

January 22, 2017 by Steve Brandon



We Are All Sinners

Romans 3:9-20

- 1. The Summary (verse 9)**
- 2. The Scriptures (verses 10-18)**
- 3. The Silencing (verses 19-20)**

A few days ago, our nation experienced something that Ronald Reagan called, "both commonplace and miraculous." He was talking about the inauguration of another President of the United States, the peaceful transfer of power from one man to another. It has been commonplace every four years, since 1789, when George Washington took the oath of office to be the President of the United States of America. It has been miraculous, in that the peaceful transfer of power has been modeled for the world to see for over 200 years.

So, according to plan, shortly before noon on Friday, January 20, 2017, Donald J. Trump took the oath to be President of the United States of America. Shortly after taking that oath, he delivered his inaugural address. Now, as he delivered the address to close to a million people in attendance, Trump was surrounded on the platform by the nation's most powerful people. From former presidents to the supreme court justices to the ruling members of congress. These are the people that have shaped the direction of America for the past few decades.

And Donald Trump's remarks on that day were as pointed and as sharp as any that he made on the campaign trail. Just listen to what he said, ...

Today's ceremony, ... has very special meaning because today, we are not merely transferring power from one administration to another or from one party to another, but we are transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it back to you, the people.

For too long, a small group in our nation's capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost. Washington flourished, but the people did not share in its wealth. Politicians prospered, but the jobs left and the factories closed. The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country. Their victories have not been your victories. Their triumphs have not been your triumphs. And while they celebrated in our nation's capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land.

That all changes starting right here and right now because this moment is your moment, it belongs to you.

Such a message surely sounded great to many of the hundreds of thousands of people in the crowd, but this message did not sound so great to those seated behind him. Because, his words were shots fired at those sitting on the stage behind him! As if he turned around with a machine gun in hand and pepper-sprayed everyone surrounding him on the platform with his words. Essentially, he was saying to those around him, "You all have messed up. You all have been in it for yourself. You all have failed to represent the people who elected you. In fact, you have hurt our nation far more than you have helped our nation."

Consider another section of his speech, ...

What truly matters is not which party controls our government, but whether our government is controlled by the people. January 20th, 2017 will be remembered as the day the people became the rulers of this nation again.

For many decades, we've enriched foreign industry at the expense of American industry; ... subsidized the armies of other countries, ... while allowing for the very sad depletion of our military. We've defended other nations' borders while refusing to defend our own. And spent trillions and trillions of dollars overseas while America's infrastructure has fallen into disrepair and decay. We've made other countries rich, while the wealth, strength and confidence of our country has dissipated over the horizon. One by one, the factories shuttered and left our shores, with not even a thought about the millions and millions of American workers that were left behind. The wealth of our middle class has been ripped from their homes and then redistributed all across the world.

But that is the past. And now, we are looking only to the future.

In other words, the problems and difficulties that we have faced as a nation lie squarely with those on the platform behind him. And as I listened to these words, I couldn't help but to think of what was going through their minds. What was going through the mind of former-president, Barak Obama, as Trump rattled off all of his failed efforts? What was going through the minds of those senators and representatives who have been in power for decades?

I would guess that many of them simply ignored Trump's words as rhetoric. "Let him say what he wants. Most people see through him. That

he's just a windbag." I would suspect that many of our nation's leaders were self-justifying. Perhaps, especially from those who have only come into power in recent years, we would have heard the refrain, "I've not been part of the problem. I have only just arrived to Washington. I'm on Trump's side. It's going to be different with me."

Certainly, there was also attack going on in their minds. "Trump is wrong. It's not as bleak as it sounds. We haven't destroyed America. Things have never been better." And I'm sure that few, if any, at that moment came to a point of realization that they, indeed, have been the problem with America. Indeed, they have enriched their own pockets at on the backs of the people. Indeed, they have prospered at the expense of struggling families across the nation. Indeed, they have enriched other nations at the expense of the working class.

And the reason that I'm doubtful that his speech did anything in the hearts of those who have been in power in the past is that they have all heard this message before. It's nothing new. It has been the mantra of Donald Trump on the campaign trail. And they are firmly established in their own thoughts. There is little changing needed, or so they think.

This morning, as we approach the Scripture, it's going to say some harsh words to all of us. It is as if we are seated on the platform behind the Scriptures, and they are taking aim at our hearts. And we have a choice to make.

Are we going to ignore these words? Are we going to justify ourselves, saying that these words don't apply to us? Are we going to attack the words as overstating the case? Or, are we going to accept these words as rightly describing the reality of our hearts.

And there may be some changing that needs to take place in your hearts. Because, we are going to be dealing with some issues that you have heard before.

My text this morning is Romans, chapter 3 and verses 9-20. My message is entitled, "We Are All Sinners." There isn't anything new or breath-taking about those words. How many times have you heard it before: "You are a sinner! And in need of a Savior!" I can't tell you how many times that I have said that exact phrase from this pulpit! "You are a sinner! And in need of a Savior!"

My prayer this morning for all of us is that we would acknowledge the statement: "We Are All Sinners," And that you would fully embrace it, not just with your minds, but with your hearts as well. "I am a sinner!"

What's needed is a deep, heart-felt impression upon our souls, that Paul, indeed, speaks the truth. We have no place to run. We cannot ignore these words. It is no use to justify ourselves. We must stop all objection to his words.

And we must cry out to God, "I am a sinner!" that you would fully embrace John Newton's famous words. "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!" That you would fully embrace the fact that you are a wretch, completely despicable and vile and worthless. Such is the message of our text this morning. Let's read it.

Romans 3:9-20

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, as it is written:

"None is righteous, no, not one;
no one understands;
no one seeks for God.
All have turned aside;
together they have become worthless;
no one does good,
not even one."
"Their throat is an open grave;
they use their tongues to deceive."
"The venom of asps is under their lips."
"Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."
"Their feet are swift to shed blood;
in their paths are ruin and misery,
and the way of peace they have not known."
"There is no fear of God before their eyes."

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.
For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

These words are really the culmination of everything that Paul has said since chapter 1 and verse 18. In fact, it closes up the first part of the book of Romans. On our teaching slide, I have depicted the broad outline of Romans summed up with these words: Sin, Salvation, Sanctification, Security, Sovereignty, Service This passage closes up the "Sin" section. Next week, we will look at the "Salvation" section, which begins in verse 21 with the contrast of God's wrath on sin with God's grace on sinners.

And I am so looking forward to next week when we can tackle what many consider to be the most importance paragraph in all of the Bible. But that's next week. And this week we are closing up the sin section. May it lead us to be ready for Romans 3:21.

So my first point comes from verse 9, ...

1. The Summary (verse 9)

Romans 3:9

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,

This is a summary statement. Paul states what he has already pointed out that "both Jews and Greeks are under sin" (verse 9). Indeed, this is a perfect summary of what Paul has been talking about ever since chapter 1.

In Romans 1, Paul deals with the sin of the Gentiles, that is, those who have not received the written revelation of the Bible, either the Old or the New Testaments. In Paul's day, this may have been Gentiles living in Israel. Or, they may have been Gentiles living in Asia. In our day, this may be the American who has no exposure to the church. Or the savage animist in the back woods of Africa. Namely, those who have had no exposure to the gospel.

And Paul says that God is angry with them because of their sin. Oh, indeed, they didn't sin against the law. Rather, they sinned against the creation, which testifies to God's "eternal power and divine nature" (Romans 1:20). And when they saw the creation, they saw the glory of God and they knew the Lord. And yet, "they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him" (Romans 1:21). And God, in his anger, has given them up. He has given them up to their sin and all of its ugly consequences.

And in Romans 2, Paul takes a turn. He turns toward the moralist, perhaps a Jewish person, who condemns the Gentiles for not following after God. He turns toward the one who knows enough about right and wrong to point his finger at those who aren't doing right. And he says that God's anger is being stored up on you, because they know what is right, but fail to practice such things.

Romans 2:5

Because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

And in verse 17, Paul takes explicit aim at the Jew, who knows all about God, who thinks that because of the covenant, he is right with God, but fails to walk in his ways. That's who Darryn preached about last week--the Jews, who had all of the religious advantages the world had to offer.

Romans 3:1

Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?

And yet, they failed to take advantage of all of their blessings. And as a result, the wrath of God was rightly falling upon them, as God displayed his righteous judgment. That's the point of verse 5, ...

Romans 3:5

But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us?"

On the contrary, God is righteous to judge the Jew, son of the covenant though he be, because of the Jew's unrighteousness. And Paul, in verse 9 asks the same question as he did in verse 1, only this time, he comes with a different answer.

Romans 3:9

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,

So, on the one hand, according to verse 1, there is great advantage of being a Jew. But, on the other hand, according to verse 9, if you fail to take advantage of your blessings, there is no advantage of being a Jew. And in, fact, this is the reality. That because of sin, any advantage has been negated. This is Paul's point in Romans 1 and 2, ...

Romans 3:9

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

In fact, this is my first point, The Summary (verse 9). "Both Jews and Greeks ... are under sin" (verse 9). Or, in other words, "We Are All Sinners." Jew and Greek alike! "We Are All Sinners!"

It's amazing how easily people fail to grasp this. That all of us are sinners and in need of a Savior.

On our youth retreat this past weekend, we spent a few hours after church on Sunday at Nash Recreation Center--a fitness gym. There was

swimming, pool, weights, those sorts of things. And about a half an hour before we were leaving, I struck up a conversation with a guy. He obviously saw that I was involved with this group of teenagers, and I was able to tell him that we were on a youth retreat with several local churches.

And the conversation naturally turned to the gospel. He began to tell me of the problem that he had with the church he grew up in, because the church was looking to form their public stance on homosexuality. He said, "Really? Do we need to have a public stance on this?" And I sought to bring him back to the root of the question. It's really not what we think about homosexuality. It's what God thinks about homosexuality.

And, I told him that homosexuality is really no different than drunkenness or adultery. You can't allow such things to be celebrated in the church. Such is an affront to God. That's the point of developing a "public stance" on the issue.

And at that point, I tried to show him how the gospel works. I said, "Here's the deal. It's not a condemning thing. Jesus loved the worst of sinners. But he never let them remain in their sin. Certainly, there may be struggle. The alcoholic will struggle in his temptation to sin. The homosexual will struggle with same sex attraction. But, what is at stake is this: Will the sin be celebrated? Or, will the sin be acknowledged and hated with a passion?"

I quoted Paul's attitude toward the subject (from Romans 7). These are some verses that I have been memorizing in recent days.

Romans 7:15

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

Romans 7:24

Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

And I told this man that this is the gospel. That we see our sin, and hate it. And we long to be released from sin's power in our lives! And Jesus died for us so that we might be set free from sin and its power over our lives.

Soon afterwards, he directed the conversation to the teenage girl, who was born in Iran, forced into an arranged marriage with a middle-aged man where she will be his slave for the rest of her life. He said, "She has no exposure to Jesus. What about her?" In some measure, I think that in justifying her, he would find a way to justify himself. With all of God's grace, I sought to turn the attention away from her situation to his situation. That he, indeed, is a sinner, in need of a Savior!

In his intellectual pride, I don't think that he understood. But this is the point of verse 9. "We are all sinners."

And to show this, Paul turns to the Scriptures. This is my second point, ...

2. The Scriptures (verses 10-18)

Paul writes, ...

Romans 3:10

as it is written:

"None is righteous, no, not one;
no one understands;
no one seeks for God.
All have turned aside;
together they have become worthless;
no one does good,
not even one."
"Their throat is an open grave;
they use their tongues to deceive."
"The venom of asps is under their lips."
"Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."
"Their feet are swift to shed blood;
in their paths are ruin and misery,
and the way of peace they have not known."
"There is no fear of God before their eyes."

And with an avalanche of Scripture (from the Psalms and from Isaiah), Paul puts forth the testimony of Scripture into the sinfulness of man. Romans 3:10-12 comes from Psalm 14:1-3 and Psalm 53:1-3. Romans 3:13 is quoted from Psalm 5:9 and Psalm 140:3. Romans 3:14 is from Psalm 10:7. Romans 3:15-17 stems from Isaiah 59:7-8 (also see Isaiah 48:22). And Romans 3:18 comes from Psalm 36:1.

Now, given the time, and given the interest, we could go into these Old Testament passages and read them and look at them in their context and ponder their truths. And we would come up with this: "We Are All Sinners."

That's the point that Paul is trying to get across. When God looks to humanity, He fails to find any who understands or who seeks for God. When God listens to humanity, He hears filth and venom and poison and bitterness come from their mouths. And when God watches humanity, he sees sin on every corner.

Let's consider God's search. Listen to Psalm 14:2-3, ...

Psalm 14:2-3
The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man,
to see if there are any who understand,
who seek after God.
They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt;
there is none who does good,
not even one.

When God looks upon us, he fails to find any who seek after him! Instead, we seek after our own ways. This is what Isaiah said in chapter 53 and verse 6, ...

Isaiah 53:6
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

This is what Paul was getting at when he said (in Ephesians 2:1)--that we "were dead in the trespasses and sins." That is, we were unresponsive to spiritual things.

This is what Jesus was getting at when he said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44). Because people, in their sin, don't seek God and don't want God. It's why grace is such a miracle.

I once was lost, but now I'm found.
was blind, but now I see.

And, ...

Jesus sought me, when a stranger,
wandering from the folds of God.

There are churches across our land that tout themselves as being "seeker sensitive." That is, they are sensitive to those non-Christians, who are "seeking" after God. And I understand what they are saying. And I understand what they are doing. And I really appreciate their heart to reach the lost.

My point is simply that they aren't using Biblical language appropriately. Listen, there aren't any non-Christians who are seeking after God. There are hurting people looking for hope. There are broken people looking for solutions. There are needy people looking for help.

But humanity doesn't seek after God. If anything, it's the other way around. God seeks after us. Didn't Jesus come "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10)? It's God's grace that comes and rescues us!

And that's the gospel! It's not that you have to go searching to find something that might work for you. Rather, it's that God has brought you to the salvation that he has provided.

That's God's looking upon humanity. And what happens when he is listening? It's not good. Verses 13 and 14 describe the filth that comes from our mouths.

Paul here quotes Scripture describing our words like "open graves" (verse 13) to describe the stench of what comes out of our mouths. Paul quotes Scripture using words like "venom" (verse 13) to describe the deadly power of our words. Scripture speaks of the "cursing" and "bitterness" that flow from our mouths. All you need to do is listen to someone speak, and you will soon see their sin.

Because, as Jesus said, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34). And as we all have corrupt hearts, our words are far from faultless. James said, "If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body" (James 3:2).

The fact of the matter is that there was only one perfect man. And they crucified him upon the cross for our sins. Our words will condemn us. Jesus said, ...

Matthew 12:36-37
I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

So, when God looks to humanity, he sees none seeking God. And when God listens to humanity, he hears poison in our lips. And when God watches humanity, he sees sin abound.

Romans 3:15-18

"Their feet are swift to shed blood;
in their paths are ruin and misery,
and the way of peace they have not known."
"There is no fear of God before their eyes."

It's not a pretty picture. But it is the reality of all of us apart from God. Adam and Eve didn't want any part of God, and so, they rebelled against the Lord. In the days of Noah, God only saved 8 out of all mankind. Consider what God saw, ...

Genesis 6:5

The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

When God looks upon humanity, both in its breadth and in its depth, he sees sin abound. And so, God destroyed the world and began afresh with 8 people. And the reason why things continue as they do today, without another destruction coming upon the earth, is not because we have changed. For indeed, we haven't. It is because of God's promise not to bring a flood again (Genesis 8:21-22).

He has every reason to destroy us once again. But by his grace, he delays. Oh, there will be a day. It's called the day of judgment. But today is a day of grace.

There is the old story of the evangelist preaching in the open air to those in the fields. When, off in the distance, was a man led away to execution. And he said, "There but for the grace of God, go I."

Is that how you feel? Do you really feel that apart from the grace of God, you would be carried away to your execution? I'm praying that you would. I'm praying for all of us to see how bad our plight is.

I say this, because this is what Paul is getting at in our text. When all is said and done, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin (verse 10).

We come to our last point. We have seen The Summary (verse 9) and we have seen The Scriptures (verses 10-18). Now, we see, ...

3. The Silencing (verses 19-20)

Romans 3:19-20

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. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

After reading verses 10 through 18, there should be a reaction. It should be silence. Spurgeon said this, "The true condition of the whole world [is] 'GUILTY BEFORE GOD.' This is the right attitude for the whole human race, to stand with its finger on its lip, having nothing to say as to why it should not be condemned."

Do you feel this? Ray Stedman notes that, "You can always tell someone is close to becoming a Christian when they shut up and stop arguing back. Self-righteous people are always saying, "But -- but this -- but I -- yes, but I do this -- and I do that." They are always arguing. But when they see the true meaning of the Law, their mouth is shut. When you read a statement like this, there is really nothing left to say, is there?" [\[1\]](#)

People can't be saved until they see their sin. Our problem today is that people don't see their sin. I love the work of Ray Comfort in training people for evangelism. You can learn more about this on his website, "The Way of the Master." [\[2\]](#)

Like those around the platform listening to Donald Trump, you may seek to ignore these words. You may say, "That's just rhetoric. Paul doesn't really mean what he says. He is speaking hyperbole."

You may be self-justifying, saying, "No. That's not really talking about me. It's talking about others, especially those who don't attend a church on a regular basis, but it's not talking about me."

Or, perhaps you will go on the attack. "No. I don't really believe what the text says. Sure, I'm a sinner, but I think that the text goes too far in what it says."

Where are you? Can you say, "I am a sinner"

1 Timothy 1:15

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost

The darker you see your sin, the brighter will shine the glory of the cross of Christ.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on January 22, 2017 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Stedman, R. Sermon Notes.

[2] <http://www.thewayofthemaster.com>