

We Are No Better Than They: Christ Our Only Righteousness

Romans 3:9–18

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

¹⁰As it is written:

- “There is none righteous, no, not one;*
- ¹¹*There is none who understands;*
There is none who seeks after God.
- ¹²*They have all turned aside;*
They have together become unprofitable;
There is none who does good, no, not one.”
- ¹³*“Their throat is an open tomb;*
With their tongues they have practiced deceit”;
“The poison of asps is under their lips”;
- ¹⁴*“Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.”*
- ¹⁵*“Their feet are swift to shed blood;*
- ¹⁶*Destruction and misery are in their ways;*
- ¹⁷*And the way of peace they have not known.”*
- ¹⁸*“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”*

Main idea: Humility is essential to the Christian mindset, because it recognizes that no good can come from us except that which is from Christ.

Introduction: The spiritual horrors of v5, v7, v8. But it is considering these very horrors that the apostle now turns around and says “we are not at all better” than they are. Any righteous thoughts, words, or deeds that come out of us have not come from us but from Christ.

1. No righteous thoughts apart from Christ (v10–12; cf. Ps 14:1–3, 53:1–3)

- a. No righteousness apart from the power of God to save, and the righteousness of God that is revealed, in the gospel (v10). This is why Paul and the Romans still need it!
- b. No good theology except that which God gives/produces in us (v11a).
- c. No good desires/intentions, except those which are from God (v11b). Even now, the only true seeking of Him that we have is what comes from Him!
- d. No repentance, except that which is from God (v12a).
- e. No usefulness, except that which is from God (v12b).
- f. No help, except that which is from God (v12c).

2. No righteous words apart from Christ (v13–14; cf. Ps 5:9; 140:3; 10:7)

- a. No life from our words (v13a).
- b. No formula that can fix this problem (v13b).
- c. No healing or help from our words (v13c).
- d. No genuine honoring of God from our worship (v14; cf. Ja 3:8–12)

3. No righteous deeds apart from Christ (v15–18; cf. Isa 59:7–8; Ps 36:1)

- a. Our steps are bad (v15)
- b. Because our paths are bad (v16–17)
- c. Because our hearts are bad (v18)

Conclusion: The more we feel the ongoing reality of our remaining sin, the more encouraged we ought to be to look to Christ for that righteousness that is from faith and for faith. For your righteous standing before God, look only to what Christ has thought, what Christ has spoken, what Christ has done. And as you seek to think, speak, and act according to the righteous requirement of the law, know that this comes only from Christ’s life in you. So in every stumbling you may yet have hope, and for any walking and growing you must be grateful.