

All Have Sinned



SABBATH—JULY 10

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Romans 1:16, 17, 22–32; Romans 2:1–10, 17–23; Romans 3:1, 2, 10–18, 23.

MEMORY VERSE: “Everyone has sinned. No one measures up to God’s glory”¹ (Romans 3:23, NlrV).

IF A PERSON DOES NOT ADMIT THAT HE OR SHE IS SINFUL, that person will not feel the need for justification² from God. Justification is God’s way of saying that a sinner is pure and righteous³ in His eyes. So, for Paul, the first step in justification is that a person recognize himself or herself as a helpless, hopeless sinner. To make his point, Paul first presents the terrible, sinful condition⁴ of the Gentiles. They have sunk as low as they have because they have forgotten about God. Paul then shows that the Jews are just as bad. He makes the point that nobody can save themselves with their good works.

Ellen G. White makes it very clear: “Nobody should think that anything man does can help pay for the debt of his sins. This is dangerous thinking. To understand the truth, then, you must stop arguing over your own ideas. And with open hearts think about the forgiveness God has freely given for our sins.

“Many people do not understand this. Thousands upon thousands claim to be sons of God who are really children of Satan. This is because they depend on their own works to save them. God always required good works, and the law requires it. But because man sinned, his good works were no longer enough to save him. Only Jesus’ righteousness⁵ can save us from sin. Christ alone is able to save us because the only purpose of His life is to be our Savior.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 6, page 1071.

1. glory—great beauty, power, and royal perfection.

2. justification—forgiveness and cleansing from sin.

3. righteous—free from sin or guilt.

4. condition—that state in which something exists; the way something is.

5. righteousness—God’s character (the qualities, such as goodness and love, that make Him who He is). God’s character, or righteousness (holy life), is given to us by faith; holiness.

SUNDAY—JULY 11**NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL⁶ (Romans 1:16, 17)**

What does Romans 1:16, 17 say to you? How have you experienced the promises and hope found in these verses?

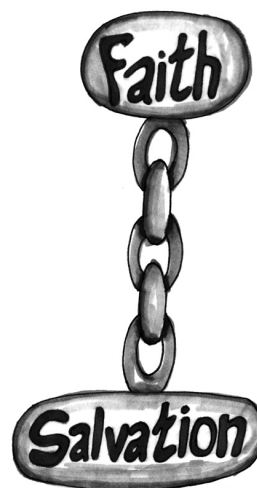
There are several important words in these verses:

1. *Gospel*. This word comes from a Greek word meaning “good message” or “good news.” By itself, the word may mean any good message. But when the phrase says “the gospel of Christ,” it means “the good news about the Messiah.”⁷ (The word *Christ* comes from the Greek word meaning “Messiah.”) The good news is that the Messiah has come and people may be saved by believing in Him. We can find salvation⁸ only in Jesus and in His perfect righteousness. We cannot find salvation in ourselves or even in God’s law.

2. *Righteousness*. This word means being “right” with God. The book of Romans helps us understand a special meaning of this word. We shall explore the word more as we study the book of Romans. In Romans 1:17 the word comes with the phrase “of God.” It is righteousness that comes from God. It is the righteousness that God Himself has given. This is the only righteousness good enough to

bring us the promise of eternal⁹ life.

3. *Faith*. In Greek the words that mean “believe” and “faith” (KJV) in these verses come from the same word: *pisteuo* (believe) or *pistis* (belief or faith). The meaning of faith is joined or linked together with salvation. We will better understand this link as we study the book of Romans.



The meaning of faith is linked together with salvation.

Do you ever struggle with being sure or certain? Do you sometimes wonder whether or not you are saved? What makes you feel these fears? Where do they come from? Are you living a lifestyle that goes against your beliefs? If you are, how can you change things so you can have the promises and assurances¹⁰ that are for you in Jesus?

6. gospel—the good news that Jesus saves us from our sins; the good news about salvation.

7. Messiah—God’s chosen one; Jesus.

8. salvation—God’s plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life.

9. eternal—forever; without end.

10. assurances—strong and definite statements that something will happen or that something is true.

MONDAY—JULY 12**THE HUMAN¹¹ CONDITION
(Romans 3:23)**

Why is the message in Romans 3:23 so easy for us, as Christians, to believe today? What could cause some people to doubt the truth of this verse?

Some people do not believe that all humans¹² are sinners. They say that people are basically good. The problem is that they do not understand what true goodness is. People sometimes compare¹³ themselves to someone else so they can feel good about themselves. Even the famous mobster¹⁴ Al Capone¹⁵ was a saint¹⁶ compared to Adolph Hitler.¹⁷ But if we compare ourselves to God and His holiness and righteousness, none of us would appear pure and perfect—not even close. We would feel awful about ourselves.

The verse also talks about “the glory of God.” This phrase has many different meanings. Perhaps the simplest meaning is in 1 Corinthians 11:7, “He [man] is the likeness and glory of God” (NIV). In Greek, the word for “glory” is almost the same as the word for “image [likeness].” Sin has ruined the image of God in us. Sinful humans fall far short of showing the glory of God.

Which of those pictures in Romans 3:10–18 best describes you? What would you be like if Christ was not in your life?

No matter how bad things get, they are not hopeless. The first step is for us to know that we are sinners, and we are helpless to do anything about it. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to make us feel our need for God. But the sinner must not pull back from God. If he or she does not pull away from God, then the Spirit will lead the sinner to wake up to his or her own sins. Then the sinner will throw himself or herself upon Christ and plead for God’s mercy:¹⁸ “ ‘ “God, be merciful to me, the sinner!” ’ ” (Luke 18:13, NASB).

When was the last time you took a hard look at yourself, your reasons for doing what you do, your actions, and your feelings? This can be a very upsetting experience. Yet, what is your only hope?

TUESDAY—JULY 13**FROM THE FIRST TO THE
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY¹⁹
(Romans 1:22–32)**

It was the year 1900. People truly believed that the world was changing

11. human—having to do with men, women, and children.

12. humans—men, women, or children.

13. compare—to show how two or more things are the same or different.

14. mobster—someone who is part of a secret organized group of criminals: a member of the mob.

15. Al Capone (1899–1947)—an American gangster (a member of a group of violent criminals).

16. saint—a very good person.

17. Adolph Hitler (1889–1945)—an Austrian-born German politician and leader of the Nazi Party.

18. mercy—kindness that a person does not deserve.

19. century—a period of 100 years.

for the better. People would live longer lives and be good and kind to one another. Science and technology²⁰ would help bring in a perfect world. It was also believed that humans were on their way to becoming perfect. They thought that with the right kind of education and religion, people could make themselves and their society²¹ better. All this was supposed to start happening, en masse (all together), as we entered into the brave new world of the 1900s.

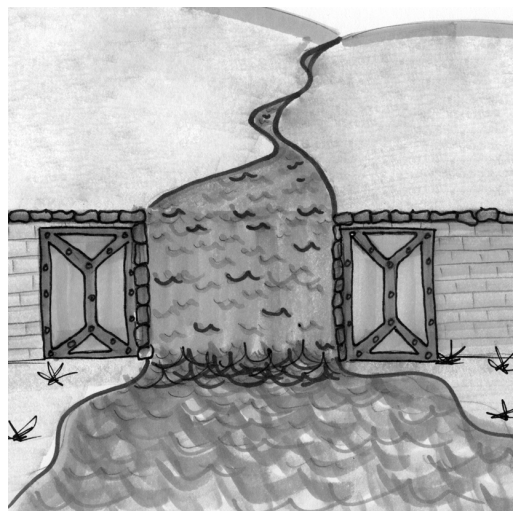
Sadly, things did not quite turn out that way. The twentieth century (the 1900s) was one of the most violent²² and cruel in all of history. Thanks to the modern inventions²³ of science, it became possible to kill masses of people in numbers that the worst madmen of the past could only dream about.

What was the problem?

In what ways are the things written about in Romans 1:22–32, in the first century (A.D., years 1–99), also happening today in the twenty-first century (A.D. 2000s)?

When people forgot God, a floodgate of sin and error opened. Today we are living with the results of that problem. In fact, if we do not surrender²⁴ to God, we become part of the problem too.

How is the principle (rule) found in Romans 1:22, 23 happening today? By refusing to accept God, what have people these days come to worship and idolize²⁵ instead? By worshiping these things, how have they become fools? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath.



When people forgot God, a floodgate of sin and error opened.

WEDNESDAY—JULY 14

JEWS AND GENTILES²⁶ TOGETHER (Romans 2:1–3, 17–24)

In Romans 1, Paul was dealing with the sins of the Gentiles. They were pagans²⁷ who had forgotten God a long time ago. They had become sinful in

20. technology—science that is put to use for practical work.

21. society—people living together as a group, or forming a group, with the same way of life.

22. violent—using or involving the use of physical (body) force to cause damage to someone or something.

23. inventions—things that are made that did not exist before.

24. surrender—the act of giving one's whole life to Jesus to love and serve Him and to obey His holy law.

25. idolize—to love or admire someone or something very much or too much.

26. Gentiles—people who are not Jews.

27. pagans—people who do not believe in God. In the ancient (old-time) world, pagans believed in many gods and often worshiped the sun.

their thoughts, feelings, and actions.

But Paul was not going to let his own people, his own countrymen, think they were any better than the Gentiles. God had given the Jews many advantages (Romans 3:1, 2). But they also were sinners. They were guilty of breaking God's law. They needed the saving grace²⁸ of Christ as much as the Gentiles did. When it comes to needing God's grace for salvation, Jews and Gentiles are the same.

What is Paul warning against in Romans 2:1–3, 17–24? What message should we all, Jew or Gentile, take from this warning?

It is easy to point out the sins of others. But we are often guilty of the same kinds of sins, or sometimes even worse sins. The problem is that we often are blind to our own faults. Or we make ourselves feel better by thinking about how much better we are than other people who are doing bad things.

Paul does not accept that kind of thinking. He warns his people not to judge the Gentiles at all. This is because his people, the Jews, who were God's chosen people, were sinners too. In some cases they were even more guilty than the people they criticized because, as Jews, they should have known better than the Gentiles.

Paul's point is that none of us is righteous. None of us meets God's perfect standard.²⁹ None of us is good or holy.

Whether we are Jews or Gentiles, male or female, rich or poor, we all are guilty of sin. If it were not for the grace of God, as the gospel shows us, there would be no hope for any of us.



The Jews had been given a great light (truth); so when they did wrong they were guiltier than others.

Do you think you are a hypocrite?³⁰ How often do you judge others for things that you also are guilty of? How can doing what Paul has written here help you change?

THURSDAY—JULY 15

REPENTANCE³¹ (Romans 2:4)

A five-year-old boy pushed his little sister down. His parents made him say he was sorry. He did not want to. So, without really meaning it, the boy weakly said, "sorry." This is not truly being sorry.

28. grace—God's gift of forgiveness and mercy (kindness) that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

29. standard—example, guide, principle (rule), or law.

30. hypocrite—a person who says one thing but does another; a person who shows "two faces."

31. repentance—the act of feeling sorry for your sins and turning away from sinning with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Think about this story and read Romans 2:4. What message is here for us?

We must remember that God’s goodness leads sinners to repentance. God uses no force. He is always patient and wants to draw (pull) all men toward Him by His love. If He forced us to repent,³² we would just pretend to be sorry like the boy who pushed his sister. Then everyone would be saved, would they not? But then, why would He force some and not others to repent?

According to Romans 2:5–10, what happens to those who reject (turn against) God’s love, refuse to repent, and remain disobedient?

In these verses, and at many times in the book of Romans, Paul focuses on good works. Justification by faith³³ without the law does not mean that Christians should not do good works. For example, in verse 7, salvation comes to those who “keep on doing good” (NIRV). Works cannot bring salvation by themselves. But works are an important part of the whole experience of salvation. We cannot read the Bible without understanding that works and actions are important. True repentance comes willingly from the heart. And then the person who truly repents will choose to grow past,

and put away, the things that he or she needs to turn away from.



True repentance comes willingly from the heart.

How often do you truly repent? Is it sincere? Or do you just pretend that your faults, shortcomings, and sins are no big deal? Can you change without truly repenting? How can you change? Why must you change?

FRIDAY—JULY 16

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “The Lord’s Vineyard,”³⁴ pages 291–294, in *Christ’s Object Lessons*;³⁵ “God’s Love for Man,” pages 9–15; “The Sinner’s Need of Christ,” pages 17–22, in *Steps to Christ*; “In Contact With Others,” pages 492–494, in *The Ministry of Healing*; “Agents³⁶ of Satan,” pages 146, 147, in *Testimonies³⁷ for the Church*, volume 5.

32. repent—being sorry for your sins and turning away from sinning with the help of the Holy Spirit.

33. justification by faith—the belief that being saved and forgiven depend only on the death of Jesus on the cross for our sins.

34. vineyard—a piece of land where grapevines are grown.

35. object lessons—lessons that use an object or a thing to teach a spiritual (holy) truth. Most often the object comes from nature, such as a flower, an animal, a tree, or a seashell. But the object used to teach the lessons could also be man-made.

36. agents—workers who are given the authority (power and permission) to perform (do) a job or a project.

37. *Testimonies*—the writings of Ellen G. White.

“Many fool themselves into thinking that their hearts are good. They do not understand that the ‘human heart is more dishonest than anything else’ (Jeremiah 17:9, [NirV]). They think only about their own righteousness. They are happy in reaching their own standard [level] of character.³⁸ But how fatally³⁹ they fail when they do not reach God’s standard. By themselves they cannot do all the things that God asks of them.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, page 320.

“God has given me a terrible picture of the condition of the world. Impurity⁴⁰ is everywhere. Sex outside of marriage and sex that causes harm to others are the special sins of this time. Sin has never raised its ugly head like it does today. The people seem to be so hardened and numb to sin. The lovers of purity⁴¹ and true goodness almost lose hope over sin’s boldness and strength. But the sin that is in the world is not limited to unbelievers and doubters. Many men and women who say they are religious also are guilty. Even some people who claim to be waiting for Jesus’ coming are no more prepared for that event than Satan himself. They are not making themselves clean from all sin. They have served their own lust

so long that their thoughts and feelings have become impure.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 2, page 346.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ In class, go over your answers to Tuesday’s last question. In what ways is this principle shown in today’s society?

❷ Read again the second quote from Ellen G. White in Friday’s lesson. Are you one of those people she describes? If so, what is the answer? Why is it important not to give up in despair⁴² but to remember God’s promises of forgiveness and cleansing?⁴³ Satan is the one that wants you to say, “It is no use. I am too sinful. I can never be saved, so I might as well give up.” Do you listen to Satan or to Jesus, who says to us, “ ‘I don’t [do not] find you guilty either. . . . Go now and leave your life of sin’ ”? (John 8:11, NirV).

❸ Why is it so important for Christians to understand what sin really is? What can happen when we forget this important fact? What mistakes will we make if we forget how sinful we are?

38. character—who someone is; all that a person does, feels, and thinks are what a person is made of; a person’s character is the sum of the choices he or she makes, such as a choice to be honest or to cheat.

39. fatally—causing death, ruin, or failure.

40. impurity—the quality or state of not being clean or wholesome (good).

41. purity—the quality or state of being free of sin or guilt.

42. despair—a feeling of no longer having any hope.

43. cleansing—having the power to make something pure and clean.