

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: ROMANS: God's Power for Salvation

TITLE: Under Sin

SCRIPTURE: Romans 3:9-20

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The book of Romans is a masterfully written exposition of the gospel of God. Without a doubt, it is the foundation of authentic Christianity and the most articulate, systematic understanding of our faith found in the Bible. Countless lives have been changed by the truth found in this ancient letter, and it continues to change lives today. Interestingly enough, Romans was written to Christians. So, while the good news found in Romans can certainly bring people to faith in Jesus, the actual focus is on how the gospel helps Christians think rightly about God, life, faith, and Christian community. If you want to grow to know God more personal and intimate way, this letter is for you!

Often times, some words that have to do with Christianity get so overused that they tend to lose their meaning. Take the word "amen" for example, or the phrase "traveling mercies" maybe you've heard in a prayer. This happens without us realizing it. Maybe the most frightening instance of this is with the word "sin".

As Francis Spufford says, "Sin is that well-known contemporary brand name for ice cream. And chocolate truffles. And cocktails." He writes that today sin today usually "refers to the pleasurable consumption of something. It basically means 'indulgence.'" The problem is, this isn't at all what the Bible means when it talks about sin.

So, in Scripture, what is sin? Is it a list of DOs and DON'Ts? Is it more about attitude or action? What's the best way to understand and respond to the Bible's teaching on sin?

In Romans 3:9-20, Paul begins and ends this section by using the word sin in verse 9 and in verse 20. He says that both Jew and Greek are "under sin" (3:9). This is a key phrase. This language is about who your master is, who you serve, and who you report to, and Paul's teaching is that we all take commands from sin as our COO (chief operating officer). Sin has mastery over us somehow, or, put simply...

SIN IS WHAT WE SERVE AND WHAT WE DO THAT MAKES US LESS AND LESS TRULY HUMAN.

As David says in Psalm 51, sin is primarily against God. Just like this put all Jews and Gentiles on level ground before God, this means that, apart from the gospel, we're in the same boat as terrorists and felons and those that we think we're better than.

Just like Paul begins and ends this text with "*sin language*", he does the same with "*courtroom language*". In verse 9 there is a charge. In verse 19, the whole world is accountable. And in verse 20, no one can be justified before God on their own. In the divine courtroom, we are all guilty.

ENTER JESUS.

Time and time again in the New Testament, it says that Jesus came to deal with the sin problem (Matthew 1:21, John 1:29, Romans 6:23, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 1:4, Colossians 1:14, 1 Peter 2:24, Revelation 1:5-6, and more). And now, in the face of all the evidence mounted against us, we can be declared "*not guilty*" because of what he's done in the cross and in the resurrection. Jesus came to make sin an out-of-work master, to undo its power. When we trust him, he becomes our master and Lord, and he changes our actions and lives from within, through his spirit who makes a home in our hearts, and when we serve and obey Jesus, we become more and more truly human.

For Discussion ...

1. Why is it such a struggle to understand our sin as primarily against God?
2. Name a time in your life when you can very clearly remember God giving you victory over a certain sin or temptation.
3. Think more about how "sin makes us less and less truly human." What might that entail?
4. In your own words, how does the gospel address the sin-problem?
5. What naturally stood out to you the most from this sermon?
6. Personally, how should ongoing repentance and belief be taking shape in your life right now?