

Going Deeper: Romans 3:9–20

Watch the Sermon Recording: [YouTube – Romans 3:9–20](#)

Background Context

In Romans 1–2, Paul laid out his case: Gentiles are guilty because they suppress God’s truth in creation, and Jews are guilty because they fail to live up to the very Law they claim as their privilege. In Romans 3:9–20, Paul concludes his argument. His tone is that of a courtroom attorney presenting final evidence: all people are under sin and guilty before God.

Paul strings together a series of Old Testament passages (known as a *catena*, or “chain”) to show that sin has infected every part of the human condition—our thoughts, our speech, our actions, and our reverence for God.

The Law itself plays a central role in Paul’s reasoning. Though it was given by God and is therefore good, it was never meant to be a pathway to salvation. Instead, its purpose is to reveal the depth of human sin. Like a mirror, it exposes our filth but cannot make us clean. In this way, the Law exposes our guilt and leaves us with no excuse, driving us to recognize our need for a Savior.

This passage is not “uplifting” in the emotional sense, but it is absolutely essential—it tells us the truth about our desperate condition so that we will run to the Savior.

Key Themes from Romans 3:9–20

- **Universal Guilt (v.9):** All people, both Jews and Gentiles, are under sin’s power. Sin is not just an occasional action but a ruling condition that enslaves us.
- **None Righteous (vv.10–12):** Humanity has universally turned aside from God’s way. Left to ourselves, we do not seek Him or pursue His righteousness.
- **Speech Corrupted (vv.13–14):** Our words reveal the corruption of our hearts. Sin shows itself in deceit, hostility, and destructive speech.

- **Actions Destroy (vv.15–17):** Human behavior, apart from God, spreads ruin and misery. Violence, exploitation, and selfish choices mark the world.
- **No Fear of God (v.18):** The root issue is a lack of reverence for God. When His fear is absent, sin freely dominates human life.
- **The Law as a Mirror (vv.19–20):** The Law leaves every mouth silenced. It cannot save, but it reveals guilt. Like a mirror, it exposes our filth but cannot make us clean, driving us to Christ for rescue.

Old Testament References in Romans 3:10–18

Paul supports his argument by quoting directly from Israel’s Scriptures. These passages form a chain (catena) of evidence against all humanity:

- Psalm 14:1–3; Psalm 53:1–3 – None is righteous; none seek after God.
- Psalm 5:9 – Their throat is an open tomb.
- Psalm 140:3 – The poison of asps is under their lips.
- Psalm 10:7 – Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.
- Isaiah 59:7–8 – Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways; the way of peace they do not know.
- Psalm 36:1 – There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Reflect & Respond

1. **Humility Before God:** Where are you tempted to think you are “better” than others spiritually? How does this passage remind you that we all need Jesus equally?
2. **The Depth of Sin:** Which part of Paul’s description (mind, speech, actions, reverence) resonates most with what you see in the world—or in your own heart?
3. **Purpose of the Law:** Have you ever tried to “be good enough” for God? How does this passage free you from that burden and point you to Christ instead?
4. **Evangelism & Apologetics:** How can this passage help you respond to friends or family who believe they are “good people” and therefore destined for heaven?

Scriptures for Further Study

- Psalm 14:1–3; Psalm 53:1–3 – None is righteous; none seek after God
- Psalm 5:9 – Their throat is an open tomb
- Psalm 140:3 – The poison of asps is under their lips
- Psalm 10:7 – Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness
- Isaiah 59:7–8 – Feet swift to shed blood; no peace in their ways
- Psalm 36:1 – No fear of God before their eyes
- Matthew 5:21–22 – Jesus intensifies the Law’s demands, exposing heart-level sin
- Galatians 3:19–24 – The Law’s role as a guardian leading us to Christ
- James 2:10 – Breaking one law makes us guilty of all

This Week’s Challenge

“Let the Law be your mirror.”

Each day this week, read through Romans 3:9–20 slowly and prayerfully. When the Law exposes sin in your life—whether in your words, actions, or attitudes—confess it immediately to God. Then thank Him for sending Jesus, the only One who perfectly fulfilled the Law and took your guilty verdict on the cross.

Ask the Lord to give you both humility (remembering your own need) and boldness (sharing with others that salvation is found only in Christ).