

9

WE ARE MORE SINFUL THAN WE THINK

Romans 3:9-20

Introduction: The doctrine of total depravity

I. General Description of Mankind's Sinfulness (v.10-12)

- A. People's Actions are Corrupt: "None is righteous"
 - o People often consider themselves to be righteous
 - **What standard do people use when they evaluate themselves?
 - o Earlier, Paul tells us that the standard for "righteous" is God's perfect law (2:13)
 - o Key clarification: Elsewhere the Bible refers to believers as "righteous" not because they are perfect but because they are empowered by God's Spirit to follow God's law
- B. People's Minds are Corrupt: "No one understands"
 - o Sin affects a person's intellectual life; it corrupts the way they think
 - o 1 Cor 2:14: "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."
 - o Key point: The non-Christian cannot understand the Gospel unless God opens his eyes
- C. People's Wills are Corrupt: "No one seeks for God"
 - o Sin affects a person's desires and affections
 - o Rom 8:7: "The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so."

**Key Implication: Sin so pervades each person (total depravity) that they cannot come to God on their own. God must first open their eyes (so they understand), and soften their hearts (so they believe).

II. Particular Manifestations of Mankind's Sinfulness (v.13-18)

- A. "Mouth": Sin by our Words

- o Why do you think Paul begins with the tongue? Isn't that pretty minor compared to other sins?
- o "It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person." Matt 15:11

**God's speech is the way he manifests his glory, our speech is the way we manifest our sinfulness.

B. "Feet": Sin by Harming Others

- o The reality of sin is seen easily in the way people harm other people
- o Key point: A broken divine relationship leads to broken human relationships.

C. "Eyes": Sin by our Pride

- o The Bible regularly describes a sinful person's eyes as 'haughty' or 'prideful'
- o The lack of fear of God is a fundamental sign of sinfulness

III. Implications of Mankind's Sinfulness (v.19-20)

- A. The Whole World is Guilty and Under Judgment
- B. The Purpose of the Law is not to Save but to Convict

Discussion Groups

1. We have learned that our sin was so pervasive that we could never choose God on our own. How does this affect the way you view your salvation? How does it affect your approach to evangelism?

2. Which of the three manifestations of sin (tongue, feet, eyes) do you struggle with the most?

3. How does this passage change your understanding of the purpose of God's law? According to Paul, what role does the law play in bringing people to Christ?
