

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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THE NEED
OF SALVATION

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In the book of Romans, 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](#)). First, 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. Although we do not want to dwell upon the subject of condemnation, there are two points related to it that are quite important. First is the source of wickedness, and second is the way of restriction.

THE CONDEMNATION ON MANKIND

The Source of Wickedness

[Romans 1:18-32](#) reveals four elements of the source of evil.

Holding Down the Truth in Unrighteousness

The first element in the source of wickedness is holding down the truth in unrighteousness (1:18). 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. However, from the very beginning, mankind did not respect the reality of God, but held down the truth in unrighteousness, suppressing it in an unrighteous manner. The newspapers are filled with wicked and shameful things because many people will not maintain the truth, but instead, wrongfully hold it down.

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 do not believe in Christ and disapprove of holding God in their knowledge.

Not Glorifying God and not Worshipping Him

In the ancient times men knew God, but did not glorify Him as God. Neither did they thank Him, worship Him, or serve Him (1:21, 25). 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. 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 for many things.

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, this will be the best method of escape from my poor disposition. How much we need to worship God!

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! Many have exchanged God for their self-made idols—their future, positions, degrees, and goals. They care for these idols, not for God.

These four aspects of the source of wickedness constitute the origin of every kind of evil and sinfulness.

The Result of Giving Up God

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. It is terrible 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 will 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). 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. 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. People are 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.

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.

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.

The Way of Restriction

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.

Many times, as I preached to people about God, I have asked them to consider their bodies. 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 marvelous design of the human face. 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. 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?

When we behold creation in general and the human body in particular, how can we say there is no God? 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.

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). Nothing is more important in your human life than worshipping God. I do not want to see my second or third generation become wealthy and yet not worship God. The greatest blessing in human life is to be trained to worship our God.

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. Nevertheless, as human beings, we have a nature which God created good, and we need to act according to it. Although you may argue that it is not wrong to steal from others, the nature within you protests whenever you are tempted to steal. It is the same with every evildoer. 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. 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. Therefore, the law given by God and the man created by God correspond to one another. 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.

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. 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. In the normal Christian life we must all take care of our conscience in a suitable way.

Caring for the Proper Reasonings

In addition to our nature and our conscience, we have the reasonings in our mind (2:15). 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 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.

THE CONDEMNATION ON THE RELIGIOUS— THE VANITY OF RELIGION

Human culture is the best human invention, and within this culture the foremost item is religion. Human culture needs religion, for without it culture is wild. If religion were eliminated from human culture, culture would remain crude.

Among the human race the two best religions are Judaism and Christianity. These are the typical religions. They are the genuine, sound, and fundamental religions. Both proceeded out of the same source, the divine revelation in the Bible. Along with these two religions, we have Islam, a counterfeit of Judaism. The Koran, the sacred book of the Moslems, is actually an imitation of the Old Testament.

Strictly speaking, besides Judaism, Christianity, and the counterfeit religion of Islam, there are no other religions. Buddhism is not a religion; it is nonsense. A religion teaches people to worship

God, but in Buddhism there is no God at all. The teachings of Confucius are nonreligious; they are altogether ethical teachings, having nothing to do with God. We should not consider Confucianism as a religion.

Even with the two genuine religions there is 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. However, the ancient Jews formed a religion out of the Old Testament, and Christianity has formed an even stronger religion using the Old Testament and the New. The stronger a religion is, the more vanity it contains.

I do not say that Christ is vanity and I do not say that Christians are vanity, but I assert strongly that Christianity is vanity. The church is precious, but if you add "anity" to the church it becomes vanity. We want Christ, Christians, and the church, but we do not want any "anity." We must beware of religion; religion is vanity.

Having an Outward Name

Religion has an outward name (2:17). Recently, I went to the barber shop for a haircut. The barber talked about attending Christmas Mass. 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. What kind of believer is this? A believer with a mere outward name. If you lack the reality and simply keep the outward name, it means nothing. It is vanity.

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 in our spirit that spreads into our whole being. We need such an inward and subjective knowledge of God.

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 many of them hold the Bible in a superstitious way. Some Christians have told me that if they do not place the Bible beside their pillow or on their table, they have no peace to sleep at night. They think 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.

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 searched the Scriptures for knowledge, yet would not come to Him for life. Today many Christians are in the same category. The Bible does not mean much to them in life and reality.

Keeping the Outward Form in Letter

Some religious people keep the outward form

in letter (2:27-28). I myself am strongly in favor of baptism by immersion according to the Scriptures, and I would never baptize people by sprinkling them. However, this matter of baptism has become almost entirely a mere outward form. Paul told the Jews that genuine circumcision is inward, in the heart and in the spirit. We may apply the same word to baptism, for, in a sense, baptism in the New Testament replaces circumcision. 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. I am sorry to say that nearly all baptisms have degraded into an outward form. We need the inward reality. We should not be attached to any form, but pay our full attention to the reality.

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. However, if we love in our spirit, our love is with God. If I say a word to you, I must say it in my spirit. Then that word will be a word with God. 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.

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 is vanity. We must stay away from religion and have nothing to do with it. We need the living Person of the Triune God.

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). 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. Therefore, everyone has become subject to the judgment of God (3:19). The condition of the world is totally hopeless.

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. This section on condemnation paves the way for God's salvation and opens the door for people to enter into God's salvation. Regardless of who we are, 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. 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.

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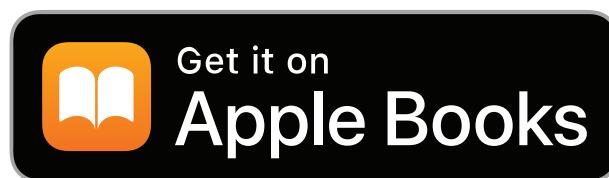
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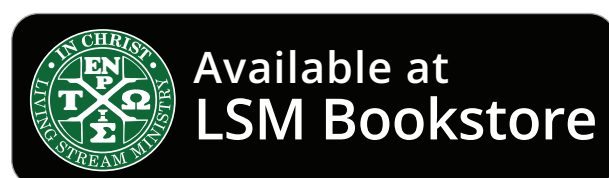
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