

# ROMANS BIBLE STUDY

## Romans 3:01-20

### Lesson #6

#### Introduction

We're now moving into chapter three of Paul's epistle to the Romans. From chapter 1, verse 18, through the end of chapter 2, and now continuing on through verse 20, Paul has been making the case that all humanity has forsaken God and turned aside to their own ways. Not just the atheists, but also the pagan idolaters, and perhaps the most disappointing, even the religious Jews, who were entrusted with the Commandments of God; all have forsaken God in their own particular ways. Whether religious or non-religious, atheist, pagan, Jew, or professing Christian, all have turned aside, together they have all become useless to God. (V.12) Now, let's make sure we understand that Paul is speaking of all humanity in their unredeemed state. Faithless, unbelieving humanity of every ilk, of every ethnic group and of every religious persuasion.

Most everyone has heard the term, "total depravity" and there are several different interpretations of that term, but Paul is, and has been, speaking of the human race as it exists from its birth, and making the case that all humanity has, in one way or another, departed from God to follow their own ways of sinful disobedience to Him. One of the most important things that any Christian can learn is the proper understanding of what actually happened to humanity in Genesis chapter three, when Adam and Eve disobeyed the command of God, and ate from a tree that He had specifically forbidden. Something happened to them that changed their very constitution, their way of thinking and evaluating their actions. It affected their innate desires, and awakened in them many things that weren't even there before. They immediately realized that they were naked, something that hadn't even occurred to them before that. They were afraid when they heard God approaching in the garden. Shame and guilt and fear of God were brand new feelings and emotions that they hadn't even comprehended before their act of disobedience. They were forever changed. They were very different creatures than they had been before they acquired the "knowledge of good and evil" which God said would happen if they disobeyed Him. He also said they would surely die as a result. Human depravity and death are the direct and immediate consequences upon the human species that resulted from not believing what God had said, and intentionally disobeying His direct order.

We hear objections of fairness to this, since we ourselves didn't even exist when this happened, but this wasn't an issue of fair or unfair, it was an issue of the very makeup of these creatures that God called "man" and we call humans. What we are, and how we think, and what we want in our hearts, are all a product of this knowledge of good and evil. Once introduced into the species, that knowledge has been just what God told Adam and Eve that it would be, a curse that leads to their death. The understanding of the pleasures of evil, and the apparent benefits of sin have proven to be more than this species is equipped to handle. God fully knew this to begin with, because He designed and built this species, and personally established our capabilities and our limitations. And every child born of this couple, from that day forward, has been born with this knowledge inherent within them. In this respect the totality of humankind has been plunged into the depravity of sin by its knowledge of good and evil. Not everyone is as evil as they can be, but every individual is damaged by the knowledge of sin and the innate desires that it produces. It's not like this knowledge of good and evil has only affected some parts of our being and left others alone, we're incapable of compartmentalizing these desires. Every part of our thinking and feeling is to some degree or another being influenced by this knowledge, so we are now totally incapable of any completely 100% pure acts or intentions. Even our best efforts and most noble works are performed with damaged tools and less than perfect intentions, though we may adamantly argue to the contrary.

Furthermore, there's the spiritual element of this fundamental human affliction. Since God is holy and pure and perfect He will not live and abide in direct proximity with sin. The freedom which Adam and Eve had to walk about the Garden of Eden, and actually converse with God had been damaged by their newly acquired state of sin. They were no longer suitable to live and converse with God on the level that they had prior to their disobedience to His commandment. Most theologians call this spiritual death. I agree with this terminology. But so that we understand what that term means, let's say that Adam and Eve's new knowledge of good and evil left them with permanent spiritual damage, in so much as they were now no longer able to relate to God from a position of purity. Sin has destroyed the connection capability.

Their thoughts and affections were now polluted with all the things that this knowledge of good and evil brought into them. And the original innocence of the human species was forever lost. So how could God have allowed this to happen you may ask? I recently had a gentleman come to our bible study who asked why God didn't put angels with flaming swords around the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, just like He eventually did around the tree of life, to prevent Adam and Eve from going near it? The answer to this question really is obvious, isn't it? After all, He could have left that tree out of the garden, or planted it on another continent, but He put it right in the very midst of Adam and Eve and then told them not to eat from it because if they did they would surely die. This was a test designed by God, and was fully intended to result in exactly what happened. The Father had planned from before creation that His Son would be the sole (singular) redeemer, and the only way to heaven and eternal life, of a select few individuals from among a vast pool of guilty human beings. (Jn 14:6) For His Son to be the Redeemer of all, then all had to be guilty to begin with, lest there be some who need no Redeemer. And Adam and Eve accommodated God's plan by their own free volition, against His direct warning, and brought upon themselves, and all their offspring, the guilt of disobedience, through the knowledge of good and evil, by which mankind comes to know sin and simultaneously alienates himself from God.

Do not fret over this. Adam and Eve did not ruin God's great plan for humanity, they actually put it into motion by doing exactly what God knew they would do from the beginning. They voluntarily created the beginning of this vast pool of guilty humanity from which the planned Redeemer would begin to extract His chosen people. In the verses we're about to read, Paul speaks of those who ask why God holds people guilty if they're only doing what God knew they would do to begin with? But the question isn't about what God knows, it's about what man does. God told Adam and Eve that eating of that tree would result in their death, and irregardless of what God knew or didn't know, it was Adam and Eve who had to make a choice whether to believe God or not, and whether to eat from that tree or abstain, and they were fully informed of the danger involved before they made that decision. Therefore, all guilt and consequences are completely on their own heads. The human species plunged itself into guilt and depravity of its own choosing, and against God's clear warning. From the day of Adam and Eve's decision to not believe God's warning and disobey His command, the human species has been born from its mother's womb's in a condition of spiritual death and innate depravity. (Ps 51:5) Unless a man (or woman) is born again, they cannot see, or enter the kingdom of heaven declared Jesus. (Jn 3:3,5)

Now you might wonder why I've said all this as an introduction to chapter three. And the answer is that it's vitally important to comprehend the contextual background for what Paul is going to say in the first 20 verses of this chapter, especially in verses 10 through 18. In chapters one and two Paul has made reference to atheists, pagan idolaters, and finally religious Jews, and summed it up by saying that all have fallen away from God and gone astray, and the Jews who put so much faith in their heritage were as lost and guilty as the rest of humanity, in spite of all their rituals and professed knowledge of God. In spite of having the Commandments, and the prophets, and the writings of God, the Jews were no better than the pagan tribes that surrounded them. And it's here that Paul picks up in chapter three:

### **None Righteous, Not Even One**

*1 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? 2 Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God. 3 What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? 4 May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, "That You may be justified in Your words, And prevail when You are judged."*

*5 But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.) 6 May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world? 7 But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner? 8 And why not say (as we are slanderously reported, and as some claim that we say), "Let us do evil that good may come"? Their condemnation is just.*

*9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; 10 as it is written,*

*"There is none righteous, not even one;*

*11 There is none who understands,*

*There is none who seeks for God;*

12 All have turned aside, together they have become useless;  
There is none who does good,  
There is not even one."

13 "Their throat is an open grave,  
With their tongues they keep deceiving,"  
"The poison of asps is under their lips";

14 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness";

15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood,

16 Destruction and misery are in their paths,

17 And the path of peace they have not known."

18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

Romans 3:1-20 (NASB)

#### **Verses 1-4:**

1 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? 2 Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God. 3 What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? 4 May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, "That You may be justified in Your words, And prevail when You are judged."

Now we can see why the introduction before the verses. Paul asks *Then what advantage has the Jew?* And he answers that the advantage is *Great in every respect*. Having the oracles of God, that is His written Commandments and statutes is of great benefit, as it affords the opportunity to know God beyond what we can simply see and imagine in our minds. But he's just finished saying that having all this knowledge didn't benefit the Jews, so why is it valuable they might have asked? Paul reminds the Romans that just because most of the Jews didn't believe God doesn't make God's promises any less valuable to the few who do believe Him. Those who didn't believe missed the benefits, but the benefits are still there waiting for all who do believe God. The unbeliever's actions do not nullify the faithfulness of God to honor all His promises to those who do believe Him, regardless of how very few that group might be. Paul uses some Old Testament references to support his example of God's faithfulness to His word. Although every man be found a liar, nevertheless God is true, and His judgements will prevail in the end. (v.4) Nothing man can do, or not do, will ever change God's righteousness and faithfulness to His promises of salvation to those who believe Him.

#### **Verses 5-8:**

5 But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.) 6 May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world? 7 But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner? 8 And why not say (as we are slanderously reported, and as some claim that we say), "Let us do evil that good may come"? Their condemnation is just.

These verses, 5 through 8, are Paul's anticipation of questions and objections to God's judgement of unrighteousness. Paul asks the question - If our unrighteousness simply serves the purpose of demonstrating God's righteousness, then why is God upset at this? Haven't we done a good thing in the end, by providing the opportunity for God's righteousness to be demonstrated through our own unrighteousness? Why would God judge us for this, shouldn't we actually be rewarded for this as a service to God. Paul makes the absurdity of this argument obvious with the question - if this is the case then how will God judge the evildoers of the world?

In verse 7 Paul continues with this argument. He says *But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner?* In today's vernacular we might restate this question as asking - if my committing armed robberies only demonstrates the good of the law that forbids armed robberies, then why am I being arrested for my armed robberies, after all, they just prove the need of the law. An obviously absurd argument, but still apparently valid in the eyes of some individuals of that time. And Paul says: *Their condemnation is just*.

**Verse 9:**

*9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;*

Paul then uses this summary statement to conclude his argument. He asks if we are better than they. The distinctions of who are the “we” and who are the “they” might be debated, but the context suggests that Paul means the Gentiles rather than the Jews, since it is the Jews that he has been discussing, but either way, he sums it up by saying: *for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;* What he means is that everybody in the whole world is under sin, and he divides all the peoples of the earth into the two groups of Jews and Greeks, meaning Jews and Gentiles. There are no exclusions in Paul’s analysis of humanity. The Atheists do not believe God, the pagan idolaters do not believe God, and the self-righteous Jews did not believe God. It was clearly Paul’s intention to cover every contingency. Among the things we can learn from this is that religion is no substitute for believing God. The vast majority of what calls itself religion is simply diversion. An attempt to please some unknown god by ceremonial rituals passed down by our unbelieving forefathers. For the majority of humanity this is all they’re looking for, so the world is filled with these.

It’s been said that the first thing necessary in any successful recovery is to accept the fact that you have an illness. Paul has spent much of chapter one, all of chapter two, and now the first 20 verses of chapter three making the case that humanity is terminally ill, every last one of us. We’re born that way. Because of the sin of Adam and Eve, death entered this created world, and whether we think it’s fair or not, we all still die. The knowledge of good and evil has brought with it the realization of sin, and sin has proven irresistible to us all. When sin entered into our species spiritual life departed, because light and darkness cannot reside in the same place at the same time. We are not born innocent as is the popular idea, we are born damaged by our very nature. (Ps 51:5; Eph 2:5) We are born spiritually dead and void of righteousness. We don’t want to hear this, but it’s the truth that Paul is trying to make clear to everyone, because the cure is only available to those who recognize they are desperately sick and are willing to confess it.

I’ve tried to say everything I can to make us ready to hear and understand the next 9 verses that we’re going to read. In an earlier lesson I said that humanity evaluates good and evil from a human perspective, meaning we see good and evil through eyes that are themselves damaged by evil. We call things good that are only partly good and we fail to see much evil as it actually is. We call people good people, when we know they are also sinful on many occasions. We want to think of ourselves as “good people” but we know the true thoughts and intents of our hearts, and if others knew us like we do then probably no one would call us a “good person.” Then there are the self-deceived who actually do think they are a good person, in spite of the many thoughts and intents of their hearts. They have convinced themselves that this is simply the norm, and it doesn’t mean anything. Humanity is a master of self exoneration. We compare ourselves to ourselves and by so doing we justify our every thought and action. (2Co 10:12)

If we were to use a flawed diamond as a reference for comparison in sorting through a large batch, then we would not get pure diamonds as our result. God does not use humans as the reference of comparison to evaluate humanity. He doesn’t compare one to the other and pick the best available. That is not how it works. He uses His Son Jesus as the reference, and anything less, anything that doesn’t measure up, is rejected as being flawed. We humans have invented the term “well, it’s not perfect, but it’s good enough.” We’ve all used this terminology haven’t we? But I tell you the truth, God will never use this terminology, and He will never settle for “good enough.” Only perfection is good enough for God to accept in His eternal kingdom. Therefore, He provided His Son Jesus as the means of imputed perfection to all who believe in Him. But now I hope we’re ready to see how God evaluates the human species. How we all appear in His perfect and holy sight. Be prepared, the picture isn’t pretty, but it’s something we must know to understand our relationship to the true and living God. So now let’s read these next verses where Paul uses an assortment of Old Testament scriptures to paint a clear picture of humanity as we truly appear in the holy and untainted eyes of God:

**Verses 10-18:**

*10 as it is written,*

*"There is none righteous, not even one;*

*11 There is none who understands,*

*There is none who seeks for God;*

*12 All have turned aside, together they have become useless;  
There is none who does good,  
There is not even one."  
13 "Their throat is an open grave,  
With their tongues they keep deceiving,"  
"The poison of asps is under their lips";  
14 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness";  
15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood,  
16 Destruction and misery are in their paths,  
17 And the path of peace they have not known."  
18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

Who do we think Paul is talking about here? Somebody else? Some obscure group of vicious heathen. No, he's speaking of every human being as it's born from its mother's womb. Every single one without exception. We often hear people, even Christians, refer to new born infants as being innocent, but the scriptures tell us we are born in a condition of spiritual death and innate depravity. (Ps 51:5; Eph 2:5) Of course newborn babies haven't had any opportunity to demonstrate this by their behaviors, but as they grow their innate nature will begin to manifest itself. I'm making this point so that we understand that it isn't something we do at some point in our lives that causes our condition, but it's what we are by our very composition, it's how we are conceived and born into this world. This is why Jesus told Nicodemus that unless a man (meaning person) is born again they cannot see nor enter the kingdom of heaven. At the first birth we are brought forth in iniquity and spiritual death.

In verse 10 Paul starts out with the statement that *"There is none righteous, not even one;* we look at this like its hyperbole, like it's an exaggeration for effect, but he goes on with more quotes. He says *11 There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; 12 All have turned aside, together they have become useless;* When I read these verses I'm reminded of what God said in Genesis 6, early in the history of mankind, when wickedness and violence were already running rampant all over the whole earth:

*5 Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.*

When I read this it breaks my heart, because we humans have proven to be a heartbreak to our own Creator. Our continual desires for sin, and practices of wickedness had made God sad that He created us, and His heart was broken like the parents of an evil son who becomes a monster are broken over the continual practices of their beloved child. Those parent wish that they had never had that child, and God was briefly sorry that He had made mankind on the earth. So God destroyed the population of the earth, but in His mercy He spared Noah and his family, to perpetuate the human species.

The relevant point in this is that from the time that Adam and Eve disobeyed God, and became aware of sin, through the knowledge of good and evil, spiritual life and the capacity of pure desires for righteousness departed from our species. This was not just something judicial, if that were the case it would have ended with Adam and Eve, but rather it was something that affects our constitutional configuration. A basic change in the actual configuration of the species occurred to accommodate the knowledge of good and evil, and that change was permanent. It's not that God simply punished Adam and Eve for their disobedience, it's that Adam and Eve did something that caused a systemic change in their actual genetic program coding, and they were not what they were before that happened. This is why I say that it was not judicial, it was organically constitutional. We, as a species, are not what Adam and Eve were when God first created them. We are now all a flawed species from our very conception, and we do not have the capability to seek after God with a pure heart when we are originally born into this world. Thus we **must** be **born again** or we cannot ever enter the kingdom of God. This is not hyperbole, it's not conjecture, this is divine scriptural truth.

This is why Paul can sum it up with the statement *There is not even one.* That's exactly what is meant in this verse, that no human is born who is righteous, who understands and seeks for God with pure motives. This is why all have become useless in the eyes of God, and why Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and why no one can come to God the Father

but through Him. (Jn 14:6) He, Jesus, is the only cure that God the Father has provided, or ever will, for the systemic human condition of spiritual death and innate depravity, and the only mediator between Himself and mankind. (1Tim 2:5)

But let's continue with Paul's discourse on the condition of fallen, and unredeemed humanity when viewed through the undistorted eyes of God. He says *Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving*. Why is our throat an open grave? Because we speak of iniquity, and we tell lies and plan wickedness, all of which leads humanity to death. The things humans speak about are those things that cause our destruction, so our mouth is like an open grave and with our tongues we keep on deceiving both ourselves and others that we're really okay, and that heaven awaits us all. Thus *The poison of asps is under their lips* in as much as our words conceal a deadly venom of iniquity. When people speak kind and sympathetic words of encouragement and tolerance to others to disobey the commandments of God, they say they're being kind and loving, but those words of encouragement have the deadly venom of death to those who listen and intentionally disobey God. The throat that speaks such things is truly an open grave, eagerly awaiting the burial of those who listen and follow. Pretty sounding words of death are those that encourage sinning against God. (Example: Satan speaking to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden)

In verses 14 and 15, Paul says *14 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness"; 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood*, Of course we know that not every conversation is one of cursing and bitterness, but we also know that such talk is all too common throughout all society. If we have to work and function in secular society, then rarely a day goes by that we don't hear such things. Paul says that their feet are swift to shed blood. What does he mean, what do feet have to do with shedding blood? Simply that we run with swiftness into opportunities to shed the blood of others. We don't just do so, we're swift and eager for every chance. Just as described in Genesis 6, still today the whole earth is filled with violence, and multitudes are just looking for the opportunity to display it on someone they perceive as their enemy. Therefore, *16 Destruction and misery are in their paths*, because the desire to kill and harm our perceived enemies brings about much misery upon our species. As a people we have never learned how to live in peace with one another, we don't know how to deal with differences except to kill those who think differently. We've never devised any other long term suitable solution. Major differences of religion, morality, and politics eventually end up being resolved on a battlefield, this is the history of our species. *The path of peace we have not known*.

Then there's the summary statement to this scathing analysis. Paul says that *There is no fear of God before their eyes*. This really does sum it up. Either there's no fear that there even is a God, or there's no fear that God can or will actually do anything about our wickedness, or there's no fear that what we're doing is anything to worry about, because after all, most of us are fundamentally "good people" aren't we? But this last idea is exactly what Paul has just spent so much time addressing. Paul intends to speak very clearly on the divine principle of justification by faith alone, but to speak of justification it's absolutely imperative to understand just what we need to be justified from. Justification for what? If we don't know that, then the whole principle is lost and meaningless. Paul is doing his best to convey the fact that there are no good people when weighed in the balance scale of God, because His counterweight on that balance scale is His Son Jesus Christ. His point of reference is the righteousness of His Son, and when we understand this we begin to realize that there's none righteous, no, not one among man can measure up to God's required standard. *Not even one*. Therefore, there are no good people who need no redemption. The idea that most of the world is comprised of good people on their way to heaven is not what the bible teaches, it's entirely a human invention, a clever deception, just like Satan's. There is no reverent fear, based on His obvious omnipotence, as displayed by creation, and there is no fear of His divine wrath that has been promised upon all those who live in disobedience to His commandments. No matter what we say, we live like God doesn't even exist, and like we'll never have to answer to Him. But He says we will.

We compare ourselves to ourselves, and by this we justify ourselves. But God compares us to His Son, and when so compared there is none righteous, no not one, there is none who seeks after God. Humanity has all together become useless. Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they lie and deceive, cursing and bitterness fills their hearts, so they are swift to shed the blood of their neighbors with whom they disagree. Destruction and misery lie in the path trodden by humanity for its entire recorded history, and the means to live in peace we have never known. Because of our self imposed ignorance and denial of the obvious, there is no fear of God before our eyes, so we keep on living in stubborn disobedience to God, and we call it loving tolerance. That's probably what Satan called his advice to Adam and Eve.

There is probably no end to what we could say about this group of verses that we're examining, but in the end, regardless of the words we use, there is the single imperative that we must grasp and understand from these verses, and from Paul's teaching in these chapters, and that is - that all humanity, from its very conception as a living being, is brought forth in a condition of spiritual death and innate depravity. Every human being loves sin, admittedly some more than others, but there is none who are entirely righteous, *not even one*. The human species is born under the curse of sin and the sentence of death. If you can't accept this then the scriptures have nothing further to offer you. You might as well put down your bible and watch television, because the whole of the New Testament is about God's amazing and gracious remedy for this terminal condition in which the human species finds itself entrapped. It's not a book of philosophy, or even just a book of wisdom; it is a book revealing the amazing grace of God to save lost sinners from eternal destruction in the fires of hell, of which group you, and I, and every other person ever born is a part.

If we don't come away from this group of verses with the absolutely clear and unchallenged understanding that all mankind is depraved and useless to God in our unregenerate condition, then we have missed the whole point, and we're not ready to hear or understand what Paul is going to teach in his subsequent verses. But now, before we get to that part, let's look at the last two verses of this section:

### **Verses 19-20:**

*19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.*

What is Paul saying here? *Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law.* So who are those who are under the mandates of the Laws of God, is it just the Jews? No, Paul goes on to say *so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God.* Paul is making it absolutely clear that God's Laws are for the human species, not just one or two of the people groups. Yes, God gave humanity His Laws by way of the Jews, but the mandates of those Laws were, and still are for all the people that God has made. (Mat 5:17-20)

Every mouth will be closed in so much as any human ever claiming that they are innocent, or guiltless, and deserve to go to heaven based on their own merits and life. No such claim has any validity in the sight of God. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, which Paul is going to declare in the next few verses. With an iniquitous heart our mother's bring us forth into this world, (Ps 51:5) so even the newborn infant is in need of regeneration, it must be born again to be suitable for the kingdom of heaven. Does God provide this regeneration to infants who die? I don't know, and neither does anyone else, the scriptures simply don't address this with any direct clarity. But the point is that the Law of God shuts every human being's mouth in regards to deserving to go to heaven. The man who robbed a bank and shot the guard can argue that this was just one day of his life, and every other day he was a good law abiding citizen, so he shouldn't have to suffer for just one little incident. The court should forget about it and let him go home. We know that it just doesn't work like that, even though there is a degree of logic in his argument. We commit a few small infractions of God's Law and then we argue that we're really not bad people, so we should be allowed to go into heaven anyway, but God's court doesn't work like that either. There has to be restitution made for every crime in human courts, and there has to be restitution made for every infraction of God's Laws as well. This is what Paul means when he says that every mouth will be closed and *all the world may become accountable to God.*

This is just another way of restating what he already quoted from Old Testament scriptures, that there is none righteous, no not one. And yes, that means you, and I, and everyone we know as well. In this case the "none" is not qualified, or restricted to a particular group, it is referring to **all humanity** from the first to the last. Everything we know and understand about the grand plan of God to redeem and sanctify His elect children is based on our understanding of this existing precondition from which we start. Now let me explain something. God has not been thwarted by Satan. God designed the whole thing to mold and shape and properly prepare a family of suitable worshipers for Himself, and a companion for His Son. It was not God's desire to create more Gods just like Himself. It was His desire to create lesser beings who will not challenge His authority, but rather worship Him eternally for His superiority and loving kindness. God has intentionally given His children a very good reason to fear, revere, and love Him for eternity. We are, and will forever be, totally dependent upon Him for our very existence, for our redemption from our sins, and for His abiding mercy upon us.

We will never, ever, in all eternity, be able to think of ourselves as His equal, nor will we wish to do so. This is all a function of how God planned the whole of creation, including the fall of the human species, so that He could redeem a small remnant through the sacrifice of His own Son, and properly prepare them for their position in His eternal kingdom. Those who worship God will do so willingly and joyfully, because of the process which they went through to get into that position. There is no higher honor bestowed upon any created being than to be allowed to acceptably worship the one true and only living God. And He has designed the processes of life on this temporary planet earth specifically to mold those worshipers into exactly what He wants them to be. The plan is proceeding perfectly, without a hitch, and is right on time.

Paul finishes this section with the statement *because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin*. This fits well into what we were just discussing. God fully intends that no human can ever be justified in His sight by the workings of their own flesh, in other words, by their own doings. This would destroy the whole reason for worship and reverence of God. If we rightly earned our own salvation by an exemplary life then our whole attitude toward God would be very different wouldn't it? We might still acknowledge His kind assistance, but our attitude would be one of self accomplishment, and worship would be stripped of much of its motivation. We would kind of look at God as our partner, not our sole and only redeemer, and God will not tolerate any such thing. He will not share His glory with another, especially puny mankind. (Isa 42:8) He is God, we are not, and that difference is at the very heart of pure and acceptable worship. Worship that is in spirit and in truth. For God seeks such as these to be His worshipers. (Jn 4:23-24)

Let me comment on that portion that says "in His sight." In our sight, meaning humanity, we can find ways to justify ourselves by endless mental gymnastics and clever rhetoric, and this is what humanity does. The Old Testament Jews elevated this to an art form. But Paul states that there is absolutely no justification of humanity, no not one, in God's sight by keeping the Laws of God. Even if we could, which we can't, we are still depraved in our mind's and our desires and our affections, which Jesus said was the same as actually committing those acts. (Mat 5:28) Just the desire and propensity to commit sin is enough to disqualify us from heaven, and thus Jesus was perfect in every way, He was without sin, either committed or desired, (2Co 5:21; 1Pet 2:22) and this is the minimum necessary standard of perfection required by God. So God gave mankind the Law, knowing that it would result in man's ultimate failure, because *through the Law comes the knowledge of sin*. And mankind's love for sin and lust are his and her undoing. The Law is perfect, but we are not, and this understanding is what closes every mouth and makes every person ever conceived accountable to God, both for our actions and for the condition of our heart that produces them.

There is little or nothing that an unbeliever can ever hear that is more important than this teaching that Paul writes in this epistle. It is the mandatory starting point for salvation. But it is equally imperative for believers to understand this clearly as well, because our whole preparation process, as eternal worshipers, rests upon our clear understanding of just who and what we were before God's gracious mercy was freely bestowed upon us. We were spiritually dead, lost sinners seeking only our own interests, and perhaps trying to live up to what we perceived as a reasonable proximity to His commandments, in spite of our every desire to the contrary, and hoping it would suffice. (Which it would not)

### **Conclusion:**

Now, I'm sorry to have to end this lesson on so bleak note, but no one is immune to the restraints of time. And our next lesson begins Paul's answer to this hopeless situation that mankind has been born into. Things that are impossible for man are entirely possible for God, and the redemption of a remnant of humanity is a work of God, performed by His grace alone, and for a purpose that He planned from before the creation of the universe. If the Lord be willing, we'll begin to examine this next week. To God be the glory. Amen.

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