

The Futility of a “Religious” Comparison
Romans 3, 9-20

Introduction:

1. It may have seemed as we have studied Romans for the last several weeks that we would never leave the first principle that Paul was inspired to outline; that being that humanity is totally fallen without hope of redemption outside of a redemptive act by Jehovah God.
2. Indeed, there is a huge emphasis on this matter, but we will move from that thought after next week.
3. So, in Romans to this point Paul has dealt with humanity generally, the Jews and the Gentiles, and the “conclusion of the first section of Romans, (has) ... answered the question, ‘Is the world lost?’” according to Alva J. McClain. (student of R. A. Torey)
4. At any rate, the question raised here is “Who’s system of theology is better? That of the Jews or that of the Gentiles?”
 - a. This is a long debated topic, to which the obvious answer was answered last week. The Jews **are better off historically** in light of the commitment by God to them of the Oracles of God.
 - b. However, the Gentile’s **at least** had their guilt mitigated (but not the ultimate outcome of their religions) by a general unawareness of the written word of God.
5. But Paul makes clear that whether we are “a little lost” as are the Jews, or “a lot lost” as are the Gentiles, we are all lost.
6. Therefore, every person must acknowledge their lost condition.

Why?

- I. Because of the Witness of the Bible: vv. 9, 10 and the Psalmist’s Testimony
 - A. 9, 10, “What then? are **we** (the Jews) better than **they** (the Gentiles)? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:”
 - B. Psalm 14:1-3, “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”

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- C. Psalm 53:1-3, “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good. God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread: they have not called upon God.”
 - D. God’s opinion of those who would deny His existence has not changed, and it never will!
- II. Because of the Witness of Exclusion, vv. 11-18.
- A. Paul’s exposition of the fallen nature of humanity continues in this section.
 - B. Matthew Henry, “Here again is shown that all mankind is under the guilt of sin, as a burden; and under the government and dominion of sin, as enslaved to it, to work wickedness. This is made plain by several passages of Scripture from the Old Testament, which describe the corrupt and depraved state of all men, till grace restrain or change them.”
 - C. Psalm 14:1-4
 - D. Paul argues that no **natural** human can understand the nature and character of God, and he further states that there is no **fallen creature** that can truly seek after God. “There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.” v. 11.
 - 1. To “understand” means: “to bring or set together,” is used metaphorically of “perceiving, understanding, uniting” (sun), so to speak, the perception with what is perceived,”
 - a. In terms of a contract, there has to be a “meeting of the minds” – a time where the parties come to agreement.
 - b. Here, there is no one who is not a child of God who can truly understand (come to a “meeting of the minds” with God)
 - 1) Fallen man has no standing or right to come before the Father and negotiate.
 - 2) This situation demands a Mediator who has standing with the Father!
 - 2. To “seek” means: “to seek carefully, diligently, to investigate, to scrutinize.”

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- a. This is more than a casual glance at the possibility of a relationship with the Father; many people glance over Christianity, and can even articulate its doctrines, but fallen man cannot comprehend the depth, and breadth, and width of God’s love.
- b. 1 Corinthians 2:14, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

III. Because of the Witness of Human Behavior. vv. 19, 20.

- A. Of verse 19, Matthew Henry writes, “They *are all under sin*. Under the guilt of sin: under it as under a sentence;—under it as under a bond, by which they are bound over to eternal ruin and damnation;—under it as under a burden ... that will sink them to the lowest hell: we are guilty before God....”
- B. In Psalm 38:4 David wrote, “For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.”
- C. Thus, all of human conduct is an ultimate revelation of the condemnation of Jew and Gentile alike under God.
- D. “Man’s inhumanity to man.”

IV. So, what solution does the Apostle offer to this issue of fallen man?

First, justification (to be adjudicated and declared as forever free from sin), v. 20a.

Second, accept the law for its lawful purpose, to reveal our sinfulness, v. 20b