

Romans Session 38

The Guilt of all Men

Romans 3:9-17

THE ARRAIGNMENT

Romans 3:9 (NASB)

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;*

The charge begins with two questions.

The first is simply "*what then*"

The idea is, "what is the point of further testimony?"

Paul has already condemned the immoral pagan, the moral pagan, and then both the moral and immoral Jew.

Anticipating what some of his readers would think, his second question asks rhetorically, "*Are we better than they?*"

That is, "Do we have a basic nature better than those who have just been shown to be condemned?"

Are we made from a different mold? Are we cut from a different piece of cloth than they?

As we look at this, who does the "*we*" refer to? Well this is not clear.

Some commentators believe Paul is speaking of his fellow Jews. But he has already dealt with that question earlier on.

It seems more likely that Paul uses the word *we* here to refer to himself and his fellow believers in Rome, both Jew and Gentile.

So the question seems to be this. Are we Christians, in ourselves better than the other groups of people already shown to be condemned before God?

Are we intrinsically superior to those others?

Were we saved because our basic human nature was on a higher plane than theirs?

Paul immediately answers his own question, he unequivocally asserts, **Not at all**. No, we are not in ourselves any better than others.

"For we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin."

Proaitiaomai (already charged) was often used as a legal term to designate a person previously indicted for a given offense.

Hupo (under) was a common Greek term that frequently meant not simply to be beneath but to be totally under the power, authority, and control of something or someone.

That is obviously the sense Paul has in mind here: Every human being, **both Jews and Greeks are all under**, completely subservient and in bondage to, the dominion of **sin**.

Such an idea was preposterous to most Jews. In his rebuke of Peter for succumbing to the Judiazers, Paul referred to the common belief of Jews that they were righteous before God simply by virtue of being Jewish, members of His chosen race.

On the other hand, Jews believed just as strongly that Gentiles commonly called Greeks because of the prevalence of Greek culture and language even under Roman rule were naturally sinful simply by virtue of being non-Jewish. If a Jew was poverty stricken, handicapped, or otherwise seriously afflicted, it was assumed that either he or his parents had committed some unusually heinous sin, for which, for a generation or so, they forfeited their normally high standing before God.

That belief is reflected in the story of the blind man whom Jesus and the disciples passed just outside the Temple one day.

Noticing the man's condition, the disciples asked the Lord,

John 9:2 (NASB)

² And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?"

After Jesus corrected the disciple's wrong assumption, He restored the man's sight.

When the man was talking with the Pharisee's a short while later, they vehemently voiced the same wrong assumption the Twelve had expressed.

When the man said to them of Jesus, "***if this man were not from God, He could do nothing***" the Pharisee's were greatly offended and replied, "***You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?***"

People who are very religious tend to think of themselves as being inherently better than others and favored by God because of their goodness and religiosity.

Even Christians are sometimes tempted to think that God saved them because they were somehow more deserving of salvation than others.

But if a person ever becomes right before God it is never because he is innately better than anyone else or because he has managed to bring his life up to God's standards or because he zealously observes certain religious practices.

It is only because he has acknowledged his sin and helplessness and prostrated himself in humble faith before the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness and cleansing.

Despite great differences to outward behavior and attitudes among people, every Christ less person is sinful in nature and is under the dominion and control of Satan.

The entire unredeemed world, John declares, lies in the power of the evil one:

1 John 5:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

And is therefore arraigned, as it were, before God.

THE INDICTMENT

Romans 3:10-17 (NASB)

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 ASPES 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."*

Paul now presents an appalling thirteen count indictment against fallen mankind.

To reinforce the inclusiveness of the indictment, he reiterates the fact that all of fallen humanity, Jew and Gentile alike, is under sin. In verses 10-18 he uses the term **none** and its equivalent, **not even one**, six times in referring to man's absolute lack of righteousness before God.

The indictment comes directly from Old Testament Scripture, to which **it is written** refers.

Both Jesus and Satan used that phrase to introduce quotations from the Old Testament during the temptations in the wilderness.

Matthew 4:4 (NASB)

⁴ *But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"*

Matthew 4:6-7 (NASB)

⁶ *and *said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU'; and 'ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'"*

⁷ *Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'"*

Matthew 4:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ *Then Jesus *said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'"*

It is written translates the Greek perfect tense, indicating the continuity and permanence of what was written and implying its divine authority, which every faithful Jew and every faithful Christian, whether Jew or Gentile, acknowledged.

The thirteen charges of indictment are presented in three categories concerning the accused;

- 1st. concerning the character (vv-10-12)
- 2nd concerning the conversation (vv-13-14)
- 3rd concerning the conduct (vv-15-17)

And we will take these up the next time we get together for our study.