

Musing #46 — Romans 3:1-11

Paul's letter to the Romans is the good news... starting with the bad news! The universal problem of the human condition. He's sharing his burden about "religious people," and the Jews.

The term "depraved" doesn't mean that lost people are as bad as they can possibly be. Some are very, very good in the world's eyes — but they are also very, very lost.

Paul is also faced with having to connect the Old Covenant and the New Covenant—especially for the Jews. His problem is not unheard of in our modern world as many believers and unbelievers have a very difficult time connecting the God of the Old Testament with the Jesus, our God-man, of the New Testament.

As an example, here is just one verse from the OT: **Hosea 13:16 The people of Samaria must bear the consequences of their guilt because they rebelled against their God. They will be killed by an invading army, their little ones dashed to death against the ground, their pregnant women ripped open by swords.**

It can be difficult to line up that verse with: **1 John 4:8God is love.** Pastor Mark Buchanan said in a magazine article...

"It's hard to reconcile the New Covenant God revealed in Jesus Christ, who welcomes little children, eats with sinners, speaks peace to troubled hearts, calls us to love our enemies, and lets adulterers walk away unscathed... with the Old Covenant God, who lays waste to entire cities, lets babies be dashed on rocks, opens the earth to swallow families whole, smites his own priests for just touching holy relics, and encourages parents to stone their own children for acting up. More pointedly: Jesus, is that really you? But yes, he's one and the same—God!"

Now Paul continues to take the truth home to the Jews. Unbelievers don't mind talking about "religion" as long as the subject doesn't involve their own lost soul. He concludes his case that "even religion" cannot avoid the judgement of God.

Everyone comes into this world — guilty!!

Chapter 1 — the willfully ignorant (Gentiles)

Chapter 2 — the self-righteous (Jews) and the super-religious

Romans 3:1 Then what's the advantage of being a Jew? Is there any value in the ceremony of circumcision?

Well, the Jew did have an advantage:

2 Yes, there are great benefits! First of all, the Jews were entrusted with the whole revelation of God. Paul is concise—

• The Pagan has Creation • The Moralist has Conscience • The Jew has the Scriptures —and all are without excuse.

3 True, some of them were unfaithful; but just because they were unfaithful, does that mean God will be unfaithful? 4 Of course not! Even if everyone else is a liar, God is true. As the Scriptures say about Him, "You will be proved right in what you say, and you will win your case in court." But...

Because they broke the faith! It doesn't mean that God should do the same. That's the way the natural man thinks.

#1 - They disobeyed the law

#2 - And in the process—they took pride in the very law they were disobeying.

Paul was adamant. Unbelief doesn't change the reality of the truth that Christ, the predicted Messiah, died and was raised whether your "religion" believes it or not.

As the modern bumper sticker proclaims—"God said it..I believe it...that settles it." The "I believe it" has nothing to do with the reality of the facts. What God says, settles everything.

It's all part of the larger picture—what we really believe defines what we do, how we act. We are, in fact, the sum collective total of our actions. That is so, since time began!

5 "But," some might say, "our sinfulness serves a good purpose, for it helps people see how righteous God is. Isn't it unfair, then, for him to punish us?" (This is merely a human point of view.) 6 Of course not! If God were not entirely fair, how would he be qualified to judge the world? 7 "But," someone might still argue, "how can God condemn me as a sinner if my dishonesty highlights his truthfulness and brings him more glory?" 8 And some people even slander us by claiming that we say, "The more we sin, the better it is!" Those who say such things deserve to be condemned.

The Narrow Road will always be criticized—as believers we are a "narrow" people. Paul's enemies were spreading the lie that Paul preached and "encouraged" sin as a means of enhancing God's glory... i.e. grace on display! God is fully justified in letting people "choose" their own actions and destiny.

J.B. Phillips Translation verses 5-8 —**"If our wickedness advertises the goodness of God, do we feel that God is being unfair to punish us in return? (I'm using a human tit-for-tat argument.) Not a bit of it! How then could God judge the world? It is like saying that if my lying throws into sharp relief the truth of God and increases his glory, then why should he still judge me a sinner? Why not do evil that good may come? As a matter of fact, I am reported as urging this very thing, by some, slanderously and others, quite seriously. But, of course, such an argument is quite properly condemned."**

So, Paul has now covered the heathen, the hypocrite, the Hebrews, himself, and he's moving on to humanity at large....

9 Well then, should we conclude that we Jews are better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that, whether Jews or Gentiles, we are under the power of sin.

All are under the power of sin... it's everywhere we go! We all came into the world as slaves to sin. Just like gravity, sin is a law. It operates 24/7—**Romans 7:23 I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.**

Man is born dead. He either stays dead or receives Jesus Christ as his/her Savior, Lord, and Life—which sets us free from the condemnation of the law of sin.

This is where the term "Total Depravity" comes from that was the foundational debate between the views of John Calvin & Jacob Arminius in the late 1500s.

Think of all the nice people you know... gracious, loving, kind people. I don't want to bust your bubbles, but "not one" comes into this world equipped to gain a "right standing" with God through what they know or do. Only those who have the Life of Christ, are born again, and who by faith meet that calling are God's children.

We all enter the world as a part of the mass of humanity—and are lost. **Psalm 14:2-3 MSG God sticks his head out of heaven. He looks around. He's looking for someone wise — one man, just one God-ready woman. He comes up empty. A string of zeros. Everyone is corrupt. No one does good—not even one person!**

Adam and Eve were innocent... but not yet complete. Due to their bad choices, all of humanity comes into this world guilty & spiritually dead... an unfinished work.

10 As the Scriptures say, “No one is righteous—not even one. 11 No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God.

The word Election scares most denominations, but it is clearly defined in our Bible. God tells His true children that He knew us before the foundations of the world were made. He also declares He knew us in our mother’s womb. Our name is written in His Book of Life, because the Christ in us is eternal Life and we were a member of His “elect” before time began.

People flock all over the world... to churches, temples and places of worship. What are they doing? They think they are searching for God. But Paul disagrees, telling us in vs. 11, “...there is no one who seeks God.”

No one can understand God’s wisdom and ways until we are born of the Spirit, who is now a part of us—teaching, opening the eyes of our understanding.

God had to do the seeking... “Adam... where are you?” (Genesis 3:9)

Jesus came to "seek and save that which is lost" (Luke 19:10)

Somewhere in the process of our salvation, God reveals Himself to us. That’s why we can’t talk or argue someone into salvation. Paul is doing his best to help those who don’t really believe understand that they are in fact lost which creates the need for a Savior.

To be continued...