

DEVOTIONAL

WHEN IN ROME III // NO ONE IS RIGHT
JULY 18, 2021

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discussion Starter: How would you respond to a person who says they will go to Heaven when they die because they are a good person?

Key Text: “What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,¹⁰ as it is written: ‘None is righteous, no, not one;¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God.¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.’¹³ ‘Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.’ ‘The venom of asps is under their lips.’¹⁴ ‘Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.’¹⁵ ‘Their feet are swift to shed blood;’¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery,¹⁷ and the way 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 stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.” (Romans 3:9-20)

In 1908 the *London Times* asked Christian author, theologian, and humorist G. K. Chesterton, along with other notable authors, to write an article answering the question, “What is wrong with the world?” Chesterton’s response simply said,

Dear Sir,

Regarding your article “What is wrong with the world?” I am.

Yours truly,
G. K. Chesterton

Chesterton knew that we, in our sin, is what’s wrong with the world. In today’s text, Paul asserts that while the Jews have an advantage on a *national* level as God’s chosen people (v.1-8), there is no advantage on a *personal* level since both “*Jews and Greeks are under sin*” (v.9). Then in 3:10-18, Paul backs up that claim with ten statements that are quotes from the Old Testament to show that all people—without exception—need salvation.

1. “*None is righteous, no, not one...*” (v.10) – Scripture leaves no room for anyone to claim they are “good enough” to deserve heaven.
2. “*...no one understands; no one seeks for God.*” (v.11) – Rather than seeking God, our sinful inclination is to try to run or hide from Him.

Discuss: In what ways do people attempt to run or hide from God?

3. “*All have turned aside...*” (v.12a) – Paul says that everyone turns away from what God wants and does whatever they want. Isaiah 53:6 says, “*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way.*”

4. "...together they have become worthless" (v.12b) – The Greek word for "worthless" was used for milk that went sour and thus became distasteful and wasted. Sin wastes us and robs us of the sweet joy and usefulness God intended for us.

Discuss: In what ways can sin waste our time, money, energy, and talent?

5. "no one does good, not even one..." (v.12c) – People are capable of knowing good from bad; however, nobody's heart is naturally oriented toward doing good. We are all pointed in a self-serving direction and away from God's standard of goodness.

6. "Their throat is an open grave..." (v.13a) – One of the strongest pieces of evidence of our sinfulness is our words. Thanks to sin, the effect of our words is death and decay.

7. "...they use their tongues to deceive" (v.13b) – Not only are our hearts aimed in the wrong direction, we use our words to point others away from God, too.

8. "...the venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness" (v.13c-14) – Asps (snakes) have a sac in the back of their mouth, and they can kill people by their mouth. We strike and hurt others with our bitter, grievous words, using our mouths to wish harm for other people made in God's image.

Discuss: When have someone else's words hurt you?

Discuss: When are you most tempted to gossip? How can you avoid this temptation?

Discuss: How would you advise a new Christian to be wise with his/her words?

9. "Their feet are swift to shed blood; and the way of peace they have not known" (v.15-17) – In Scripture, feet represent the intentions and actions of people—where your feet go, you go. By nature, we are quick to hurt each other, especially when we think it will help ourselves. As a result, we do not know peace.

10. "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (v.18) – We don't even let God enter our thoughts. We ignore or trivialize God. Our lack of fear for God is eternally fatal.

Paul concludes his thoughts in v.19-20 by summarizing the main point he'd been making in the first three chapters of Romans: the whole world is accountable to God, and the whole world is without excuse: "Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin." The Old Testament Law (Ten Commandments) makes us aware of our sin—when we have a standard, we know when we fall short; when we have a law, we know when we've broken it.

For Further Study:

"What is Sin?" article at www.crosswalk.com

Basic Theology by Charles Ryrie

"How Can I Know if Something is a Sin?" article at www.gotquestions.org