various ways? philosophy, religion, etc.
  - b. They refuse to seek God on His terms.
  - c. All false religious and philosophical systems are efforts to escape the true God by manufacturing gods (or truths) of one's own liking. 1:25
  - d. What about biblical invitations to seek God? Mt. 7:7-8 Jer. 29:13 Isa. 55:1f Ps. 105:4 Acts 17:27 15:17
  - e. Man will not seek God unless He supernaturally draws him. John 6:37,44
4. All have turned away from God. v. 12a Ps. 14:3a Pr. 14:12 Isa. 53:6
  - a. He has revealed His way to us: creation, conscience, Scripture.
  - b. We have chosen to go our own way. 1:21 Is. 53:6
5. Mankind is useless. v. 12b Ps. 14:3b Mt. 5:13 John 15:6 Phil. 3:8 Isa. 64:6
  - a. Aren't people like policemen and firefighters of some use?
  - b. They are useful only in a common grace sense.
  - c. The natural man can bear no spiritual fruit.
6. There is no one who does good. v. 12c Ps. 14:3c Gen. 6:5 Lu. 16:15  
God sees the heart. The best acts of men are all tainted by sin.

#### B. The conduct of sin. v. 13-17

1. Why does Paul focus on sins of speech? Js. 3:1f 1:19,26 Mt. 12:34 15:18-19  
The tongue expresses what is in the heart. Mt. 12:34 15:18
2. Their vile conversation. v. 13-14 Ps. 5:9 140:3 10:7
  - a. Their *throat* is an open grave. v. 13 Ps. 5:9 140:3
  - b. They keep deceiving with their *tongues*. v. 13b Jer. 9:3-5 Pr. 29:5 Mark 14:1
  - c. The poison of asps is under their *lips*. v. 13c Mt. 12:34 Js. 3:8
  - d. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. v. 14 Ps. 10:7 64:3-4 Eph. 5:3-4 Mt. 5:22 Js. 3:8-9 Acts 8:23.

3. Their violent course. v. 15-17 Isa. 59:7-9 Ti. 3:3
  - a. Their *feet* are swift to shed blood. v. 15 Lu. 22:20
  - b. Destruction and misery are on their paths. v. 16 Ps. 1:4 Pr. 1:16
  - c. The path of peace is unknown to them. v. 17 Isa. 57:21
  
- C. The cause of sin: no fear of God before their *eyes*. v. 18 Ps. 36:1
  1. All wickedness flows from a disregard of God. 1:21f
  2. The fear of God restrains sin. Pr. 16:6 9:10 Ps. 128:1 Heb. 12:28-29
  
- D. What do we mean by total depravity?
  1. We do not mean every person is as bad as he can possibly be. 2:14-15  
Gen. 15:16 II Ti. 3:13
  2. Nor do we mean that every person is guilty of every possible sin. Mt. 23:23
  3. Every aspect of man's nature is affected by sin. 5:10 Ge. 8:21 Jer. 17:9 Co. 1:21
  4. Man's will is in bondage to sin. 6:20 8:7-8 Lu. 6:43-45 Jer. 13:23 Ge. 6:5 8:21
    - a. Aren't we free to do as we please? Mt. 7:16-18
    - b. Man is only able to act in accordance with his nature and ability. 8:7-8
  5. God must give sight and life for anyone to be saved. John 1:12-13 6:44 3:5-7  
Acts 13:48 16:14 Col. 2:13 Mt. 22:14 I Co. 1:30-31
  
- E. Jesus Christ is the Man without sin. Rev. 1:12-16

### III. Concluding summary: The purpose of the law. v. 19-20

- A. The law renders all people accountable to God. v. 19
  1. Those under the law (the Jews) stand condemned by the law.
  2. The Gentiles are also condemned under the law. 2:14-15
  3. Every defendant is silenced: without excuse. Job 40:4-5
  
- B. The law cannot justify. v. 20a 3:28 Ga. 2:16 3:2,5,10 Ps. 143:2
  1. No one can be saved by law works because no one meets the standard of the law.  
Mt. 22:37f 5:48 Lev. 19:2
  2. This undermines every human religion and philosophy, except one.
  
- C. So what use is the law? The law prepares you for the gospel. v. 20b 5:20 Ga. 3:22-24
  1. The law is like a mirror, which enables you to recognize your miserable condition.
  2. Then you are prepared to cry out for God's mercy. Lu. 5:31-32
  3. God makes us righteous by means of the gospel of Christ which is received by faith. 3:21f Phil. 3:7-9 Ga. 4:4-5 I John 1:8-2:2 Gen. 15:6 Ps. 32 51 103 Isa. 53
  4. Through Christ you are set free from bondage to sin. 3:21f II Co. 5:21 Mt. 7:7-8  
Eph. 2:10 I Co. 2:14 Jo. 14:6 Acts 24:14 (righteousness, will, mind, works, way)

#### Discussion questions for family worship

1. What does Paul mean when he says that *none is righteous*? v. 10  
Aren't some people better than others?
2. In what sense does *no one understand*? v. 11a
3. With so many people seeking truth through philosophy and religion, how can Paul say  
*There is none who seeks for God*?
4. Why does Paul focus on sins of the tongue to illustrate human depravity? v. 13-14
5. What is the root cause of all sin? v. 18
6. What does the law have to say about us? v. 19
7. Why is the law unable to make us righteous? v. 20a
8. What use then is the law? v. 20b