



Sharing Christ – Part 5
Romans 3:9-20
GCSP – 06/27/2009

Donald Grey Barnhouse, who pastored Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia from 1927 to 1960, relates the following story:

A man who lived near the church would always stop Pastor Barnhouse every time he tried to share the gospel with him. He would simply say that he belonged to a lodge, the chief function of which was to do good works in the community. He said he was active in the lodge and lived up to its high moral standards. If he ever met God he felt he would be all right on that basis.

Years went by and he continued to resist all attempts Barnhouse made to explain the gospel to him.

One day Barnhouse received word that the man was in the hospital on his deathbed and was not expected to live through the day. A member of his lodge was present in the hospital on "death watch" as they made sure that no one died alone.

As Barnhouse entered the hospital room he knew the situation was desperate and decided upon a bold course of action. He sat down by the man's bed and asked the following: "You don't mind if I stay here for a few moments and watch you, do you? I have often wondered what it would be like to watch a person die without Jesus Christ. I have known you for many years and you have always said that you do not need Jesus Christ and that your lodge associations were enough if and when you met God. I would like to observe a person end his life with those beliefs and see what it is like."

The man looked up at Barnhouse and replied, "You wouldn't mock a dying man would you?"

Barnhouse then said, "You are going to appear before God in a very short while. Suppose He asks you what right you have to enter His heaven? What will you say?"

The man looked back in agonized silence with great tears falling from his frightened eyes. Then while he listened attentively, Barnhouse told him how he could approach God through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. The man spoke about how his mother had taught him these things as a child but he had abandoned them long ago. But now in his final moments he repented of his sins and confessed Jesus as his Lord and Savior. He then asked if Pastor Barnhouse would call his family members and tell them his newfound testimony, and if he would preach this message at his funeral, which took place a few days later.

Absolutely no one will be justified by their own works of righteousness, however great they may be. Your record will not save you. It is your record that will condemn you.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Romans**.

Romans 3:9-20

Our focus tonight will be primarily on **verses 18-20** but I wanted to give you the entire section so you might gain some perspective. The passage opens with a few verses that most Christians are familiar with: **"There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one."**

For all who believe their good works will save them on Judgment Day, God couldn't be clearer that they are instead, believing in a lie. **Galatians 2:16** repeats the beginning of **verse 20** by saying, **"...by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified."**

No one can accumulate enough good works to get them to heaven. Even someone like Mother Teresa, who sacrificed her whole life doing good works, could not earn her way into heaven, by her good works. I don't know the testimony of Mother Teresa but if she died apart from Jesus Christ being the Lord of her life, then all of her good works were done in vain in regards to her eternal destiny. I hope she had the truth and that she genuinely repented of her sins and trusted in Jesus, because the Bible is clear that there is no other way to heaven. No amount of good works, no amount of prayers said on her behalf, and nothing else besides genuine repentance and genuine trust and genuine faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ will earn heaven.

The Virgin Mary can't save her, the "saints" can't save her, and the Pope can't save her. Salvation comes by grace alone through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ, period, end of story.

Multitudes of "good" people will fill the pits of hell because they missed the Way the Truth and Life; and they missed the fact that no one comes to the Father but by Jesus. **"There is none righteous, not even one...there is none who does good, there is not even one."**

Martyn Lloyd-Jones said this regarding **Romans 3:10-17**: *"Let me put it plainly. If you do not accept this, and if you do not accept this description of yourself apart from the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, then there is no need to argue about it, you are just not a Christian. If you resent all of this you are not a Christian, you are not convinced and convicted of sin, and you are not a believer in Christ, though you may have thought you were. If you in any way object to this, you are automatically putting yourself outside the kingdom of God and the Christian faith. This description of man in sin is the simple truth, the horrible truth."*

But what's the real problem? Why do so many genuinely believe that their life is good enough to earn heaven? I challenge you to ask the next ten unbelievers you meet if they think they are a good person – I'm serious! Ask the next ten people you meet at the grocery store or at the mall or at a restaurant, "Would you think that you are a good person?" I will be shocked if 9 out of 10 or all 10 do not say, "Yes."

And here is the reason why:

v. 18

“There is no fear of God before their eyes.” No one takes the time to think from the perspective that it is the righteous and holy God of the universe that they will bow down before. No one compares their righteousness to God’s holy standard but instead they compare themselves to other sinners. If we were to judge ourselves by human standards I bet each one of you could pick out at least ten people in this room that you think you would compare favorably to, right? There has to be at least ten people in here that you think you are better than, and more righteous than.

There is no fear of God before their eyes. And all too often there is no fear of God before our eyes; and by “our eyes” I mean those who are genuinely saved. How else can you explain the way most Christians gloss over their sin? How else can we go on justifying our sins? How else do you explain how everyone points to somebody else or to something else to blame when their life is not what they think it should be? There is no fear of God before our eyes.

This might be more apparent to me than to some of you. Almost invariably when I am in a marriage counseling situation, both parties feel as if the other person is the primary problem. Even when some will admit to me that they have had a part in the situation, I can see it in their eyes and hear it in their voice that they think their part in the problem is smaller than the other person’s part. The blame game is in full operation when a marriage is on the rocks, which is why I make every attempt to have each person look at their own issues and what the Bible says about them before I will even address the problems they come to me with.

I refuse to counsel couples who do not commit to going through a six-session Bible study with me. It’s a waste of my time and a waste of their time. Because if there is no submission to the principles of God’s Word, then there is no fear of God, and thus there is no desire to truly do what is right. And without that desire there is no use investing anybody’s time into finding a solution to the problems.

This truth applies to any problem we face today. If there is no fear of God you simply do not have the ability to find the solution.

Hold your place in **Romans** and turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Hebrews**.

Hebrews 12:28-29

Is your attitude toward God one of reverence and awe? Can you honestly say that your life reflects that kind of fear of the Lord? Is God just your buddy or is He your sovereign Lord of whom you bow down to? Are you in an attitude of awe and wonder every time you open His Word or is your attitude like it is when cracking open any other book in your library? Does worship overflow from your heart and lips spontaneously upon reflecting on His holiness, or do you even take the time out of your schedule to give Him a second thought each day?

God deserves our worship and our praise. God deserves to be adored by us. He deserves our absolute reverence and awe. Our lives should be marked by humble obedience and complete surrender to His authority and sovereignty. There should be an undeniable attitude of reverence in your life. Any other Christian should be able to point at you and say, “Now there is a man or woman who fears the Lord.” It should be so

obvious that believers and unbelievers alike will wonder what you have and how they can get it.

The fear of the Lord is the solution to all of your issues and problems, because the fear of the Lord will lead you into a lifetime of obedience and thus blessing from on high.

But let's turn back to the unbeliever for a while. Secular counseling, secular psychology, and secular psychiatry have absolutely no hope of affecting lasting change in a person's life. The best they can do is offer a temporary fix that will only last as long as the person can cover over their sins. But apart from a fear of the Lord there is no solution.

And all we have to do is look around us to see that the world has absolutely no fear of God. I cringe when I pass a car that has a blasphemous bumper sticker on it. I saw one the other day that made fun of the saying, "God is my co-pilot" by proclaiming that "Dog is my co-pilot." Now God had better be your pilot not just your co-pilot, but you understand the irreverence implied by the bumper sticker I saw.

I immediately prayed for the person in that car as I passed and I marveled at the patience and long-suffering of our Lord.

There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Turn with me in your Bibles back to **Romans 3**.

v. 19

When anyone compares themselves to other people, they can go on and on about their innocence or how they were unjustly accused. If they are brought before a judge and jury and convicted of a crime, they will appeal the verdict and appeal the verdict until they run out of options. And even after they have run the full course of appeals the law of the land allows and find themselves imprisoned, they still don't shut up. Very few who find themselves in prison believe they belong there, or at the very least don't believe they belong there for as long as their sentence says.

And from a human standpoint, sometimes the punishment doesn't fit the crime. Sometimes juries mess up because they are sinners just the same. Sometimes judges can be bribed and sometimes judges make mistakes. And to top it all off, human law is imperfect. There are loopholes in the law and there are injustices in the law. Sometimes a murderer will get a suspended sentence and sometimes a petty thief will get 20 years. So sometimes there are legitimate reasons to keep flapping your lips; although more often than not there is no valid reason.

That's the court of man.

The court of God is an entirely different court. Before God every mouth will be silenced. Every sinner who stands before the God of the universe on Judgment Day will have absolutely nothing to say. I know many who defy God during this life believe they will have plenty to say to Him if and when they get the opportunity, but beloved, they will be silent. Their mouths will be stopped. The realization of their sinfulness will weigh so

heavily upon them that they will be speechless. And they will be speechless because they will know beyond all doubt that God's judgment is just and right.

On the many occasions when Jesus is confronted by the Pharisees as recorded in the gospel accounts, it doesn't take long before their mouths are stopped. Jesus always brought their sinfulness to the surface and they were left with only two options: Repent and believe, or shut up and walk away; and unfortunately the vast majority of Pharisees and the vast majority of people today choose to shut up and walk away.

And herein lies a great application point for all who are genuinely saved. When you share the gospel message of Jesus Christ properly, when you present the truth of God's Word the way Jesus did, you will experience the same results; either they will repent and believe or they will shut up and walk away. If you confront them with the Law of God their mouths will be stopped because their conscience will be convicted by the sinfulness of their sin.

Turn over a few pages to **Romans 7**.

Romans 7:12-13

Paul is simply saying that God's Law is good because it showed him how utterly sinful his sin was. And this is the exact reason the message being preached in so many churches today is not producing genuine conversions. The utter sinfulness of sin is not being exposed. The convicting power of God's Law is being glossed over or eliminated altogether. And without the realization of knowing how utterly sinful your sin is you will not understand or see the need for repentance, and as I have proved to you over and over again in this series of sermons apart from genuine repentance there is no genuine salvation.

Turn back again to **Romans 3**. We have talked about how the mouths of unbelievers will be stopped by the Law of God because of how guilty they will stand when confronted with their sinfulness, but the same is true for believers as well.

The Bible has many examples of those we call heroes of the faith, who have caught just a glimpse of God's glory, and on every occasion nary a one experiences a loosening of the tongue, but instead they experience a feeling of utter worthlessness and silence.

After God appeared to Job, even though Job spent several days complaining, and justifying himself, and asking questions to his companions, Job said this: "**Behold I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth. Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; even twice, and I will add no more**" (**Job 40:4-5**). Job was silenced by the holiness and righteousness of God, and even though God called Job an upright man on several occasions, Job's sinfulness stopped his mouth.

Isaiah, upon being in the presence of God, said, "**Woe is me for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips...**" (**Isaiah 6:5**). Isaiah realized that anything he could say was unworthy, unclean, and sinful.

When the prophet Habakkuk had a revelation of God he proclaimed, "**I heard and my inward parts trembled, at the sound my lips quivered. Decay entered my bones, and in my place I tremble...**" (**Habakkuk 3:16**). His lips quivered but did not speak.

Even John the beloved disciple fell at the feet of Christ as if he were a dead man, according to **Revelation 1:17**.

I assert that if any words are spoken at all at the Great White Throne Judgment, they will be words of acknowledgment and words of confirmation that they deserve condemnation. But even if they speak at all their voices will fade forever away as they are cast into the Lake of Fire; into outer darkness. Their cries will no longer be heard.

v. 20

Do you know the primary reason people cannot be justified by their good works? Because contrary to what they think, they are not pursuing God and they are not trying to please Him. Every time we succeed in obeying God's Law we also at the same time see how often we disobey God's Law. God's Word continually points out just how sinful we are. God's Word reveals our sin all the time.

God's Word is a mirror says James; a mirror that opens our eyes to all the sin that is hanging all over us (**James 1:22-25**). And when the Word of God reveals the utter sinfulness of our sin we too have two options. We can repent and believe what we read or we can shut up and walk away. And James says when we choose to walk away we will conveniently forget about the sin that is hanging all over us; we will be suppressing the truth and exchanging the truth for a lie (**Romans 1:25**). We will be saying that we do not want to serve a God that is holy and omniscient and sovereign, and we will then create a god of our own choosing to temporarily soothe our guilty and sinful consciences.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Hebrews** again.

Hebrews 4:12-13

The writer of Hebrews tells us God's Word cuts through all of the baloney we cover ourselves with. God's Word isn't fooled by our self-righteousness. God's Word sees through all the masks we wear. God's Word strips us of any and everything that we lean on or claim that doesn't measure up to the holiness of the Lord.

And notice the wording between these two verses. It begins in **verse 12** by saying "**the Word of God**" and then it completes the thought by saying "**all things are open and laid bare to** (His eyes)" in **verse 13**. The point is that God and God's Word are one and the same.

I hear people all the time speaking about how they long to experience God in their life. Then get busy experiencing Him. Open the Book! Read the Book! Study the Book! Meditate on the Book! Memorize the Book! And above all, obey the Book!

If you truly desire to have a proper fear of the Lord; if you truly desire to be holy before Him; if you truly desire to have a passion for the things that God has a passion for, then

you must be immersed in His Word. You must saturate your life with His Word. You must be about the business of purposefully and consistently looking to His Word for your every decision in this life.

Then and only then will you have the mind of Christ. Then and only then will you have a passion for lost souls. Then and only then will you break out of your comfort zone and seek the face of God.

Beloved, the overwhelming majority of Christians are asleep in the light. We are so comfortable with our existence and so content with our Christianity and our fellowship and our circle of Christian friends. Our lips are flapping because we are not confronting ourselves with the Law of God.

Open the Book. Look in the mirror of God's Word. Let the sharp sword of God's Word dig deep into your soul to cut away all that does not measure up to God's holy standard.

Let's pray.