

THE BOOK OF ROMANS
"Man's Lost Condition"
Romans 3:12

Oct 21, 1984

INTRODUCTION

1. Scripture teaches that the whole human race is guilty before God (vv. 1-9). Support for this assertion is found in what stands written (v. 10a, perfect tense of verb).

2. What stands written is that there is universal and total sin a. in man's character (vv. 10-12), b. in man's conduct (vv. 13-17) and c. in man's conscience (v. 18). While you may argue with all of this, it stands written.

3. The negative character of man is carefully noted in vv. 10, 11. God's indictments are that there is a. none righteous, b. none understands and c. none seeks. There is a positive character of man included in God's indictments.

1. ALL DECLINED GOD'S PATHWAY

This is an accurate quote from Psa. 14:3 (LXX i.e. Septuagint). The Greek verb used occurs three times in the N.T. (3:12; 16:17; 1 Pet. 3:11). It is a strong verb showing active, wilful departure from God. It is used 139 times in the LXX. Isaiah 53:6 sums it up. We are worse than the animal creation (cf. Isa. 1:2-4; Mal. 2:8; Mt. 23:37). Wilful abandonment of God is horrible.

2. ALL BECAME UNPROFITABLE

Here is something which results from the previous indictment. This has far reaching significance. The English word "unprofitable" means unsuccessful, fruitless, anticipated profit will not be realized. Scripture teaches this (Lk 17:10; Jn 15:5). We are unprofitable to God, others, and self. The Greek word is stronger and means worthless, stupid, good for nothing, deadly, mortal. Scripture supports this (1 Cor. 1:21). Finally, the Hebrew word is "filthy" (Psa. 14:3). The true meaning is "stinking." We are putrid, corrupted, like meat or fruit. We are useless, not fit for what we were designed--to serve God and to promote our own good and the good of others. Apart from the redemption in Christ, there can be no use for man in this universe.

3. ALL SUMMARARILY NO GOOD

This does not deny heroic achievements of human nature. However, there are two standards of goodness--

God's and man's. The former is absolute perfectness; the latter is total imperfectness. The difference is dramatically seen in Scripture (Mk 10:17, 18; Jn 10:30; 14:9). When we see the vast difference between ourselves and God, we fly to Him for redemption (cf. Lk 5:31).

NOTE: Human character is sinful. What about human conduct? It likewise is indicated by God. Consider this as it related to words (vv. 13, 14). There are four sins of the tongue mentioned:

1. CORRUPTING "Their throat is an open sepulchre." (cf. Psa. 5:9).

Man is capable, like the grave, of swallowing others whole, hence, this phrase may note how men devour each other for selfish ends. It may also denote what the throat gives out. There is nothing lovely about a grave, so when God looks at the mouth of man He sees corruption and death (Mt. 12:34; Mk 7:18-23).

2. DECEITFUL "With their tongues they have used deceit" (cf. Psa. 5:9).

Here is man's departure from truth and his participation in lies. He creates a false idea in the mind of another to escape the reward of his own doings. The Greek word is akin to bait. People take a man's word at face value and are caught on the barb. The lying nature of humanity is evident from birth.

3. UNCHARITABLE "The poison of asps is under their lips" (cf. Psa. 140:3).

This is a reference to malice which is behind the cunning of man's lips. Maybe the poison bag under the serpent's fangs suggests the figure. So man uses words to strike at others and injure them (cf. Cain, Gen. 4).

4. BLASPHEMOUS "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness" (cf. Psa. 10:7).

The bitterness which prompts the speech is the cause of the cursing. Bitterness is the product of the human heart. Profanity is "out-in-front-of-the church" speech (from "fane" meaning "church" and "pro" meaning "in front of"). Vocabulary used in church was fouled by godless men outside (cf. Ex. 20:7).

CONCLUSION The anatomical order is from the inside out--throat, tongue, lips, mouth. God's indictments against humanity are unquestionably true. Redemption through Christ alone avails. Come to Him now.