

LESSON THREE
THE SOURCE OF WICKEDNESS, THE WAY OF RESTRICTION,
THE VANITY OF RELIGION AND THE TOTALITY OF HOPELESSNESS

Scripture Reading:

Condemnation
1:18 — 3:20

On Mankind Generally [**Section 1 and 2**]

1:18-32

- Rom. 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold down the truth in unrighteousness,
- Rom. 1:19 Because that which is known of God is manifest within them, for God manifested it to them.
- Rom. 1:20 For the invisible things of Him, both His eternal power and divine characteristics, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being perceived by the things made, so that they would be without excuse;
- Rom. 1:21 Because though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or thank Him, but rather became vain in their reasonings, and their heart, lacking understanding, was darkened.
- Rom. 1:22 Professing to be wise, they became fools
- Rom. 1:23 And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of an image of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and reptiles.
- Rom. 1:24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to uncleanness, so that they dishonor their bodies among themselves,
- Rom. 1:25 Who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.
- Rom. 1:26 Therefore God gave them up to passions of dishonor; for their females exchanged the natural use for that which is contrary to nature;
- Rom. 1:27 And likewise also the males, leaving the natural use of the female, burned in their craving toward one another, males with males committing unseemliness and fully receiving in themselves the retribution of their error which was due.
- Rom. 1:28 And even as they did not approve of holding God in their full knowledge, God gave them up to a disapproved mind, to do the things which are not fitting,
- Rom. 1:29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity;
- Rom. 1:30 Whisperers, slanderers, hateful to God, insolent, arrogant, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,
- Rom. 1:31 Senseless, faithless, affectionless, merciless;
- Rom. 1:32 Who, though fully knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do them, but also have fellow delight in those who practice them.

On the Self-righteous Particularly [Section 3]

2:1-16

- Rom. 2:1 Therefore you are without excuse, O every man who judges, for in what you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.
- Rom. 2:2 But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth upon those who practice such things.
- Rom. 2:3 And do you consider this, O man, who judge those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?
- Rom. 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of His kindness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that God's kindness is leading you to repentance?
- Rom. 2:5 But, according to your hardness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,
- Rom. 2:6 Who will render to each according to his works:
- Rom. 2:7 To those who by endurance in good work seek glory and honor and incorruptibility, life eternal;
- Rom. 2:8 But to those who are selfishly contentious and disobedient to the truth and obey unrighteousness, wrath and fury.
- Rom. 2:9 Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man who commits evil, both of Jew first and of Greek;
- Rom. 2:10 But glory and honor and peace to everyone who works good, both to Jew first and to Greek.
- Rom. 2:11 For there is no respect of persons with God.
- Rom. 2:12 For as many as have sinned without the law shall also perish without the law; and as many as have sinned under the law shall be judged by the law
- Rom. 2:13 (For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.
- Rom. 2:14 For when Gentiles, who have no law, do by nature the things of the law, these, though they have no law, are a law to themselves,
- Rom. 2:15 Who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness with it and their reasonings, one with the other, accusing or even excusing them.)
- Rom. 2:16 In the day when God judges the secrets of men according to my gospel through Jesus Christ.

On the Religious Specifically [Section 4]

2:17 — 3:8

- Rom. 2:17 But if you bear the name of Jew, and rest upon the law, and boast in God,
- Rom. 2:18 And know the will, and approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law,
- Rom. 2:19 And have confidence that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those in darkness,
- Rom. 2:20 One who disciplines the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the proper form of the knowledge and truth in the law;
- Rom. 2:21 You therefore who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach not to steal, do you steal?
- Rom. 2:22 You who say not to commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do

you rob their temples?

Rom. 2:23 You who boast in the law, do you by transgression of the law dishonor God?

Rom. 2:24 For “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,” even as it is written.

Rom. 2:25 For circumcision profits if you practice the law; but if you are a transgressor of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

Rom. 2:26 If therefore the uncircumcision keeps the ordinances of the law, will not his uncircumcision be accounted as circumcision?

Rom. 2:27 And the uncircumcision by nature, if he fulfills the law, will judge you who through the letter and circumcision are a transgressor of the law.

Rom. 2:28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

Rom. 2:29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, in spirit, not in letter, whose praise is not from men, but from God.

Rom. 3:1 What then is the advantage of the Jew? Or what is the profit of the circumcision?

Rom. 3:2 Much in every way. First, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.

Rom. 3:3 For what if some disbelieved? Shall their unbelief annul the faithfulness of God?

Rom. 3:4 Absolutely not! But let God be true and every man a liar, as it is written, “That You may be declared righteous in Your words and may overcome when You are judged.”

Rom. 3:5 But if our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is the God who inflicts wrath unrighteous? I speak according to man.

Rom. 3:6 Absolutely not! Otherwise how shall God judge the world?

Rom. 3:7 But if the truthfulness of God has abounded in my lie unto His glory, why still am I also being judged as a sinner?

Rom. 3:8 And why not say (as we are slanderously charged and as some affirm that we say), Let us do evil that good may come? Whose judgment is just.

On All the World Totally

3:9-20

Rom. 3:9 What then? Are we better? Not at all! For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin,

Rom. 3:10 Even as it is written, “There is none righteous, not even one;

Rom. 3:11 There is none who understands, there is none who seeks out God.

Rom. 3:12 All have turned aside; together they have become useless; there is none who does good; there is not so much as one.

Rom. 3:13 Their throat is an opened grave; with their tongues they practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips;

Rom. 3:14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.

Rom. 3:15 Swift are their feet to shed blood,

Rom. 3:16 Destruction and misery are in their ways,

Rom. 3:17 And the way of peace they have not known.

Rom. 3:18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Rom. 3:19 Now we know that whatever things the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may fall under the judgment of God;

Rom. 3:20 Because out of the works of the law no flesh shall be justified before Him; for through the law is the clear knowledge of sin.

OUTLINE:

I. The Condemnation on Mankind

A. The Source of Wickedness—1:18-32

1. Holding Down the Truth in Unrighteousness—1:18
2. Disapproving of Holding God in Full Knowledge—1:28
3. Not Glorifying God and Not Worshipping Him—1:21, 25
4. Exchanging God—1:23, 25

B. The Result of Giving Up God

1. Being Given Up by God—1:24, 26, 28
2. Having Fornication—Confusion in Order—1:24, 26, 27

II. The Condemnation of the Self-Righteous

A. The Way of Restriction

1. Knowing God by His Creation—1:19-20
2. Holding the Truth in Righteousness—1:18, 28
3. Obeying the Laws of Nature—2:14
4. Listening to the Conscience—2:15
5. Caring for the Proper Reasonings—2:15

III. The Condemnation on the Religious

A. Having an Outward Name—2:17

B. Knowing God in Outward Knowledge—2:17-18

C. Having the Scriptures Outwardly—3:2

D. Keeping the Outward Form in Letter—2:27-28

E. Lacking Inward Reality in Spirit—2:29

F. Doing Evils as the Unreligious—2:21-22

IV. The Condemnation on all the World—The Totality of Hopelessness

Questions:

Section 1:

1. What are the four aspects of condemnation that Paul presented in the book of Romans?
2. What are the four elements of the source of evil?
3. How can we be protected from every evil?

Section 2:

1. What is the three-fold result of us giving up God? Give verse references and examples for each.
2. Describe the true meaning of fornication. Why do people engage in fornication?

Section 3:

1. What are the five items to restrict one from evil?
2. How do we know God by His creation? Give an illustration.
3. Please share your experiences of listening to your conscience?

Section 4:

1. Explain why we do not need “religion”?
2. What are the six aspects to show that religion is vanity? Give a verse for each aspect.
3. Why must everything be done in our spirit?
4. List the condition of man as portrayed in Romans 3:9-20? How many are there?
5. Concerning the last two paragraphs,

ALL SECTIONS:

1. What was Paul’s intention and ultimate goal in writing a section on condemnation?
2. If bringing us to Christ is Paul’s intention, where do we find Christ today? Please give a verse to show this.

[Section 1]

After the introduction, Paul presents the matter of condemnation in four aspects: on mankind in general (1:18-32), on the self-righteous in particular (2:1-16), on the religious specifically (2:17-3:8), and on all the world totally (3:9-20). Firstly, the book of Romans reveals that condemnation has come upon mankind in general. Then attention is given to two special classes of mankind—the self-righteous class and the cultured, religious class. Finally, the whole world is brought under condemnation. Whether we are good or bad, religious or non-religious, we are under God's condemnation.

I. THE CONDEMNATION ON MANKIND

A. The Source of Wickedness

Now we need to consider the source of wickedness. This section of Romans (1:18-32) reveals four elements of the source of evil.

1. Holding Down the Truth in Unrighteousness

The first element in the source of wickedness is holding down the truth in unrighteousness (1:18). What is truth? Truth is not mere doctrine or knowledge. Truth is reality; it is solid and substantial. There is reality in this universe, and the prime reality is God Himself. To say that there is no God is to speak vanity; to declare the reality of God is to speak something solid, substantial, genuine, and true. God is real. No one can deny the reality of God or disclaim the fact that He exists, for the existence of God is a reality. However, from the very beginning, mankind did not respect the reality of God, but suppressed it. They simply did not care for this reality and refused to hold it in a proper way. They held down the truth in unrighteousness, suppressing it in an unrighteous manner. Today we behold evil on every side, and the newspapers are filled with wicked and shameful things. Why are there so many shameful things in the leading country of the world? Because so many people will not maintain the truth, but instead, wrongfully hold it down. This is the most significant aspect of the source of wickedness.

2. Disapproving of Holding God in Full Knowledge

Although mankind knew there was God, they tested and tried Him, eventually deciding not to hold Him in their full knowledge. They disapproved of holding God in their full knowledge (1:28). Many professors and

professional people do not believe in Christ. If you ask them about God, they will say, "We know there is a God, but we don't like to believe in Him." Such people disapprove of holding God in their knowledge. We must hold God in our knowledge, for it is dreadful to refuse to do this.

3. Not Glorifying God and Not Worshipping Him

In the ancient times man knew God, but did not glorify Him as God. Neither did they thank Him, worship Him, or serve Him (1:21, 25). This is another element in the source of evil. Refusing to glorify God, thank God, worship God, and serve God is a major aspect of the source of wickedness. However, if we glorify and thank Him, worship and serve Him, we will be protected from every evil. There are so many divorces and so much immorality throughout the world today because people will not glorify God and worship Him. A man who glorifies God, thanks God, worships God, and serves God, will never divorce his wife. All divorces and immorality come from one source—refusing to worship God. Never think that worshipping God is an insignificant matter and that glorifying Him is trivial. They mean a great deal to our human living. We need to thank God. We have many things for which to thank Him. Some people do not thank God until the hour of their death. Although that is very late, it is better than nothing.

We need to realize that glorifying God, thanking God, worshipping God, and serving God are extremely important. Suppose I have a bad temper, a shameful and ugly disposition. If I try to suppress it, I will never succeed. However, if I thank and praise God continually, I will find the best method of escape from my poor disposition. Whenever you are about to lose your temper, you should say, "I am going to serve God. I don't have time to lose my temper. God, I thank You that You are my God, that You are my Creator. Without You, I would have no being. I owe my very existence to You. I thank You, worship You, and serve You." If you do this, you will be freed from your disposition immediately. How much we need to worship God!

4. Exchanging God

Then mankind exchanged God (1:23, 25). It is terrible to exchange God, for God is the glory and the reality of the universe. When God is expressed, that is glory. To exchange God means to give Him up for something else. The people exchanged God for idols. God is glory; idols are vanity. God is reality; idols are a falsehood and a lie. How foolish

and awful it was for man to exchange God for idols! Most of the people have learned not to worship visible idols, although some people do practice this. Nevertheless, many people in this country have exchanged God for their self-made idols—their future, positions, degrees, and goals. This means that their future, position, degrees, and goals have become their idols. They care for these idols, not for God. Therefore, they also have exchanged God for idols.

If we consider carefully these four aspects of the source of wickedness, we will see that they constitute the origin of every kind of evil and sinfulness.

[Section 2]

B. The Result of Giving Up God

Now we need to inquire into the result of giving up God.

1. Being Given Up by God

The first result of giving up God is being given up by God. When you give up God, this forces God to give you up. If you let go of God, God will be compelled to let go of you. This is most deplorable. It is terrible to be given up by God. We must say to God, “Even if I let You go, don’t let me go. Perhaps I will be so foolish as to give You up. Lord, be merciful to me and never give me up.” We need to pray in this way, for it is awful to be given up by God. When a person has been given up by God, he will never do good things. He will not improve but only descend lower and lower.

According to Romans 1, God gives people up to three things. First is uncleanness (1:24). When a person gives up God and forces God to give him up, that person will be defiled, immediately becoming involved with uncleanness. Second, God gives up people to passions of dishonor, to shameful lusts (1:26). I do not like to mention these shameful lusts with my clean lips. Such people may become sodomites, indulging in evil passions and unrestricted affection, dishonoring their bodies with one another. Third, God gives people up to a disapproved mind (1:28). If you disapprove of holding God in your knowledge, God will allow you to have a mind that He disapproves. The mind of sinful men can never be approved by God. For example, God disapproves of a mind that is occupied with thoughts of divorce. Look at today’s sinful society: no one has a mind that can be approved by God. All have been given up by God to a

disapproved mind, for they do that which is improper. People are so foolish and shameful in their sinful ways. Their behavior is absolutely improper. Nevertheless, they continue in sin because God has given them up to a disapproved mind.

2. Having Fornication—Confusion in Order

When a person has been given up by God to uncleanness, dishonorable lusts, and to a disapproved mind, the consequence is fornication (1:24, 26, 27). Do you know the true meaning of fornication? Fornication means to violate the governing and controlling principle. This brings about confusion in order. God’s economy is one husband for one wife. This is not only God’s economy; it is His ruling and controlling principle. The people who have been given up by God will do almost anything to break this principle, violating the governing principle of one husband for one wife. The result is fornication, confusion in order. Why do people engage in this? Because of uncleanness, passions of dishonor, and their disapproved minds. When people give up God, He gives them up to fornication.

Every kind of wickedness issues out of this fornication (1:29-32). At the end of Romans 1, Paul enumerates the various kinds of evil and describes the wicked persons, such as the whisperers, backbiters, and God-haters. By this we can see that if a person gives up God, God will give him up to lusts, confusion, and every evil imaginable.

[Section 3]

II. THE CONDEMNATION OF THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS

The portion of Romans on the condemnation of the self-righteous (2:1-16), along with the condemnation on mankind, shows us the way of restriction.

A. The Way of Restriction

Now we come to the way of restriction, the way to restrict evil and wickedness. All of us, especially the young people, need to pay our full attention to this way of restriction.

1. Knowing God by His Creation

The first item in the way of restriction is knowing God by His creation (1:19-20). The invisible things of God, His eternal power and divine nature, can be apprehended by His creation. The heavens and the earth manifest the invisible things of God. I once read an article in which Einstein was asked whether or not he believed in God. He replied, "Your question is an insult to me. How could a scientist such as I not believe in God?" If you study science, it will tell you that there is a God.

Although I do not know science, I know a little about our human body. Many times, as I preached to people about God, I have asked them to consider their bodies. I told them, "Think how wonderful you are. Who made you?" All the hair on our physical bodies, both inside and outside, grows downward except for the hair in our throat, which grows upward. This is very meaningful. If the hair in our throat grew downward, we would die because phlegm could not be discharged. Who made us this way? Furthermore, consider the marvellous design of the human face. The mouth has been properly positioned. How awkward and how terrible it would be for our mouth to be placed between our eyes! Also, have you ever thought about the function of our eyebrows? They function as breakwaters, keeping the perspiration out of our eyes. Who designed us this way? Recently I had two operations on my right eye. The surgeon showed me an artificial eye, especially pointing to the lens and the retina. Immediately I saw that this was an exact replica of the best camera. No one can make a camera to match the human eye. Who made these things? Our teeth are also marvelously designed. Our front teeth, the incisors, act like two knives, cutting whatever is placed in between them. Then the tongue sends the food back to the molars which are like grinding stones, grinding the food into a digestible substance. As the molars grind, saliva is secreted to liquefy the food. This is marvelous. Who made it? We must say, "Lord, thank You. You are my Creator. You have made me in such a wonderful way."

When we behold creation in general and the human body in particular, how can we say there is no God? Even an atheistic medical doctor has to confess there is an Almighty One who created the human body. Therefore, by the things made we can apprehend the eternal power and the divine nature of God. When we see God in the beauties and wonders of His creation, we have to

worship and glorify Him. Knowing God by His creation is the first aspect in the way of restricting evil.

2. Holding the Truth in Righteousness

We must hold the reality of God in righteousness, approving of keeping God in our full knowledge (1:18, 28). We need to glorify, thank, worship, and serve Him (1:21, 25). It is very important to practice these four things. Nothing is more important in your human life than worshipping God. The greatest blessing in human life is to be trained to worship our God.

3. Obeying the Laws of Nature

Next, we need to do things according to our nature (2:14). Our original nature, as created by God, was good. Everything created by our Father, including our nature, was good originally. Of course, our nature was poisoned by the fall. There can be no doubt about this. Nevertheless, as human beings, we have a nature which God created good, and we need to act according to it. We should take heed to this nature. Although you may argue that it is not wrong to steal from others, the nature within you protests whenever you are tempted to steal. Even bank robbers will admit that, as they rob banks, their nature tells them, "Don't do this." However, they will not listen. It is the same with every evil-doer. Whenever they do something wrong, their nature disagrees. We need to observe the requirements of the nature within us.

In Romans 2:14-15 Paul says that when the nations who do not have the law practice the things of the law, they prove that the function of the law is written in their heart. The law of God has a function in our nature. In other words, our nature corresponds to God's law because our nature was made by God. God's law was given according to God's nature, for a lawgiver always enacts a law in accordance with his own being. God created man according to what He is. Therefore, the law given by God and the man created by God correspond to one another. Thus, we do not need an outward law because we have the function of the law written in our nature. We simply need to live according to our nature.

4. Listening to the Conscience

Along with our good nature, we also have a conscience (2:15). The conscience is a wonderful entity, and we should listen to it. Although medical doctors cannot locate it, no one can deny that we possess it. Our conscience protests

continually. When you argue with your parents, the conscience says, "Don't do this." If you offend your parents, your conscience will trouble you for three nights. Every husband seeking to divorce his wife will also be convicted by his conscience. All men have a conscience. This is a great matter. In the normal Christian life we must all take care of our conscience in a suitable way.

5. Caring for the Proper Reasonings

In addition to our nature and our conscience, we have the reasonings in our mind (2:15). Do not be so spiritual to say that our mind is absolutely useless. In our mind we have the good reasonings. Sometimes these reasonings accuse and condemn, and other times they excuse and justify. Often, as we set out to do a certain thing, we experience a conflict in our reasonings, with some reasonings saying, "Yes, that's right," and others saying, "No, that's wrong." We have all experienced this. We need to take care of our nature, our conscience, and the reasonings within us.

We have seen the five items in the way of restriction: knowing God by His creation, holding the truth of God in righteousness, living according to our nature, listening to our conscience, and caring for our proper reasonings. If we observe all these things, we will be restricted from every kind of evil. Although we all are saved and are living somewhere in Romans 5 through 8, we still need to know the source of evil and the way to be restricted from doing evil. Hallelujah, we have found it! We need to know God by His creation and hold His truth in righteousness. We need to act according to our nature, heed the voice of our conscience, and care for the proper reasonings within us. If we practice all these things, we will be protected.

[Section 4]

III. THE CONDEMNATION ON THE RELIGIOUS

Let us first consider the vanity of religion. Human culture is the best human invention, and within this culture the foremost item is religion. Religion is the apex of man's culture. Human culture needs religion, for without it culture is wild. If religion were eliminated from human culture, culture would remain crude. Therefore, most people respect religion.

Even with...religions there are still nothing but vanity. We do not need religion. We need a living Person. We do not need something related to God; we need God Himself. We do not need a way to

worship God; we need the living Person of God to come into us. When God gave us the Bible, He had no intention of giving us a religion. God's intention was to reveal Himself into us through the Holy Word, not to have a religious form.

A. Having an Outward Name

Now we need to consider a few matters about the vanity of religion. First, religion has an outward name (2:17). Recently, I went to the barbershop for a haircut. The barber talked about attending Christmas Mass. I used the opportunity to ask him how many people would be there. He said, "You know, this is just a religious duty. Some people attend Mass only once a year at Christmas time." Here we see an example of the vanity of religion: attending Mass once a year as a religious duty in order to keep the name of being a Catholic. If you are real in the spirit, meaning you are a genuine believer, that is wonderful. However, if you lack the reality and simply keep the outward name, it means nothing. It is vanity.

B. Knowing God in Outward Knowledge

The second aspect of the vanity of religion is knowing God in outward knowledge (2:17-18). It is vain to know God merely in external knowledge, in outward letters. We need the inward knowledge of God, the knowledge in our spirit, the knowledge that spreads into our whole being. We need such an inward and subjective knowledge of God.

C. Having the Scriptures Outwardly

The third item of the vanity of religion is having the Scriptures outwardly (3:2). Both Jews and Christians have the Bible, but the Bible, for many of them, has become a superstitious book. They hold the Bible in a superstitious way. Some Christians have told me that they are afraid to sleep at night without having a Bible nearby. If they do not place the Bible beside their pillow or on their table, they have no peace to sleep at night, thinking the Holy Bible will keep the demons away from them. This is superstition. Other Christians use the Bible to find guidance in an extraordinary way. They open the Bible, point their finger to a certain place, and follow the leading given in whatever verse they locate. It is terrible and absolutely superstitious to handle the Scriptures in this way. All of these vain practices must be torn down.

Of course, most orthodox Jews and genuine Christians do not handle the Bible in such a superstitious way, but they do not take the

Scriptures in a real and living way. They care for the teachings in letters; they do not care for Christ, the living Person. In John 5:39-40 the Lord Jesus told the Jewish religionists that they search the Scriptures for knowledge, yet will not come to Him for life. Today many Christians are in the same category. Thus, the Bible does not mean much to them in life and reality.

D. Keeping the Outward Form in Letter

Some religious people keep the outward form in letter (2:27-28). Take the example of baptism. Many dear Christians cling to their concepts about baptism by immersion in water. However, this matter of baptism has almost entirely become a mere outward form. We must avoid all outward forms. Paul told the Jews that if their circumcision is merely outward, it is unreal. The genuine circumcision is inward, in the heart and in the spirit. We may apply the same word to baptism, for, in a sense, baptism replaces circumcision. In the Old Testament was circumcision, and in the New Testament circumcision has been replaced by baptism. Since circumcision is unreal as long as it is practiced as a bare outward form, so baptism can never be real if it is simply outward.

People have argued and disputed about baptism for centuries because they cling to an outward form. Whether you are baptized in hot water or cold water, salt water or plain water, in the river or in the ocean, one time or several times, the mere outward form means nothing. We need the inward reality. We should not be attached to any form, but pay our full attention to the reality.

E. Lacking Inward Reality in Spirit

Religion is vanity because it lacks inward reality in spirit (2:29). Romans 2:29 says that whatever we are, whatever we do, and whatever we have must all be in spirit. If you are a Jew and are circumcised, your circumcision must be in spirit. If you are a Christian and are baptized, your baptism must be in spirit. Everything must be in spirit. The spirit here, of course, is the human spirit. Why must everything be done in our spirit? Because our spirit is the very place within us where God can dwell. The spirit is the site, the ground where God can act on our behalf. If you are a Christian in your spirit, this means you are a Christian with God. If you act in your spirit, this means you act with God. Without God, everything is vain; with Him, everything is reality. Therefore, we must return to our spirit. If we love other people, we must love them in our spirit. Otherwise, our love is not genuine. It is a

political love. However, if we love in our spirit, our love is with God. When you husbands tell your wives that you love them, you need to say this with your spirit. If your love is not in the spirit, it is a fraud, a political love. If I say a word to you, I must say it in my spirit. Then that word will be a word with God. Otherwise, it will be political talk. Our spirit is the organ through which God can touch us and through which we can touch God. Everything we are and everything we do must be in our spirit. This is not religion; this is reality.

F. Doing Evils as the Unreligious

Eventually, the religious people practice the same evils as the unreligious (2:21-22). It seems that there is no difference between the unreligious people and the religious people. All are the same. Although the Jews were religious, they behaved even worse than the Gentiles.

In this portion on the condemnation of the religious, we see that religion means nothing, that it is vanity. Therefore, we must stay away from religion and have nothing to do with it. We need the living Person of the Triune God.

IV. THE CONDEMNATION ON ALL THE WORLD—THE TOTALITY OF HOPELESSNESS

Now we come to the condemnation on all the world, a condemnation that unfolds the totality of hopelessness (3:9-20). The world situation is hopeless. Do not try to cure it, correct it, or improve it. Give up your hope. The world condition is incurable.

In this section of Romans, Paul portrays man as totally evil and gives several proofs that the condition of the world is hopeless. Not one person seeks God and no one understands God (3:11). All have turned away from God and have become useless (3:12). No one is righteous (3:10) and no one practices good (3:12). In other words, there is not one righteous man and not one good man. Do you know the difference between a righteous man and a good man? If I work for you for one month at a salary of five hundred dollars per month and you refuse to pay me, you are unrighteous. However, if you pay me, you are a righteous man. If I did not work for you at all and you gave me five hundred dollars as a gift when I needed it, that would be an act of grace. If you did this, you would be a good man. However, Paul says that among all the human beings in the world not one is righteous and not one is good. Do you believe this? I do. We should not think of

ourselves as exceptions. No one is righteous; no one is good. Therefore, everyone has become subject to the judgment of God (3:19). The condition of the world is totally hopeless.

Where were we before we were saved? We were all under the righteous judgment of God. Everyone of us was wrong. Not one of us sought God or understood God. Everyone of us had turned aside and had become useless. Not one of us was righteous or good. We were all under the righteous judgment of God. By this we can see the hopeless condition of the world.

[All Sections]

I appreciate Paul's writings. In the section on condemnation we see the source of wickedness, the way of restriction, the vanity of religion, and the hopeless condition of the world. Here is the conclusion of Paul's writings on condemnation: the whole world is subject to the righteous judgment of God. Where would we be and what would we be if we were not yet saved? We would be a hopeless case under God's judgment. Regardless of what we did, what we had, and what we were, we were under God's righteous judgment. We all realized our need for God's salvation. This section on condemnation paves the way for God's salvation and opens up the door for people to enter into God's salvation. Regardless of who we are, we need Christ. We need Christ with His redemption.

Paul's intention in the section on condemnation was to prepare the way for him to minister Christ into us. The ultimate goal of Paul's gospel is to minister Christ into us. When we come to Romans 8, we will find a verse that says, "Christ is in you" (8:10). This is Paul's goal. Whether we are one of mankind, one of the self-righteous, one of the religious people, or a person in the world, we need Jesus. Our need is in our spirit. We should not pay attention to outward things or outward doings, but turn ourselves to the spirit. There in the spirit we will meet Christ. In the spirit we will enjoy Christ. Paul's writing on condemnation paves the way for us to receive Christ. It opens the way for Christ to come into us.