

Romans Session 41
The Guilt Of All Men 4
Romans 3:13-17

Romans 3:13-14 (NASB)

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";*

When we were together the last time we talked about the charges by Paul concerning the character of the accused. He talked of the rebelliousness of man and he talked about the waywardness of natural man. In both cases man is estranged from God. He willingly walks away and chooses another path that leads him away for the Lord.

The next area he presents is that of the conversation of the accused (vv-13-14)

It is true that a man's character will inevitably manifest itself in his conversation.

Jesus said;

Matthew 12:34-35 (NASB)

³⁴ *"You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.*

³⁵ *"The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil.*

Again in another place the same truth with just different words

Matthew 15:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ *"But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man.*

The writer of Proverbs says;

Proverbs 10:31-32 (NASB)

³¹ *The mouth of the righteous flows with wisdom, But the perverted tongue will be cut out.*

³² *The lips of the righteous bring forth what is acceptable, But the mouth of the wicked what is perverted.*

He also wrote;

Proverbs 15:2 (NASB)

² *The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, But the mouth of fools spouts folly.*

Proverbs 15:28 (NASB)

²⁸ *The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.*

Continuing to quote from the Psalms, Paul illustrates the truths about a person's character as they are reflected in his conversation.

And in doing so, he adds four more charges to the divine indictment against the unregenerate man.

Commenting on Paul's use of human anatomy to illustrate how man's evil character manifests itself, one writer paraphrased the psalmist's and the apostle's word in this way;

"His tongue is tipped with fraud, his lips are tainted with venom, and his mouth full of gall (bitterness), his tongue a sword to run man through, and his throat a sepulcher in which to bury them."

The seventh charge of Paul's indictment is that by nature fallen mankind is spiritually dead, demonstrated by the metaphor of **their throat being an open grave (Ps. 5, 9)**.

A spiritually dead heart can only generate spiritually dead words.

In areas where embalming is not available, a corpse is placed in the ground and then covered up, not only to show respect for the deceased but also to protect passersby from viewing the disfigurement and smelling the stench of decay.

But the natural man keeps his throat wide open, and in so doing continually testifies to his spiritual death by the foulness of his words.

The eighth charge is that by nature fallen mankind is deceitful: **with their tongues they keep deceiving.**

Delioo, from which **keep deceiving**, is derived, has the basic meaning of luring and was used of baiting a hook by covering it with a small piece of food to disguise its danger.

When a fish bites the food, thinking he will get a meal, he instead becomes a meal for the fisherman.

The imperfect Greek tense of the verb indicates continual, repetitive deceit.

For the natural man lying and other forms of deceit are a habitual and normal part of his life. They are repetitive.

Psalms 5:9

Psalm 5:9 (NASB)

9 There is nothing reliable in what they say; Their inward part is destruction itself. Their throat is an open grave; They flatter with their tongue.

Here we have the description of flatterers, we see that their words are a means of serving themselves rather than the one they are praising.

And because praise appeals to human nature, it also leads the flattered person into pride and false self-confidence. The flatterer therefore both uses and abuses others.

David declares that man's sinfulness can also lead to self-deceit and self-flattery

Psalm 36:1-3 (NASB)

1 Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; There is no fear of God before his eyes.

2 For it flatters him in his own eyes Concerning the discovery of his iniquity and the hatred of it.

3 The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit; He has ceased to be wise and to do good.

Isaiah wrote:

Isaiah 59:1-3 (NASB)

¹ *Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear.*

² *But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.*

³ *For your hands are defiled with blood And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken falsehood, Your tongue mutters wickedness.*

Jeremiah also exposed man's natural deceitfulness, saying:

Jeremiah 9:3-5 (NASB)

³ *"They bend their tongue like their bow; Lies and not truth prevail in the land; For they proceed from evil to evil, And they do not know Me," declares the LORD.*

⁴ *"Let everyone be on guard against his neighbor, And do not trust any brother; Because every brother deals craftily, And every neighbor goes about as a slanderer.*

⁵ *"Everyone deceives his neighbor And does not speak the truth, They have taught their tongue to speak lies; They weary themselves committing iniquity.*

The ninth charge in Paul's indictment of the unconverted man is closely related to the previous one.

Quoting from Psalms 140:3 he says of ungodly man that **the poison of asps is under their lips**.

The Psalmist precedes that charge with the observation that, **"they sharpen their tongues as a serpent"**

Because of the spiritually damning false doctrines and the deceitful character of most of the religious leaders in Jesus day. Both He and John the Baptist described them as broods of vipers (*Matt. 3:7; 12:34*)

In describing **Asps**, one writer says, *"the fangs of such a deadly snake ordinarily lie folded back in the upper jaw, but when the snake throws his head to strike, these hollow fangs drop down and when the snake bites the fangs press a sack of deadly poison hidden under the lips, ejecting venom into the victim."*

There is a story of a man who found a baby rattlesnake and decided to make a pet of it. He kept it in the house and played with it for a week or so, but then it disappeared for several months and could not be found. One day the man searched behind a piece of furniture to retrieve something he had dropped, when he felt a sharp stab of pain, he pulled back his hand with the rattler hanging from it by its fangs. Man's sinful nature is equally untamable.

Listen even those who belong to the Lord can succumb to terrible deceit.

You know the story of King David. Of his sin and deceit.

He was called by God, a man after God's own heart. Yet he fell into sin and deceit that caused him great grief later in his life. Even though he had God's forgiveness, the results of the sin, the outcome was costly. (*2Sam. 11:1-15*)

The tenth charge in the indictment continues the imagery of speaking, describing the ungodliness as those **whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:**

Psalms 10:7 (NASB)

⁷ *His mouth is full of curses and deceit and oppression; Under his tongue is mischief and wickedness.*

Ara (cursing) carries the idea of intense malediction of desiring the worst for a person and making that desire public through open criticism and defamation.

Pikria (bitterness) was not used so much in regard to physical taste as to describe openly expressed emotional hostility against an enemy.

Such is the obvious meaning in this context.

David described cursing, bitter persons as those who:

Psalm 64:3-4 (NASB)

³ *Who have sharpened their tongue like a sword. They aimed bitter speech as their arrow,*

⁴ *To shoot from concealment at the blameless; Suddenly they shoot at him, and do not fear.*

Every age of mankind, our own certainly included, has been characterized by people who use their tongues as vicious weapons.

Their attacks are not only against those they know well enough to hate but sometimes, as David seems to intimate, even against strangers, simply for the perverse pleasure of venting their anger and hatred.