

WILL YOU ACCEPT GOD'S DIAGNOSIS?

Romans 3:9-20

INTRODUCTION

In 2008 we were rocked. Cancer. Stage 4. Aggressive.

At first we were numb. We weren't angry. God's Word trained us to know we all fall into trials of various kinds. I hurt for the pain Cathy would suffer.

But we accepted the diagnosis.

Rejecting the diagnosis would have signed Cathy's death warrant.

Accepting the diagnosis was the first step towards her healing.

In our passage today God delivers a devastating diagnosis. The question is, will we accept it or reject it?

REVIEW

In 57AD Paul wrote this letter to the church in Rome. Paul had never been to Rome. He hoped to come and settle in with them. He also hoped they would become his base of operations in his quest to spread the Gospel west, to Spain. While in Rome, Paul looked forward to preaching the Gospel.

Romans 1:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

In addition to his deep love for Jesus, three realities drove Paul's passion to preach. First, God powerfully transforms those who accept the Gospel.

Romans 1:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Second, the Gospel reveals the only way to get right and stay right with God.

Romans 1:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

And third, unsaved Jews and Gentiles are under God's wrath and need the Gospel.

Romans 1:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

Paul focuses on this third point. In 1:18-32 he asserts that all humanity is under God's wrath. Through creation, God reveals His eternal power and divine nature. Mankind should honor and thank Him. But what have we done since the Fall? We suppress the truth about God and worship things in the creation including ourselves! No wonder God is angry with us!

In chapters 2 & 3 Paul confronts his Jewish kinsmen because they are infected with self-righteousness. They loved to judge Gentiles as sinners under God's wrath. Though guilty of the same sins, the Jews presumed God would judge them differently because of their unique relationship with Him. But God has only one standard; He will judge every unsaved man and woman, every unsaved Jew and Gentile, on the basis of their works (2:6-11). Jews are sinners every bit as much under God's wrath as Gentiles.

Then in 3:1-8, Paul asks, "Does this mean the Jews no longer have a unique relationship with God?"

The answer is no; the Jews are still God's Chosen People. They were entrusted with the oracles of God. They will receive what God has promised Israel.

God keeps His word.

God keeps His promises.

Though the Jews have been unfaithful, God will be faithful. He will fulfill His unconditional promises to the nation of Israel.

GOD'S DIAGNOSIS: YOU ARE A SINNER (3:9-18)

If Paul were a prosecuting attorney, 3:9-20, would be his closing arguments.

Romans 3:9 (ESV)

⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off?

That's exactly what the Jews believe. This is the mindset Paul is confronting in Romans 2:1-3:8. The Jews believed that God judges their sins differently than He judges the sins of the Gentiles because of their unique relationship with God.

Are the Jews better off than the Gentiles in God's courtroom?

Romans 3:9 (ESV)

No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,

God judges each person on the basis of their works, not their knowledge of His Law, nor on the basis of their unique relationship with Him.

He judges on the basis of what each person does.

On this basis of works, every Jew and every Gentile is guilty of sin. Every Jew and every Gentile violates God's standard of righteousness.

In verses 10-18 Paul calls to the witness stand his final and most devastating witness:

Romans 3:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ as it is written:

God's Word takes the stand.

The Jews could argue against Paul, a traitor to Judaism.

But their own Scriptures?

These are the Holy Spirit inspired words of King David, King Solomon, the Prophet Isaiah.

Paul shrewdly gives the last word to God.

This is God's verdict.

Romans 3:10-18 (ESV)

"None is righteous, no, not one;

¹¹ no one understands;

no one seeks for God.

¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;

no one does good,

not even one."

This is our condition compared to the purity and perfection of God's righteousness and goodness.

¹³ "Their throat is an open grave;

they use their tongues to deceive."

"The venom of asps is under their lips."

¹⁴ "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."

¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood;

¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery,
¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known.”

Our mouths spew lies and hate. We crush one another with our words. When words won't do the job, we resort to violence.

¹⁸ “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Here is the cause; we don't fear God. On the one hand we do not reverence Him and worship Him as He deserves. On the other hand we are not afraid of Him as we ought to be. Dallas Willard sheds light on verse 18.

The very last statement from this collection of Old Testament diagnoses of the human condition goes to the core of the matter: “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” Fear of God, the proverb tells us, is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). Although not the end or outcome of wisdom, to be sure, it *is* the indispensable beginning, I believe, and the principle part. One *begins* to get smart when he or she fears being crosswise of God: fear of not doing what he wants and not being as he requires.

Fear is the anticipation of harm. The intelligent person recognizes that his or her well-being lies in being in harmony with God and what God is doing in the “kingdom.” God is not mean, but he is dangerous. It is the same with other great forces he has placed in reality. Electricity and nuclear power, for example, are not mean, but they are dangerous. One who does not, in a certain sense, “worry” about God, simply isn't smart. And that is the point of the verse.¹

WILL YOU ACCEPT GOD'S DIAGNOSIS (3:19-20)?

The verdict is in, the diagnosis is made. Every human being is a sinner under God's wrath.

It is true of every one of us at one point in our lives.

It is a harsh diagnosis. Compared to God we do nothing good; we do nothing right.

We want to argue with God His standard isn't fair, it's too demanding, it's unloving.

The diagnosis is made. Will you accept it or reject it?

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

Will you keep arguing with God that you're a good person? That you keep the Ten Commandments? That you're not as bad as a lot of people?

Be clear that God is not saying you are worthless.

When the doctor delivered the diagnosis of cancer, was he declaring Cathy worthless? He was affirming she was *sick*, not worthless. If you are worthless, why did God go to such lengths to save you as we will see in Romans 3:21-31?

Accept God's diagnosis!

To reject His diagnosis is to choose death.

To accept His diagnosis is to take your first step towards life.

¹ Dallas Willard, [Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 50–51.

QUESTION:

If obeying God's law cannot make us right with God, of what value is it?

NEXT WEEK: Romans 3:21-31