

## The Human Condition

**Memory Text:** “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)

**Setting The Stage:** I read about a new missionary who was assigned a car that wouldn't start without a push. After pondering his problem, he devised a plan. He went to the school near his home, got permission to take some children out of class, and had them push his car off. As he made his rounds, he would either park on a hill or leave the engine running. He used this ingenious procedure for two years.

Ill health forced the missionary and his family to leave, and a new missionary came to that station. When the leaving missionary proudly began to explain his arrangement for getting the car started, the new missionary began looking under the hood. Before the explanation was complete, the new missionary interrupted, and told the leaving missionary he thought he knew what the problem was. He gave a particular cable a twist, stepped into the car, pushed the switch, and to the leaving missionaries astonishment, the engine roared to life. For two years needless trouble had become routine. The power was there all the time. Only a loose connection kept the missionary from putting that power to work.

J.B. Phillips paraphrases Ephesians 1:19: "How tremendous is the power available to us who believe in God." And that power comes, according to the Bible, through Jesus Christ. **What is this power? Why is it needed? Can it be gotten anywhere else other through Jesus?** These questions and more we'll tackle this morning.

### Sunday – The Power Of God

Romans 1:16, 17

**Romans 1:16, 17:** “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ “

*“Not ashamed.”* The Jews considered Paul a defector from their faith. The Gentiles had persecuted him. He had been driven from city to city, and according to his own words, he was considered “the filth of the world.” (1 Cor. 4:13) He knew that the preaching of the cross was foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews. But Paul was convinced of the truth of the gospel. He was not only not ashamed of it, but he gloried in what most people thought was offensive.

*“The power of God.”* The gospel (good news) is the way in which God exerts His power for the salvation of mankind. Wherever the gospel finds believing hearts it is a divine power that removes all obstacles standing in the way of that person's

redemption. Paul isn't writing about fairy tales. He knew the power of the gospel for himself and he was a witness to its power in the lives of others.

*"That believes."* How many people is the gospel for? Everyone (1 Tim. 2:4 – "Who desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth")! But it is the power of God unto salvation only to those who believe, or who willingly accept it. And that willing acceptance is faith.

*"The righteousness of God."* We can understand this phrase to be referring to God's own righteousness, or to the righteousness that comes from God, or to the righteousness that is acceptable to God, or to God's way of restoring man to righteousness. Keep in mind that this is a summary statement of his letter to the Romans. To see this phrase in a general, comprehensive sense is perfectly acceptable. After all, we're dealing here with our recovery from sin, and God's plan is to restore us entirely. He doesn't do things in halves. Half-baked bread doesn't taste very good, just like half-cooked oatmeal doesn't. When God does something, and proposes as such, He takes it all the way! The gospel reveals the kind of righteousness that comes from God and how it may be received by humanity. *"The just shall live by faith."* Taken from Hab. 2:4, to mean, "he who by faith is righteous shall live," or, "a just man won't live by reliance on his own works and merit but by confidence and faith in God."

This is truly good news. Salvation is offered by God, and we receive it by faith. **Can we be assured that salvation is truly ours whether we feel like it is or not?** Yes, if we believe God's promise to save us and allow that faith to cooperate with divine power to experience God's righteousness in our lives, then we can know for sure and trust what God has started He will also bring to completion.

## Monday – All Have Sinned

Romans 1:18, 19, 24, 26; 3:10-18, 23

**But will anyone of us really appreciate God's gift of righteousness, His plan of salvation, the power of the gospel, if we think our own goodness is sufficient to bring us any eternal reward?** Will a person sense their need of a doctor if they think they're healthy? Will a person seek any help at all if they believe nothing is wrong with them or they don't need to grow? Hardly. What we find in the scriptures is that humanity doesn't need a mere upgrade in righteousness (improvement); we need to be completely renewed in righteousness (restoration).

**What reason did Paul give as to why the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel?** **Romans 1:18, 19, 24, 26.** The reason is because all are unrighteous and have therefore exposed themselves to the wrath of God.

**And what is the wrath of God?** Essentially, it's divine displeasure against sin, resulting ultimately in the abandonment of mankind to the judgment of death. But

the wrath of God shouldn't be compared to our wrath. We often lose control, lack judgment, and can be very mean, unfair, and unreasonable. God is love, and while He hates sin and what it does to humanity, He loves the sinner. However, God doesn't force His love upon those who are unwilling to receive His mercy. Therefore, God's wrath is seen in His withdrawal of His presence and life-giving power from those who choose to remain in sin and thus share in its inevitable consequences.

**Romans 3:23:** "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Who many are all? All is all. And according to Paul, all of humanity suffers need, is destitute, and is in want of righteousness. The prognosis isn't good. **What happened to us?**

October 7, 1969, the Montreal, Canada police force went on strike. Because of what resulted, the day has been called Black Tuesday. A burglar and policeman were slain. Forty-nine people were wounded or injured in rioting. Nine bank holdups were committed, along with 17 robberies at gunpoint.

Usually disciplined, peaceful citizens joined the ruffraff and went wild, smashing some 1,000 plate glass windows in a stretch of 21 business blocks in the heart of the city, hauling away stereo units, radios, TV's and clothes wear. While looters stripped windows of valuable merchandise, professional burglars entered stores by doors and made off with truckloads of goods. A smartly dressed man scampered down a street with a fur coat over each arm with no police around...anarchy took over.

But Black Tuesday happens far too often and may occur on a Monday or a Thursday. Violent protests, gang/drug related shootings, mass shootings, terrorism. These things are sadly a part of every day life.

Syria has received a lot of attention over the past year where internal strife is leaving thousands homeless, family-less...Man's inhumanity to man. Countless other stories could be told, perhaps even yours. Sibling rivalry, unfairness in your family as you grew up, abuse, mistreatment at work, or the person who cursed at you all because you didn't accelerate fast enough after the light turned green. It was Shakespeare, in Hamlet, that wrote, "Man delights me not..." Madame De Sevigne attributed, "The more I know men, the more I like my dog."

And is it any wonder... Humanity is far removed from God's original intention. And Paul urges us to recognize the vital fact that all the evidence of experience and history clearly proves that fallen man, with his depraved nature, is wholly incapable of establishing an acceptable righteousness. **Romans 3:10-18.**

*"Man was originally endowed with noble powers and a well-balanced mind. He was perfect in his being, and in harmony with God. His thoughts were pure, his aims holy. But through disobedience, his powers were perverted, and selfishness took the place of*

*love. His nature became so weakened through transgression that it was impossible for him, in his own strength, to resist the power of evil. He was made captive by Satan, and would have remained so forever had not God specially interposed.” (Steps To Christ, p. 17)*

## **Tuesday – Progress?**

Romans 1:22-32

**Romans 1:22-32.** As late as the early part of the 20th C, it was confidently predicted by many philosophers and educators that universal education could solve the major social problems of the world such as poverty, crime and insanity. It had been observed that these social ills seemed to find expression much more in the poorly educated classes than in the middle and upper classes.

Perhaps nothing did more to stimulate the thrust for universal education than the hope that these evils would be eliminated as man continued his upward “evolutionary” climb. Unfortunately, where now there is virtually universal education, there has been an intensification of these social problems.

The Bible indicates that man’s innate moral tendencies lead to the establishment of a character and behavior that is self-centered and sinful. This view of man doesn’t deny the advantage of a good environment, but it can’t assume that a good environment is all that is needed to maintain the good life, for then there could have been no possibility for the fall of Adam and Eve, since they had been placed in a perfect environment.

The reality is that self-centeredness runs through our veins and we don’t know it. Like someone once asked, “Does a fish feel wet?” We are addicted to ourselves and we cannot kick the habit unless we get help.

The human condition is like a man who has fallen down into a pit and can’t get out. Someone comes along to help, and the man can choose to respond several different ways: 1) “I didn’t ask to be down here...” 2) “If you knew I was down here then you must have had something to do with this...” 3) I’ll accept your help, but I’ll pull myself up...” Or we can respond by saying, “I can’t get out. I need your help. Please help me.” And God will gladly lift you out of the pit of sin and ruin.

## **Wednesday – What Jews & Gentiles Share In Common**

Romans 2:1-3; 17-24

**Romans 2:1-3, 17-24** (cp. 3:9). “In Romans 1, Paul was dealing specifically with the sins of the Gentiles, the pagans, those who had lost sight of God a long time ago and, thus, had fallen into the most degrading of practices. But he wasn’t going to let his own people, his own countrymen, off the hook either. Despite all the advantages that they had been given (Rom. 3:1, 2), they, too, were sinners, condemned by God’s law, and in need of the saving grace of Christ. In that sense—in the sense of being

sinner, of having violated God's law, and of needing divine grace for salvation— Jews and Gentiles were the same.”

What message should all of us take from this warning? “Often it's so easy to see and point out the sins of others. How often, though, are we guilty of the same kinds of things – or even worse? The problem is that we tend to turn a blind eye on ourselves, or we make ourselves feel better by looking at just how bad others are in contrast to ourselves.” Christians can be quick to condemn an external act or lifestyle, yet be guilty of jealousy, gossip, bitterness, pride, etc.

The point isn't that Christians should become accepting of those practices the Bible condemns because they themselves haven't got their spiritual act together. The point is to be certain that we remove the beam from our eyes so we can adequately help someone with the speck in theirs.

## **Thursday – The Gospel & Repentance**

Romans 2:4-10

### **Romans 2:4-10. What is the appropriate response to our condition?**

1. A person needs to acknowledge that they are not fine.
2. A person needs to recognize the goodness of God.
3. Beholding this goodness will lead to repentance (And we should notice that God's goodness leads, not forces, sinners to repentance. God uses no coercion. He is infinitely patient and seeks to draw all people by His love. A forced repentance would destroy the whole purpose of repentance, wouldn't it?)
4. And lastly, we need to remember that putting off repentance is a dangerous thing to do. We are storing up wrath for ourselves (not, God is storing up wrath), making it harder for God to save us.

*“It is no arbitrary decree on the part of God that excludes the wicked from heaven; they are shut out by their own unfitness for its companionship.” (Steps To Christ, p. 17)*

When a person responds by faith to God's offer of salvation and they receive the righteousness of God, what a tremendous change is wrought in that person. And that experience is for each of us. Whether we have been Christians for 10 days or 10 years, we need Christ, through the Holy Spirit, to renew our hearts and minds each and every day.

What we have learned is that we are not safe one moment without Christ. But we have also learned that when the power of the gospel is accepted into the life by faith it works a mighty change in us to restore us. I want that experience each day, how about you? And what people who suffer with guilt and worry and lack hope need today is a revelation in the lives of God's children of the power of the gospel, so that spiritual interest might be awakened and they might be directed to the only One who can bring peace with God, freedom from worry, and a hope filled life.