



(For access to all available commentaries and sermons of Charlie's click [HERE](#))

Romans

And the way of peace they have not known. Romans 3:17

Again Paul turns to the words of Isaiah to substantiate man's general character and disposition -

The way of peace they have not known,
And there is no justice in their ways;
They have made themselves crooked paths;
Whoever takes that way shall not know peace. Isaiah 59:8

There are several ways in which the "way of peace" can be demonstrated. Here are four:

- 1) In oneself. A life of peace in an individual must start with contentment in one's station. If a person is content, then a hovel and a bowl of rice soup is sufficient for peace. If a person's eyes are full of greed and want, a mansion with a table of feasting will never satisfy. One must appreciate the gifts God has given in order to have peace in oneself. If such appreciation doesn't exist it can only lead to internal toil and boil over in our actions toward others.

- 2) Toward others. Peace and contentment in oneself naturally keeps one from harming others, but when it is lacking, the greed and lust of the heart spills over in our actions - be it individually or as a group or nation. Harming others then becomes a satisfactory means of obtaining what we want. We rationalize reasons why theft is acceptable and move toward the subjugation and oppression of those who have earned their way. As noted, this stems from a lack of contentment in our own station. This frustration is taken out on others, but it inevitably directs the blame toward God.

- 3) Toward God. Peace with God comes from an appreciation of His goodness and an understanding of His sovereignty. When one feels jipped by their circumstances, they will find fault in God. The sentiment "It's not my fault I was born here..." would necessarily place the blame on God who made the choice. But Acts says, "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us..." (vs. 26, 27)

God, who is infinitely wiser than man, has selected our time, place, and position to be the very best possible moment in which we will seek Him out. In other words, a person born in Honduras in AD1630 would no more search out God than he would if born in New York city in 2013. God knows this and determines that which is the very best for His creatures, and yet we reject Him. Proof that this is true is that there is a Bible on practically every shelf and accessible from every computer on earth and yet, even with this opportunity, it is ignored. In America, there are churches on every corner and yet they are closing due to a lack of interest. "The way of peace they have not known..." This lack of contentment in self which then overflows towards others and is ultimately blamed on God results in unholy instruction within family and society.

- 4) In Instruction. When the way of peace is unknown, the venues of life instruction follow a course of wickedness. The raising of children disregards education in the Bible, in respect, in honor, and in right living. School

systems turn towards a liberal agenda and "tolerance" for that which is profane. This carries from kindergarten to college. Young minds are perverted from what is normal and the developed minds are perverted from what is reasonable. Society itself rejects the truth and turns to a news media which is based on feelings rather than objective journalism. Churches no longer preach doctrinal truths, but instead provide soft messages without any real substance. As these institutions continue to turn away from soundness, the only thing which cannot be tolerated is "intolerance." But even this is self-contradictory and so vile emotions are spewed out at those who pursue peace and reason.

In the end, the pattern repeats itself and the world ends in a state which is no longer worthy of anything but destruction. At the time of the flood, a mere 1600 years after the creation of the world, Genesis 6:5 says that "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Of course, this resulted in a global flood which took the lives of all but eight people.

God's people, Israel, have been destroyed and exiled twice because they followed this same pattern and the church is now following it as well. At the rapture of the church, there will only be strife against God leading to the Tribulation period. All because "they have not known the way of peace."

Life application: It is unreasonable to love others into hell through tolerance. That which is against God - be it in the general society or in the church - must be identified and called out. If not, there is eventually a breakdown in right moral thinking. This is especially true with our religious leaders. If they depart from what is right or deflect attention away from Jesus, their words or actions must be shown for what they are. Judgment begins at the house of the Lord and so the house of the Lord must proclaim the way of peace - Jesus.

There is no fear of God before their eyes. Romans 3:18

This is the final quote in this train of thought and is taken from Psalm 36:1 -

An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked:
There is no fear of God before his eyes.

"Fear of God" is speaking of awe and reverence. When we have these it will bring about an understanding of our own fallen nature in relation to God. Time and again in Scripture, when one is brought close to God the person finds himself overwhelmed at the majesty of His presence. Such is the case in Isaiah 6. When Isaiah had a vision of the Lord, he cried out -

“Woe is me, for I am undone!
Because I am a man of unclean lips,
And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;
For my eyes have seen the King,
The Lord of hosts.”

One of Israel's holy men stood in awe at what he witnessed, but the people Paul is speaking about shun the glory of God and in their hearts there is only contempt for Him. These past quotes from the Old Testament show us several things. First, the Jew cannot hope to be saved simply because of their heritage. Their own word testifies against them. Paul spoke about this in detail and then provided these quotes, directly from their own sacred writings, to show this is true.

Secondly, what these verses show us is the character of human nature in general, not specifically any given man. They are a broad brushstroke of how humanity is displayed from the creation until today. There was the flood to correct it. There was the cleansing of the land of Canaan by the Israelites to correct it. There was

the purging of Israel from their land (twice) to correct it. And there will be the tribulation period of the future to once again destroy wickedness. Humanity, when left to his own devices will shun God and choose the path of destruction.

Third, the corruption of man proceeds from the innermost depths of who he is and it proceeds outward in a vile display of how he presents himself. This is symbolized by the mentioning of the parts in order - throat, tongue, lips, mouth, and then feet. The corruption spreads outward and is carried far and wide.

When man forgets God and sets his feet on an evil path, only wickedness can follow. This is so, so very important to remember because as a nation, the United States has set its feet upon this course. We have condoned that which is forbidden; we have spoken that which is vile; we have spread that which is wicked; and we have lost our fear of God. Unless the people return to the Bible as its source for instruction and guidance, we will come under God's continued hand of chastisement, eventually leading to destruction. It is the church which must lead the way in this endeavor.

Life application: When the fear of God is lost, only unrighteousness can follow. We must stand up for what is right and not allow ourselves to be caught up in the eddy of moral degradation which surrounds us. Stand firm on the tenets in the Bible and be ready to defend them above all else. There is one standard by which we will right the wrongs around us and it is found there.

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Romans 3:19

Paul sums up his argumentation in this verse and will draw his final conclusion in the next. "Now we know" is his way of saying - "See, the evidence is clear, it is

concise, it is fully substantiated, and it is irrefutable." And so we know "that whatever the law says" is given to mean whichever law applies to the addressee. To the Jew, it is the Law of Moses and to the gentile it is natural law clearly revealed to us and which Paul carefully explained in Romans 1.

These laws are the facts to be presented in a judicial proceeding. Whatever the law says, "it says to those who are under the law." Whichever law applies - be it to Jew or gentile - it is spoken to that group. In the case of the Jew, it is actually both laws because despite having the Law of Moses, they also have the natural law. They are accountable in both cases, but by whichever law, the evidence is clear; the charges have been presented and so "every mouth may be stopped."

This phrase is alluded to in the Old Testament such as in Job 5:16 -

So the poor have hope,
And injustice shuts her mouth.

Every mouth being stopped means that the evidence is so overwhelming that no valid reply can be made in response to it. At the judgment, nobody will be able to say, "but I didn't know." We have received enough of God's revelation to condemn us. For the gentile it is conscience mixed with reason - "We exist; we didn't create ourselves; and therefore, we were created by another who has shown Himself through the rest of His creative works." For the Jew the argument was drawn directly from the authority they claim as the basis for their culture - Scripture. Paul has demonstrated from the source of what establishes them as a people that they are guilty.

A clear example for us to understand this is to simply change "Jew" to "Christian" and include the New Testament. You who claim to be a Christian, have you met the requirements of being a Christian? There is one source for such a claim - the

Bible which tells of Jesus. It is the basis of our faith. If it can be demonstrated from this source that we haven't met the requirements of the title, then we are found as false Christians.

Paul has shown that no gentile can be saved by natural revelation and no Jew can meet the demands of the law perfectly and therefore "every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." The term "become guilty" is the Greek word *hupodikos*. This is its only use in the New Testament. It means to be "liable to the judgment of."

The sum of Paul's thoughts to this point then is that when the judgment comes - for both Jew and gentile - the verdict is to be "guilty" and there can be no appeal. God's revelation of Himself condemns us. If this were the end of the story, it would be a sad story indeed. What value would it be to go on? What purpose would there be in doing any good at all? For what then did God create - just to destroy His creatures? The story would make no sense at all.

The next verse will conclude this line of Paul's thoughts and will show the utter futility of existence without Jesus Christ. But verse 20 will open a new page for the condemned soul.

Life application: If we somehow feel that we are pleasing to God in and of ourselves, then we have made an immense error. God has given us His law and we have broken that same law. Thank God that the story doesn't end there. Take time today to reflect on the glory of Jesus Christ. Without Him, there would be no purpose to our existence, but in Him life again has meaning.

Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Romans 3:20

"Therefore" indicates Paul's final conclusion of the issue he has been addressing. The case has been presented and the lawyer has given his closing argument. Now comes the final statement, "Therefore..."

Paul has been speaking of the law in two ways, natural law as revealed to the gentile and the Mosaic law as revealed to the people of Israel. It wouldn't logically follow that this verse suddenly drops the natural law to speak only of the law of Moses. Therefore, "by deeds of the law" is certainly speaking of man's efforts to please God under either law.

In other words, someone who isn't under the law of Moses who goes about doing good stuff cannot expect to be justified in God's sight. Nor can someone who is under the law of Moses expect to meet its requirements and thus be justified before God. In both cases, "by the law is the knowledge of sin."

For the gentile, the natural law tells us internally that there is a gap between us and God. There will always be a state of uncertainty about our eternal state because deep inside we know that the things we've done have separated us from Him. For the Jew who has the written law, there is the same knowledge. When they objectively look at the law and then compare their deeds to what it calls for, the honest soul will acknowledge that they haven't measured up.

Of course, there are those under both the natural law and the written law who feel they are above what they see; there are those who feel these things don't apply to them individually; there are those who completely reject the premise; etc. These attitudes in no way negate what is obvious, but merely further demonstrate the righteousness of God who has so revealed Himself.

In the end, Paul says that by "deeds of the law no flesh" - no person who has ever lived - "will be justified in His sight." The law merely condemns us. It is a sad and seemingly hopeless state in which man finds himself.

"By the law is the knowledge of sin" and, after all, the wages of sin is death. If this were the end of the book of Romans, it would be better for us that we had never been born. Or for those of us who are alive, it would be a pointless existence of knowing that death was coming and which would be followed by an eternal separation from the very Source of our existence. For all eternity our mind would contemplate, "Why did He even create me?"

But Paul's words do continue and they will show us the magnificence of what God has done for His wayward creatures!

Life application: The divide already exists between God and you and there is no deed or deeds that you can accomplish in order restore the bridge. But God, in His infinite goodness has provided the bridge Himself. As you contemplate your state before Him today, think on the perfection of what He has done through Christ Jesus. What a great God!