

Romans, pt.5, 3.9–20, 10.1.06

Total Depravity

Introduction:

- Read Text
- The Emperor's New Clothes
- Paul looks at all of humanity and says, "w/o Jesus, you have no clothes on...we're all laid bare...we're completely sinful/totally depraved...pretense, religious activity, right affiliation, none of it can cover your shameful nakedness.

We're all dominated by sin - 3.9-18

- V.9 – he summarizes..."under" means to be dominated by or under the authority of. He amplifies this by employing a rabbinic teaching methodology called stringing the pearls. He takes passages from 6 different OT locations to substantiate this point, "we're all dominated/under the authority of sin." Another way of saying it, "we're all addicted to sin."
- **Our depraved character** – v.9–12
 - This can be offensive...the standard we're judged against is God's righteousness. This righteous standard was most explicitly revealed to us in God's written word and God's living Word, Jesus.
 - Note the frequency of these words – no one; not even one; no one; no one; all; all; no one; not even one.
 - He is describing the character of everyone...not just the worst...remember the comparison is with the righteous standard of God, His word & His Son
 - i. Illustrate with poster board – one extreme is white & the other is black with the rest different degrees of gray
 - ii. Compared to God's character I'm gray to dark gray to black. In God's sight if I miss the mark in one place I miss it in all.
 - Specific verses

- i. V.10 – “righteous/good” – that meets the standard God has set; this doesn’t mean a person can’t do good...but that no one is ever 100% good.
 - ii. V.11a – “real understanding” of God. Sin makes it impossible to know God. 1 Cor.2 – the person w/o the Spirit (under sin) cannot understand the things of God. The words of the Bible are just words of history.
 - iii. V.11b – “seeking God” – the word means a determined search. We will not naturally seek God or His truth on our own...There is this false notion that we would seek on our own...this is especially true of us who grew up in Christian homes...we think, “I know God saved me, but it’s not like I would not have been saved...I’ve always followed the Lord.” We imply that somehow we or our environment controlled the decision to trust Christ...but Paul is saying that no one will ever truly make a determined search for God. Jesus said, “No one w
 - iv. V.12 – NIV: “all have turned away, they have together become worthless.” Mankind is like a car with a twisted axle. No matter how hard we try we can’t get it straight...left on our own we are headed to the ditch every time. “Become worthless” – this word in Scripture Paul quotes means “to turn sour.” We’re like milk that has been left out too long and soured. It’s not partially worthless, but completely worthless and must be discarded. The entirety of our being has “soured” and no part of me...and entirely of mankind.
- Our depraved conduct – v.13–16
 - V.13 in NLT: Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave...” Our words can be putrid...I would add that our thoughts are also words that God hears...God is saying, “When you think it or say, I smell it and it smells like a decomposing carcass.” Next time you smell the stench of a rotting animal, say to yourself, “That’s the smell of my words

& thoughts which do not glorify God or build up others.” (I almost brought in a dead raccoon to illustrate the point...you would’ve never forgot it.) But our lying, deception, gossiping, hurtful words, negativity, complaining, cursing is like the smell of decaying corpse.

i. It’s not like your good words neutralize your bad words

- Vs.13–14 are about the use of the tongue; out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.
- V.15–17 are about actions.
- The cause of our depravity – v.18
 - “No fear of God” – since we are dominated by sin, we do not have a correct view of God. Therefore, we show no true reverence or fear of His anger towards sin & the judgment to come
 - The thief on the cross – Matt.26.39–43. One angrily insisted Jesus do something. He didn’t know who he was talking to. The other one responded, Don’t you fear God...Don’t you know who you are talking to...he’s the one who has the words of life.
 - Mankind as a whole is like a child standing amidst a den of lions separated by a barrier of glass proclaiming to everyone, “Look, I’m not afraid of the lions...I’m fearless.” So mankind marches through life with a haughty smile and great vigor proclaiming by words & actions, “I’m not afraid of God.” Not realizing that the very One who can & will consume our sin in wrath has, at least for a time, placed a grace barrier between Himself & his creation. Jesus said, “Don’t be afraid of the one who can destroy your body, but be afraid (very afraid) of the one who can throw both your body & soul into Hell.”
- Total depravity means that every part of my person has been impacted by sin. It isn’t saying that we’re all drunkards or murderers, but that every part of my humanness is to one degree or another tainted by sin. Total depravity isn’t saying I am as bad as I possibly could be, but rather I’m not as good as I know I should be.

- This passage is also clearly teaching that no one would ever have chosen God w/o Him doing something first to create in me a desire to seek after him...no one ever seeks God on their own w/o Him first awakening a desire within me to seek & know him. We are spiritually dead before God and only when God awakens my Spirit will I seek after the true God. In my spiritually dead estate I will seek after a Higher Power, but not the true God and His Son Jesus.
 - **Illustration:** Cardboard with different shades of gray with white & black on either end.

We're all doomed by the Law - 3.19

- The Law is both the moral conscience and the Law given to Moses
- The Law reveals everyone's guilt before God. No one "has an excuse" - inexcusable; it means under accusation with no possibility of defense.
 - It's like a man standing trial for stealing & selling stolen guns. The prosecution has presented its case. The prosecution has the surveillance tape of the man entering the gun store, pictures of him stealing the guns out, surveillance of him leaving the store, picture of his truck & license plate in the parking lot; tape of him trying to sell the guns to a pawn shop; testimony of the pawn shop owner; testimony of friends who the man showed the guns to; finger print evidence at both the gun store & on the guns; and email conversations the man had with others that clearly stated what he stole the guns. Now the defendant is given the opportunity to speak in his own defense. Yet, the weight of the evidence against him is so overwhelming he is speechless.
 - The Law keeps me from having an excuse before God...I'm speechless before God...the law dooms me.
- Our conscience says, "Your Guilty!" God's Word says, "Your Guilty." The Holy Spirit says, "your guilty!" And in the end, those who die w/o Christ will say of themselves, "I'm Guilty."
- We are not lily white, rather we are a shade of gray.

- No one will be able to say on the day of judgment, “I didn’t know right from wrong” or “I didn’t know there was a God.” They knew, b/c God placed it within them and outside of them to see Him and to know His moral code...they are w/o excuse.

We’re all destined to failure - 3.20

- The Law exposes our inability to be perfect. This is critical: It also reveals our present & eternal condition if we try to follow. We are destined to perpetual failure and eventually eternal failure if we try to solely follow the Law. ***No one can be made right with God by observing the law, b/c that isn’t the purpose of the law.*** God didn’t give us the law as the map to be made right with him, rather he gave it as means to point us to forgiveness
- Martin Luther quote: The principle point of the Law (Mosaic or conscience) is not to make us better but to make us worse. In other words, the Law shows us our sinful condition so that by the knowledge of our sin, we may be humbled, terrified, bruised & broken. Thereby causing us to be driven to seek grace and to come to the blessed Jesus.
- The Law points out in stark terms that we are sinners and destined to destruction; we slink away from God’s courtroom convicted. We will either march ahead into the jail of condemnation or we will cry out for mercy from the hand of the Judge, who has provided a way of forgiveness through the blood of His Son.
- Imagine yourself as a slave and every time you turn around the slave owner is popping you with his bull whip over every mistake. 95% of you in this room either try harder to keep the rules which you never perfect or you keep messing up and care less about the consequences. For the other 5%, this is what happens. One day, you break one of the rules and the owner starts beating you. You move further away but he keeps beating you. Finally, you find yourself in the middle of the road with a bus headed your way. The owner looks at you with steely eyes. You flag down the bus and jump on board. You stick your head out the window and look at the harsh owner one last time. This time, he’s smiling ear to ear, waving

good bye and wishing you the best on the road to freedom. So it is with the law. It's purpose is to drive you to freedom that's found in Jesus Christ.

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Conclusion:

- God's law exposes mankind's charade of sin and says, "Quit fooling yourself...You're naked...you have no clothes one...I see it all...You're dominated by sin...doomed by the law...destined to ongoing & eternal failure."
- Rev.3. The church of Laodecia is not only a clear picture of the American church, but of us individually. We say to God, "I'm okay...it's not that bad...I'm rich...I've got it all." God says to us, "No you aren't, you're wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked...come to me and buy white clothes so that you won't be shamed by your nakedness."
- Do you see your nakedness? Don't evade it by changing the subject, talking about self esteem (I look pretty good in the buff, I'm okay), or by blaming others. Part of human dignity, is to take responsibility and admit you are under the power of the sin. Your only hope is to run to Jesus on the road to freedom.
- For others, quit trying to use the law as the means to merit God's favor...to be made right in God's sight
- 3.21 - The conjunction: But now, - the road to freedom begins here!