

**The Book of Romans  
Not Even One! (Part 3)**

Romans 3:9-20

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Well, I invite you to turn with me again to Romans 3. In Romans 3 Paul comes to the end of his universal indictment of mankind. He provides us here with a, sort of, sweeping summary of mankind's universal and total depravity. He paints really, a very disturbing portrait of every one of us apart from Christ, every man and every woman. His goal here is to show that mankind as a whole, and each of us individually, desperately needs the gospel. We need the good news that God forgives sins, because of the life and the death of His Son, for those who will repent and believe.

Let me read it for you again, Romans 3, beginning in verse 9,

What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written,

“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.”  
“THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE,  
WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING,”  
“THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS”;  
“WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS”;  
“THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,  
DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,  
AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN.”  
“THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.”

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

This passage, as I pointed out to you, is one of the most important in all of the Bible because it describes, and it proves from the Scripture, from the Hebrew Old Testament, the moral corruption that theologians call depravity. We learn from this passage that human depravity affects the entire race; it is universal in its scope. And, it affects every part of every person who is a part of the human race, meaning it is total in its effect on the human soul.

Now, we began to study this paragraph by considering the formal indictment of man's depravity. Paul begins in verse 9 with this formal indictment. Notice what he writes, "What then? Are we," that is, "Are we Christians better than, by nature, than everyone else, than all the people that I've indicted so far in this letter?" He says, verse 9, "Not at all; for we've already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin." It is complete and universal. Here, in Paul's own summary of what he's written so far in his letter to the Romans, he says, what I have done so far is to make a formal indictment that all humanity is legally guilty, are all under sin. That is, all people live in the realm of sin, are involved in the practice of sin, are under the power of sin, bear the legal guilt of sin, and will someday face the penalty for sin.

Now, last time we studied Romans together we began to examine the second part of this paragraph and what is really the heart of Paul's argument. Having seen the formal indictment, we moved on to look at the biblical evidence for man's depravity. This is in verses 10 to 18. Paul here introduces biblical proof that all men are under sin, as he said in his indictment. Notice verse 10, "as it is written." He's going to quote from the Old Testament. In fact, verses 10 through 18 consist entirely of quotes from the Hebrew Old Testament, from seven different Old Testament passages. And Paul intentionally chose passages from the Old Testament, some of which relate to Jews and some of which relate to Gentiles, and by doing that he proves the universal nature of depravity from the Scripture. And he paints an awful portrait of every sinner.

So understand then that these verses we've just read together describe every single human being as he or she is born into this world unless God has subsequently changed their heart through the gospel. This is a description of every fallen human being who has not come to faith in Jesus Christ. Or I could put it this way, it is a portrait from God's perspective of you if you have not repented of your sins and put your faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Now Paul begins the biblical evidence here with a summary, a sort of summary statement of depravity. Notice verse 10, "As it is written, 'THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE.'" That is an overarching summation of the human condition. The Greek word translated righteous means simply to conform to a standard. Paul is saying here that apart from justifying grace not one person who has ever lived has met God's standard; our Lord Jesus Christ being, of course, the one exception. He himself said in Mark 10:18, "'No one is good except God alone.'" No one. How do we summarize our sinful condition? Not a single one of us has met God's standard.

Now, having summarized our condition in verse 10, Paul proceeds in verses 11 to 17 to outline the depth of that depravity. Through a series of Old Testament references we learn just how profoundly sin has affected all of us. Depravity has caused us all to have, first of all, darkened minds. Notice verse 11, “THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS.” In other words, sinners, apart from divine grace, fail to understand anything that is spiritually true. They don’t understand things that are true about God. They don’t understand their own lost and desperate condition. They don’t understand how they can be made right with God. They don’t understand. Darkened minds.

Our depravity also includes enslaved wills. Verse 11 goes on to say, “THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD.” None, not one. Paul’s point is that our wills are corrupt. As we saw last week, we have a free will if by that you mean we make real choices. But if by that you mean we are able to choose good and God as well as sin, we don’t have a free will, because our wills are corrupt. Here Paul says, “NONE SEEKS GOD.” Unbelievers do not seek out God. They do not desire to know the true God. They do not worship the true God. They do not enjoy the true God. And they refuse to seek the glory of God. Because their wills are enslaved.

Thirdly, depravity produces rebellious lifestyles. Notice verse 12. “ALL,” there again is that comprehensive statement, “ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS.” Here we’re talking about the direction of our lives. Paul says all human beings have left the God-ordained path. That is, what God has prescribed for the patterns of our behavior, both in His Word and in our consciences, we’ve left that path. And instead, as Isaiah puts it, “We have each turned to his own way.” And tragically, when that happened we became, notice verse 12 says, “USELESS.” We became completely useless for anything that God designed us to be. We are no longer of use to God. We are no longer of use to others. We are no longer, even, of use to ourselves. Now, that brings us to where we’ve covered so far.

Today we come to a fourth way that we can measure the depth of our depravity. Paul says we can do so by our sinful behavior. Notice verse 12 goes on to say, “THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.” This is a quote from Psalm 53:1 and he is simply referring here to the daily practice of our actions. This is our behavior, “NONE WHO DOES GOOD.”

The word for good here is not the normal New Testament word. Instead, it’s a word which refers to that which is beneficial or useful. He’s just said, we are useless, and now he says, therefore, we don’t do things that are beneficial or useful to God, or to others. “THERE IS NONE WHO,” as a daily practice, “DOES WHAT IS GOOD, NOT EVEN ONE.” I am not the exception to this. You are not the exception. There are no exceptions. Ecclesiastes 7:20, “Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and who never sins.”

Now, don’t misunderstand the Apostle Paul. He’s not saying that we don’t do things that meet the human standard of goodness. Obviously, we do and we note this in others. Somebody will do something and we will say: “There’s a good man.” “There’s a good woman.” What we mean

by that is, they've met the human standard of goodness. That's not what Paul is talking about here. Instead, he means no one does what meets God's standard of goodness. And therefore, no one achieves a personal standing of righteous before God. This is what the Scriptures teach.

In fact, one of the most familiar Old Testament passages makes this very point. Isaiah 64:6, it says, "all of us," again, that comprehensive idea, every single one of us, "all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteousness deeds," now notice he doesn't say our sins, "our righteous deeds." In other words, your shining moment, your best moral choice, when someone came along and said: "Good job." "You're a good man." "You're a good woman." "I'm so proud of what you did." "I want to imitate what you did." "All our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment" before God. They're like menstrus rags. He goes on to say, "and our iniquities take us away." You see, our problem is our iniquities, our sins, yes, but equally our problem is our righteous deeds, which are like menstrus rags in the sight of God.

Martin Luther writes, "Even if such transgressors do good outwardly, they do not do it with sincerity for they do not seek God in it, but their own glory, gain, or at least freedom from punishment. On the other hand, those who, in true faith, seek after God do good from a thankful and joyful heart, solely for God's sake. But that is the work of divine grace and not of nature." In other words, if you do good out of gratitude for God, out of a desire to exalt God, and that's your only motivation, then that's a work of grace that God has done in your heart. Because that's not by nature.

Now, don't miss what Paul is saying here in verse 12. He's saying, by God's perfect perception of reality, you understand, God sees things as they really are, by God's perfect perception of reality, not one human being practices righteousness, not one human being exhibits daily behavior that meets God's perfect standard. You see, before Christ, most of us here are believers in Christ, before Christ we chose one of two paths. Either we chose a path of rebellion and sin and we lived in rebellion, open rebellion and sin, there are many here who that was true of their life before Christ, or, for others of us, before Christ we chose the life of a good moral person; from a human perspective we were basically honest and moral and generous. But regardless of which path we may have chosen in our rebellion against the true God, we all still came under Paul's indictment here, "NO ONE DOES GOOD, NOT EVEN ONE." Our sinful behavior is a reflection of the depravity of our hearts.

As Paul continues to trace the depth of our depravity he moves next to what we could call our toxic speech, toxic speech. Now, before I read these verses, let me read you a quote from Martin Lloyd Jones that just gripped me. Lloyd Jones writes this, "Are you ready to hold before you now the most terrifying mirror that you have ever looked into in your life? Here is the mirror, sin as it shows itself in our words. How terrible, how graphic, is this description." He's absolutely right. Look at verses 13 and 14. Here's our toxic speech apart from Christ.

“THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE,  
WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING,”  
“THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS”;  
“WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS.”

Now, in those two verses, notice Paul refers to the four primary parts of the human body responsible for producing speech, the larynx, the tongue, the lips, and the mouth, and he says, they’ve all been corrupted.

Now, before we look at this together, let me ask you a really important question, why did Paul choose this? Why, with all of the categories of sin Paul could have chosen to demonstrate human depravity, to prove human depravity, why would he choose our words? I mean, after all, when we think of our speech, that’s sort of at a lower level of sin. It’s not quite as bad as some of the things that are out there. Well, I can tell you why. There’s a very important reason why Paul chose this. Because if he had chosen any other category of sin there might be some of us sitting here today who would go, “Whew, that’s not me.” But by choosing our speech not one of us can dodge or deny this indictment. Nowhere is universal human sinfulness more obvious or more evident than in the words that come pouring out of our mouths.

In these verses Paul uses some very colorful images from the Old Testament to point out some serious problems with our toxic speech. Notice, the first serious problem is that our words reveal the decay and death in our hearts. Our words reveal the decay and death that is in our hearts. Verse 13, “THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE.” This specific quote is from Psalm 5:9 and in the original language here in the New Testament Greek text there is an unusual expression. Let me translate it for you literally and I think you’ll see what I mean. I could translate this this way, “Their throat is a having been opened grave.” That’s a powerful figure of speech. It pictures the throat, an organ of speech, as always, perpetually, open. In other words, we’re always talking. And out of that always open throat streams decay and death. In other words, it reveals the grave, or the tomb, which is the human heart.

You see, Paul compares human speech here to what you would discover if you were to open a grave in which a body has been decaying for several weeks. Pull the cover off of that grave and out of it comes an indescribable odor of decay and death that is completely offensive. Paul says, that is the condition of the speech, and ultimately of the heart, of an unredeemed man. Paul’s point is that our words reveal the corruption that is within our hearts. Our words are like the fumes that come out of the grave which is our hearts. Robert Haldane, the great commentator on the book of Romans, writes this, “What proceeds out of their mouth is infected and putrid. And as the odor or fumes from a grave prove the corruption within, so it is with the corrupt conversation of sinners.” And there’s a whole lot of evidence. Because we talk a lot.

This week I read an article from ABC News about a study back in 2007. This is what the article says, “Using digital voice recorders, over an eight-year period, researchers at the University of

Arizona studied how many words hundreds of college students spoke.” How many words do we speak each day? What they found was that on average the students spoke 16,000 words a day. That’s essentially the average of what you and I as human beings speak. Now, if you do the math and you work that out over an average 75-year lifespan, accounting obviously for some early years when you don’t speak, in the end, in a lifetime we will speak over 430 million words. The remarkable thing about all those words is that taken together they reveal our hearts. They reveal what’s inside.

This is what our Lord taught in a number of places. In Matthew 15:18, Jesus said this, “the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart.” You know, sometimes we’ll say something and we’ll realize, oops, that was probably not what I should have said, that betrayed something I’m thinking, that hurt somebody, and it showed me for who I am, and we’ll say, “I didn’t mean that.” Jesus isn’t buying that. He says, “the words that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart.” In Luke 6:45, again talking about speech, He says, “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what’s good; and the evil *man* out of the evil *treasure* of his heart brings forth what is evil.” And here’s Jesus’ conclusion, “for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.” Now this is incredible insight. It means if you can look objectively at the words that come out of your mouth, not in a given moment but in a period of life, you have a perfect reflection of your heart.

Let me show you how this works, how our words reveal our hearts. Let me give you several examples. If your words are always filled with the negative side of life, if you’re always whining and complaining about what you don’t have, if you’re always wishing for what you don’t have, if you’re always focusing on what you lack, and never rejoicing in what God has provided, then that shows you that you have a discontent, ungrateful, heart. If your speech is often filled with angry hateful words, if you just sort of pour out vitriol all over the people around you, if you’re always exploding and out comes this filth, it shows that you have a hate-filled heart. If your speech is always bragging and self promotion and, or on the other hand, if it’s filled with constant criticizing of others, if you’re always critiquing other people and somehow they never measure up to your standard, you’re always looking down from your high and lofty perch at the shortcomings of others, it shows that your heart has no humility, that it is a proud heart.

If you’re always laughing and joking, even about serious things that matter to God, it shows that there’s no genuine fear of God in your heart. If you’re always talking about materialism, things, if you’re obsessed in your conversation with houses and bigger houses and better cars and clothes and jewelry and all the stuff that you can buy and accumulate, then it shows that you have a heart that loves money and what money will buy. If you’re always making off color comments, cracking dirty jokes, or instead, in a more sophisticated way, you’re filling your speech with sexual innuendo and with double entendre, then you have an immoral heart.

If all you ever talk about is the frivolous, if your conversation dwells on movies and entertainment and music and video games and sports and somehow your conversations never seem to go deeper than that, then it betrays that you have a shallow superficial heart. If you're always talking about yourself, if, even when you're listening, you're just listening in order to decide the next witty thing you can say to increase your reputation and the conversation is really about you, then it shows that you have a selfish self-centered heart. You see, our words, taken as a whole, taken over time, paint a perfectly accurate portrait of our souls.

There's a second problem with our toxic speech and that is, our words are filled with deceit. Notice verse 13, "WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING." Paul again quotes from Psalm 5:9. The Hebrew of Psalm 5, if you go back to the Old Testament, puts it in a very picturesque way. Literally it reads, "They make smooth their tongues." What a graphic picture of verbal deception. But the Greek word here for deceiving means to take advantage of someone through craft, through trickery, through deception. This word, by the way, is very similar to the Greek word for bait, as in the bait that used in fishing, causing Barnhouse to write this, "Men can use words as worms are put on fish hooks. Those who take the word at its face value are caught on the hook."

By the way, this is not an occasional problem. Rather, it is a continual pattern. Notice how Paul puts it, the verb tense, "THEY KEEP ON DECEIVING." This is their constant pattern and practice. Now, this word deceit, or deception, here includes a number of sins. Obviously it includes lying, right? It includes, lying is nothing other than the contradiction of the truth, when the truth is A and you say B, but the word deception includes more than that. It also includes using some truth in order to mislead or deceive someone. In other words, this word includes half-truths, deliberately misleading someone with the whole truth, flattery, distorting the truth in some way for our own advantage. This is verbal deception.

And frankly, it's the way the world works. People pretend to be happy to see someone that they were trying desperately to avoid. They praise someone in their presence that they always criticize in their absence. Their words are like honey when their hearts are filled with anger and bitterness. There's no more perfect description of human society than this indictment, "THEY KEEP ON DECEIVING." Lloyd Jones writes, "Look at them in the ballroom or on their state occasions and at their dinners, how friendly and affable they all seem with one another, and yet they are muttering things to one another the moment someone turns his back. That is life. That is society in its evening dress as well as in its rags in the gutter." In other words, no matter where you look on the human spectrum you will find deception is part and parcel of the fallen human condition.

Why? Why do people lie? Why is deception so pervasive? Well you understand, I hope, that lying is never an end, deception is never an end, in and of itself. Dishonesty is merely a tool for sinners to get what they want. Here are some of the reasons that we lie. If I had time I would

take you to some biblical texts that support each of these, that illustrate it. But here's some of the reasons people lie and deceive. To avoid what we fear. This is why Abraham lied, right? To enhance our reputation. That's Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. That's also a perfect illustration of Facebook and all social media, to enhance our reputation. To hide personal hatred. To gain financial advantage. To hide our own guilt. To manipulate others into doing what we want. And sometimes we lie or we deceive to hurt and to injure others.

You see, nothing is more complete a revelation of the extent of human depravity than our propensity to keep on deceiving the people around us. Again, Barnhouse writes, "The conscience must admit the fact of the lying nature of man." He says, "You know that you are a liar by nature. Never did parents have a child that they did not have to correct in this matter. The child lies naturally from birth. And only by use of the rod of correction can a habit of honesty in words be instilled into the heart of the child."

Deception and lying is completely pervasive in our world. It happens at all levels. Nations lie and deceive other nations by breaking treaties. That's one of the concerns our representatives have about the treaty that we're about to engage in, because nations lie. Government leaders lie to their citizens or to other government's leaders. Large multinational companies lie to their consumers, like we read recently of Volkswagen. Experts and researchers falsify their research, either for their own advantage or the advantage of their companies. And individuals constantly lie to the people in their lives.

This is such a pandemic problem that people even like to reclassify their own dishonesty as "little white lies." They speak of their version of lying as being harmless. Or sometimes even they'll say it's good. But the fact that this sin is so universally pervasive doesn't mean God's perspective is any different. God hates all deceit and lying. Psalm 5:6, "You destroy," this is to God, "You destroy those who speak falsehood; The Lord abhors," hard to imagine a stronger word, "The Lord abhors the man of deceit." Proverbs 6, "There are six things which the Lord hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him." And number two on the list, "a lying tongue."

In fact, God hates lying so much that there will be no liars in heaven. Turn over to Revelation, Revelation 21. As John writes of the new heaven and the new earth he includes some lists of those who won't be there. By the way, it was these texts, in 1978, that God used to bring me to faith because as I read them I realized they described me, that I wouldn't be in heaven. Revelation 21:8, speaking of those who won't be in the new heaven, in the new earth, "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters," this is a pretty bad list, "and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Go over to verse 27 in the same chapter, speaking of the new Jerusalem, says, "nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of



life.” In other words, you cannot consistently be a liar and be a believer at the same time. Look at chapter 22 verse 15. Again, talking about that heavenly city, “Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.” God hates all deception and lying. He will not allow those who are liars in His presence.

A third problem with our speech is that our words kill and destroy. Back in Romans 3, our words kill and destroy, verse 13 says, “THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS.” This line comes from Psalm 140:3. The word translated asps here is not a reference to a particular kind of snake. Rather, it’s used generally of all poisonous venomous snakes. Israel has seven species of poisonous snakes, three of which are a danger to human beings, and he’s describing how this works. It’s actually a fascinating, sort of, zoological study because poisonous snakes have a sack of poison in their mouths, you understand this, and as a snake strikes its victim its fangs extend, and as those fangs enter the victim they press against the sack of poison and at the same time the muscles of the snake’s mouth compress and cause the poison to be pressed out of that sack. And the poison, depending on the kind of snake, if it’s a rattlesnake for example, and others kinds of poisonous snakes, the poison runs through their hollow fangs down into the victim, but in most cases they don’t have hollow fangs, poisonous snakes have fangs that have a small groove running down the outside of the fang and the poison runs down that groove and into the puncture wound and delivers the poison that will eventually kill the victim.

Paul says, in the very same way, when fallen human beings speak, our words strike and deliver poison into the people to whom we speak. Our words kill and destroy. Scriptures use a number of different metaphors of this destruction, the destructive power of speech. For example, in Psalm 57:4 it describes men “whose teeth are spears and arrows and their tongue a sharp sword.” Psalm 64:3, “They have sharpened their tongue like a sword. They aimed bitter speech as their arrow.” James, in James 3, talks about the tongue as a fire, an out of control raging fire that destroys everything in its path. In fact, he says, “the tongue is set on fire of hell itself.”

Now, what kind of words destroy another life? Obviously, words that are intended to do so, right? Words that are intentionally spoken to inflict pain on the other person: lies, slander, bullying; angry vindictive words; social media that’s intended to reflect hate and to hurt another person. If you really want a picture of the fallenness of the human heart go on and read the Internet comments when people think they are commenting anonymously, it just spews out poison, destructive poison.

But it’s not just words intended to inflict pain that are words that destroy. Also words that are intended to bait us into destructive sins. For example, the sinful invitation of a fellow student or co-worker to get drunk with them or to have sex with them or to use drugs together. Movies and music that present this beautiful picture of sin and urge us to participate. It’s poison.

Advertisements that appeal to the lust of the eyes and say you have to have this, this will satisfy your soul. It's poison.

Martin Luther also points out that words that destroy includes false teaching. False teaching that only talks about God being a God of love; God loves you, He wants you to have your best life now. The prosperity gospel that tells you, God wants you to be healthy and wealthy. Or the Mormons who tell you that your good works will allow you to accomplish your own salvation and eventually you can be like God. Listen, there are no smoother tongues on the planet than the tongues of false teachers. But if you buy what they're selling, if you believe their words, those words will come with a soul damning poison administered to your heart. There are lots of words that are like poison, that kill and destroy.

There's another problem with our toxic speech. Fourthly, our words are full of cursing and bitterness. Verse 14, "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS." This final Old Testament quotation about our speech is from Psalm 10:7. He uses two words here. First of all, cursing. Obviously, that refers to pronouncing a curse on someone. In English, American English, as you know, people fill their conversations with curses. One of them is to ask God to damn someone or the other one that's very popular is the, sort of, vulgar, not sort of, the vulgar wish that someone would sexually violate the person you're angry at. Both of those in American English are common expressions intended to call down a curse on someone.

And by the way, cursing in our culture is getting worse. If you doubt that, look at the movies. Back in 2013 there was a movie released called *The Wolf of Wall Street* that, I read, set an all time record for swearing in a movie. It included the same expletive 506 times. That was almost three times a minute. But you don't have to go to the movies to hear cursing. Just go sit in a public place somewhere. And you won't be there five minutes until you've heard someone curse.

The other word, he says, is bitterness. This refers to words that are an expression of a bitter heart. In other words, angry words, words filled with animosity, hatred, harsh, vindictive. Notice again, Paul says, curses and bitter words are not the exception. Instead, he says in verse 14, the mouths of sinners are full of these things. Where does that cursing and bitterness come from? Well, Titus 3 says, Titus 3:3, it comes from the fact that unregenerate people are "hateful and hating one another."

Now, why do words figure so profoundly in this indictment of human depravity? Because, as we've noted, they paint a perfect portrait of the condition of the human heart. They are a mirror to our souls. If you want to know how bad your heart is, just examine your words, just listen to yourself.

Now, this is sobering. In fact, let me speak for a moment. If you're here this morning and you know you're not a follower of Jesus Christ, you know you've never repented of your sins, you've

never put your faith in Jesus Christ, I want you to hear what Jesus has to say to you. He says He will use your very words to condemn you at the judgment. Turn over to Matthew 12. Matthew 12, and notice, verse 34. He's talking here to unbelievers, specifically the Pharisees. And Jesus says to them, in Matthew 12:34, "You brood of vipers," you see the reference to our text, "You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man brings out of *his* good treasure what is good; the evil man brings out of *his* evil treasure what is evil." Now watch verse 36, this is very sobering, "But I tell you," now remember, Jesus is the one who will be the judge at the last judgment, He says, "I tell you that every careless word," singular, "that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment."

God hasn't missed a single one of your words. And He will call you to give an account for it at the day of judgment. Moreover, notice the end of verse 37, "by your words you will be condemned." One of the most damning pieces of evidence that will be presented at the final judgment will be your own words because they reveal your heart.

Listen, your only hope, my only hope, this is where Paul's been driving in Romans 3, is the gospel, the good news that God forgives our sins against Him because of the death of Jesus Christ in the place of all who will believe in Him, of all who will repent of their rebellion and accept Jesus as Lord. That's your only hope. And I plead with you, don't wait for another day. You don't think you're making a decision today, but you're making a decision. You're either deciding to accept Christ as Lord, to come to Him as Lord and believe in Him, or you're deciding to leave here without doing so, which is the same as the decision to reject Him. Today is the day of salvation.

For those of us who are believers, and that's most of us, who are followers in Christ, Romans 3, the passage which we've studied together, reminds us that we are different people than this, we have been changed. We must not allow our speech to be like that of unbelievers, like it used to be before Christ. Turn over to Ephesians 4 very quickly. Ephesians 4, notice what Paul says here, verse 25, because you're a new person in Christ, "lay aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR." Verse 29, don't let any rotten word "proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to their need at the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear."

And by the way, we quote "Do not grieve the Spirit." Guess the context? It's the words that come out of our mouths. "Do not grieve the Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger," that's the wrath, the anger of blowing up, the anger of clamming up, "and clamor," that means yelling in the middle of an argument, "and slander," that's name calling, you so and so, "be put away from you, along with all malice," all intention to hurt someone else, all hatred. Instead, "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you."

By the way, sexual speech is off limits as well. Look down at chapter 5 verse 4, “there must be no filthiness,” that’s obscene talk, “or silly talk,” that has to do, in the context here, with dirty jokes. It’s talking about crass, dirty jokes, sexual jokes. And then, “coarse jesting,” that’s not a great translation, it refers to sophisticated sexual innuendo. This is the person who would never tell a dirty joke, but he’s always got something that’s just a little witty and off color. Paul says, let these be put away from you. Instead, notice what our speech should be, chapter 5 verse 1, “Therefore be imitators of your Father, as beloved children.” Talk like your Father. Don’t talk like you used to be, or like unbelievers talk. Let’s pray together.

Father, I pray for those who are here today whose words will condemn them at the judgment if they do not repent and turn to Christ. O Father, may they see their sinfulness today. May they see the beauty of the gospel, of your grace offered to them in the gospel, that you will forgive their sins against You because Christ suffered the penalty of those sins in their place if they will believe. Father, may this be the day when they turn in faith and repentance to Jesus as Lord, to confess Him as Lord.

Father, for us who already have confessed Him as Lord, forgive us for talking like unbelievers talk. Forgive us, O God, for letting things come out of our mouths that dishonor You. Help us to imitate You, our Father, even in our speech. We pray in Jesus’ name, amen.