

The Truth Part 5: The Truth Abases Man

The Truth

By Gary Shepard

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Romans 3:9-20
Preached on: Sunday, January 26, 2020

Sovereign Grace Baptist Church
2031 Burgaw Highway
Jacksonville, NC

Website: www.sovereigngracebaptist.church
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/allsovgrace

"Great is Thy faithfulness
O God my Father
There is no shadow of turning with Thee
Thou changest not
Thy compassions they fail not
As Thou hast been
Thou forever will be

Great is Thy faithfulness
Great is Thy faithfulness
Morning by morning new mercies I see
And all I have needed Thy hand hath provided
Great is Thy faithfulness
Lord unto me.

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!"

Let's do our bulletin hymn, "At the feet of Christ we bow," sung to the tune of "Take
Thou the bread of life."

Welcome everyone this morning and we thank God for his good grace and mercy
preserving us through another week and blessing us and enable us to come and gather and
worship him. I would be glad that there were every seat full, every pew full, if it was the
Lord's will, and I pray that he might be pleased to bring more to hear his Gospel and be
able to rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ. But we're to preach the Gospel and we leave all

the accomplishment in the bringing in his hands and for his glory. We pray this morning that he would meet with us, that he would give us his truth, that he would cause us to be able to believe it, to hear it in our hearts, and that he would give us peace, a felt peace in all that's said and done. We thank the Lord for his mercy to us.

Let's pray.

Our Father, we come into this service and as we do, we have already met with a reminder of how much we need your grace, how much we as a people need your mercy, your restraining hand upon the world that is around us and upon our own hearts and natures. We pray that you would meet with us this day that we might be able to enter into true worship, that we might be enabled to say right and true things about you and about your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We know that in ourselves we're nothing, we can do nothing, no, totally dependent upon what you in your sovereign grace are pleased to do for us. We thank you for all that you have done and for all that you continue to do. We pray that in all things you might get all the glory and all the praise in all that's said and done and accomplished.

We pray for your people here in this assembly. We ask your mercy upon them and for all of us in our daily lives and problems and cares and sicknesses. And we pray for your people that are scattered throughout this country and throughout this world, most of whom we do not know but we're thankful that the word tells us that you know them that are yours, and you've known them from old eternity and you knew them in everlasting love and you will know them in Christ Jesus and know them in that great righteousness that you impute to each one of them, saving them from their sin and bringing them unto yourself.

Father, we pray for the lady that was mentioned to us this morning who has lost her family. Such things are unexplainable to us, incomprehensible, and yet we know that you are the one who does all things right and we have so many reminders around us of human weakness, of sin, but we pray that you'd help her for your own name's sake. We pray that by your grace and power you might draw her unto yourself and give her the only comfort and refuge that can be had in this world, that comfort that is in Christ Jesus.

We pray that you would receive our thanks this morning for your people and for those who preach your Gospel, stand for your word in this world. Help us, Lord, in these days of great tribulation and great apostasy and great ungodliness on every hand to be true to you and true to your word and not be drawn away to the idolatry that is all around us and that is natural to us. Forgive us, we pray because we ask this in the name of Christ. Amen.

Hymn #247, "Amazing Grace."

"Amazing Grace, How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me

I once was lost, but now am found
T'was blind but now I see

T'was Grace that taught my heart to fear
And Grace, my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

Through many dangers, toils and snares
We have already come.
T'was grace that brought us safe thus far
And grace will lead us home.

The Lord hath promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

The Earth shall soon dissolve like snow
The sun forbear to shine
But God, Who called me here below
Will be forever mine.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun."

"Behold the Lamb, the spotless Lamb,
Who takes away our sin;
The debt we faced was not erased,
But paid in full by Him.

Gaze on the Christ, our sacrifice
On altar made of wood.
Exalt the Lamb, the worthy Lamb,
Who bought us with His blood.

Behold the Lamb, the bleeding Lamb,
Who takes away the veil;
His body torn, His soul forlorn,
Christ cut to God a trail.

Behold the Lamb, the dying Lamb,
Who takes away just wrath;

God saw the blood of His beloved
And over us has passed.

Behold the Lamb, the risen Lamb,
Who takes away death's sting;
All knees shall bend, all praise ascend
To Christ, the living King."

Open your Bibles, if you would, this morning to the book of Romans, Romans 3. We're continuing this morning on this series that I've called "The Truth," the truth in its essential elements, and when I began thinking about this, this week, I was reminded of King Ahab's words to King Jehoshaphat. When they were wondering whether to go up and fight at Ramoth-gilead, Jehoshaphat asked Ahab was there not a prophet, was there not a prophet that they could inquire of the Lord as to whether to do it or not and in 1 Kings 22 it says, "And the king of Israel," that's Ahab, "said unto Jehoshaphat there is yet one man," and that's all there was, "There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." In other words, he was saying there is one prophet, Micaiah, but he doesn't have anything good to say about me.

I'm sure that the preacher of truth has nothing good to say about man. The truth as we find it in this book, the truth always abases man. That's the fifth essential element of the truth this morning: the truth always abases man. And many divide our race in Adam into some who are good and others who are evil. Many more have said that each of us is something like this: we have an angel on one shoulder and the devil on the other. We are, they say, part good and part evil with the will free to decide which way we will go. And some say that after regeneration, we have two natures. It's kind of the old black dog/white dog thing, we have two natures, they say. But I don't find that anywhere in this book. What I find is that we have one nature, one nature that is natural to us and that is the nature of sin, and the glory is that God in grace meets man and those he saves, he deals with them in their true condition. This is the condition of man that his grace always meets and such explanations as men come up with, they're just ways of avoiding the undeniable truth and that is the truth of man's depravity as it is stated so many times in the word of God and so clearly in our text here in Romans 3.

We see in these words, as well as all throughout this book, that his depravity or our sinfulness, if you will, it is universal and it is total, complete. Listen to Paul as he says in Romans 3:9,

9 What then? are we better than they [speaking of Jew and Gentile]? No,
in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they
are all under sin;

Isn't it funny how men love universal things when they're talking about the grace of God which is so particular, but they don't like universal things when it comes to the sinfulness

of man which is truly universal. "As it is written," already the same dilemma spoken of in the Old Testament,

10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: 14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: 15 Their feet are swift to shed blood: 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways: 17 And the way of peace have they not known: 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes. 19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Now that is a solemn indictment of Adam's race and when we hear such things spoken of by men as so-called free will, it obviously is a denial completely of what we have just read. It goes against what God says is the natural ability which is inability of every sinner. Salvation, therefore, in any part by human works or efforts is a denial of what God says that our true condition is. We only know, and I've told you this so many times, we only know what we are by what God says that we are. Not what we feel. Not what someone says that we are. We hear things like this, "He's a good man," but according to God, there is none good, no, not one. There is a difference between the amount of evil acts done by men but it's, oh, so dangerous, it is, oh, so dangerous to say that you wouldn't or that you couldn't do some of the same exact things.

You hear of these awful acts committed by men and women and sometimes self-righteousness swells up in people and they say that they could never do anything like that. You do not know yourself. You do not know yourself. The only thing you and I wouldn't do or couldn't do is what God in his restraining grace keeps us from doing, and apart from grace, even a believer can and will do anything that an unregenerate man will do because we have still the nature of sin. And there is not only a potential to evil but there is an inclination to evil, a tendency and event in our nature toward doing that which is against God. We are evil essentially and evil universally, and because of this, we believe and we declare what the Bible teaches about the true state, the true condition and depravity of man. We must say what God says.

The word "depraved" is a word made of two different thoughts. The first part means "thoroughly." Whatever follows, it is thoroughly. And the second part is "crooked or praved is crooked, thoroughly crooked inside and out." And by this we mean that man is thoroughly crooked, he's thoroughly wicked, he's thoroughly sinful by nature in himself and he has stood before God in the same condition by nature.

How many obvious illustrations must we see in our society to believe what God says is true? How many murders? How many thefts? How many abuses? How many things must we see obviously before our eyes in the news every day before we believe what God says

all the time is the truth? Somebody does something and we say things like this, "Well, I never thought he was capable of doing that." Not only is he capable but you and I are capable. And this corrupt nature we received in Adam, this fall that took place, this evidence of what we are as sinners shows that every choice of man, every practice of man, just like Adam, is to sin and thus we read that we come forth, we come forth from the womb it says in Psalm 58, "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." Nobody had to teach us to lie. Nobody has to teach a child to lie. Why? Because he's a sinner by birth. He's a sinner by nature. You ask him if he did something, the first thing he does is lie. No, no, but the truth does not say some things about men, we do not say that all men are as bad as they could be, quite the contrary. The danger, as Paul said, is to compare ourselves with ourselves. We do not mean that man does not have a conscience. When Adam sinned, he went immediately and hid himself from God. When all those accusers of the woman in John 8 were met and dealt with by Christ, it says they were convicted by their own conscience. We do not mean that the unregenerate man or woman may not do some outward works of charity and might not display some degree of differences in moral goodness, but in all that man does, man does not do these things for the glory of God.

Man's best works comparatively, he does them all for selfish reasons. He does them for sinful reasons. He does them to get praise from men. He does them to get gain. He does them to get glory. We have all these charities in our country and people will gather together to sell barbecue plates or they'll sell brooms or they'll sacrifice chickens on the altar of charity to make money, they'll do all of these things but if they really had a heart to do for somebody, they wouldn't have to do from all these things, they would do within themselves and from themselves they would provide what they're trying to get from other people. All these stores now that when you ring out they ask, "Do you want to give a dollar to So-and-so?" Do you think that they will say to those that get the money, if they ever really get it, do you think they'll say to those that get the money that So-and-so and So-and-so and So-and-so gave the money? No, they'll say, "We gave the money."

But what's the truth say about man, really say about man, all men by nature? It says he lacks the love of God. John 5 Christ said, "But I know you, that you have not the love of God in you." So many have what he says "is a form of godliness but they are by nature rather lovers of pleasure, lovers of themselves rather than lovers of God." They don't love God. As a matter of fact, in this same book in chapter 8 we read something like this, "The carnal mind," that's the mind that you and I have by nature and have had by birth and cannot change of ourselves, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." People say, "Well, I don't hate God." That's what enmity means. It means hatred of God. And men say, "Well, I don't hate God. I love God." You hate the living true God but you love a God of someone's manufacturing or a God of your imagination, but the true God? The carnal mind, the natural mind is enmity against God. An old preacher said concerning this, he said an enemy can be reconciled but enmity can't. We're naturally at enmity against God. That means that we do what we do and we love the one who is love and light, and it says God is light and men love darkness rather than light.

Man has no moral faculty that is not affected by sin. Not one. That's what men are saying in free will doctrine, that there is some part of us. I remember so well hearing an old preacher say this to me, he said man is this and this and this and he's that and that. I agree with you. I agree with you. Everything you're saying, but he has just some little spark, some little spark of divinity, some little spark of goodness that he can choose God. No. My friends, the fire is out. There's not a spark of divinity, there's not a spark of goodness, there's not a spark of truth naturally in not one sinner. It's like a fiber that has died before it's woven and then after that woven, it's died again. We're sinners by nature and by practice we're double-dive sinners.

Paul says to Titus in chapter 1, "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." It's not a lack of moral faculties but it's the state of those faculties to look, to think, to love, to do; whatever that faculty is, the will especially and other capacities are so fallen we're like a junk car. You look at a distance, you go to a junkyard and you see a car and say, "I wonder what that's doing here? It looks pretty good." But when you begin to look up close, the motor won't work, the lights won't work, the windshield wipers won't work, the turn signals won't work, the transmission won't work. There won't anything about that car work but it looks like a car. That's the way we are as sinners.

Christ told those Pharisees, he said, "You search the Scriptures, oh, you're Bible students alright, for in them ye think ye have eternal life and they testify, they are they which testify of me and you will not come to me that you might have life." It sounds like they're dead to me, even though they search the Scriptures. They're blind. Men and women with Bibles in their hands, sitting under preachers and teachers, they're blind to the truth. They're like a drop of ink in the water. He says, Paul says, "For I know that in me, that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing." My flesh is me. It isn't some entity over here that is separate from me. That's me. In my flesh dwells no good thing, and he said that as a believer but still in his flesh, in him dwelt no good thing. Why? Because Christ said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and it's always gonna be flesh.

Look at what Paul says here in these verses before us beginning in verse 9. He says, "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." Society, mankind is divided up by God into two groups and only two groups: Jews and everybody else, Gentiles. But it doesn't matter whether you're a Jew or a Gentile, Paul says, "We've proved it from the Scriptures and we have proved it by nature." All under sin. All under the curse. All under the condemnation and dominion of sin.

This ought to really sink into our heads if we've got any spiritual brains at all, and that is what the Psalmist says in verse 5 of Psalm 39 when he says, "every man at his best state is altogether vanity." Gather yourself up on your best day, gather up the best people you know, kindest, sweetest, gentlest, generous people that you know, gather them up all together on their best day and God says in his sight and according to his word that they are a big fat zero. The whole world, mankind, weighed in the balances of God's justice and judgment are like the dust, they won't even move the needle.

We're sinners. We're sinners. All are sinners. Look at verse 10, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one." Not you. Not me. Not Paul. Not anybody in themselves is righteous and you have to be righteous to do righteousness. "So he's a righteous man." I hear that every once in a while. No. There's none righteous. In ourselves standing before God he says there is not one of us in ourselves righteous.

Look at verse 11. That's in our person and our position and standing before God. Verse 11, he says, "There is none that understands." By birth, by nature, we none have any spiritual perception, understanding. That's why God has to give an understanding. If he leaves a man to himself or a woman, they will never understand the realities of eternity, of spiritual things of God, and they'll die in their lack of understanding and perish. No spiritual perception. No understanding.

Verse 11 again, "there is none that seek after God." No man pursues the living God. Just like Adam, we, by nature, hide from him. How many people thought that they were searching for the truth? Are you a seeker of truth? That's the biggest farce that's ever been, that we somehow in ourselves decide one day we're going to seek after the truth. We're not seeking after God, not as he is, we're seeking for a God that we can live with as sinners. We're seeking after a God who will be like a piece of Silly Putty, we can make him like we want to. And men in their theology, they have come to this, that God is who you want him to be. Man pursues another God. He pursues a godless religion. He pursues things of the world and he never pursues God, never seeks after God until God gives him a heart to seek for him and he says when you seek after him with his whole heart, you'll find him. But you don't have that heart by nature.

Verse 12 says, "They're all gone out of the way." That not only means that they all practice sin, that means that they're not in the way of truth, they're not in the way of holiness, they're not in the way of righteousness.

Verse 12 again, "they've all together become unprofitable." Bring them all together like you'd gather up all your money, all your treasures, and let God pronounce their value. He's the only one that knows. Put up your profit and loss statement, what are you worth? On your column it will say just simply zero, unprofitable, worthless, reputed as nothing, vanity.

Verse 12 again, "none that doeth good." Why? Because they don't know what good is. They came to Christ and they said, "Good Master, what must we do?" He said, "Why do you call me good? There's none good but God." You call everything else good? There's nothing good but God and especially God as he is in Christ Jesus. There's no good men naturally in God's sight.

Verses 13 through 18, "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips." Nobody will, you can't believe anybody these days. They'll tell you a lie. We're all guilty of this. "Well, I'll be here so-and-so. I'll do this for you. I'll be sure you get this." We're just a bunch of liars. We pour

forth gossip. The poison of the asp is under their lips. They use their tongues for deceit. They speak something, they don't know if it's true or not but I want to be the first to tell it.

"Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." Criticism. Murmuring. Foul language. I wish that was all of it.

"Their feet are swift to shed blood." One time we had a dog that was injured in hunting, one dog in a pack of dogs. That dog got injured, what happened? Well, all the other dogs turned on him and they finish killed him. You say that sounds so pitiful. That's what men and women do every day to wounded, hurt people. You think they'd want to lift him up, help them. Not man by nature. He turns with the crowd and finishes them off.

"Destruction and misery are in their ways." Look around us.

"And the way of peace have they not known." Try as they will, do what they will, they do not know the way of true peace because that's in Christ.

"There is no fear of God before their eyes." How can people believe some of the things they do? How can they identify with some of the religions that they do? How can they, on the other hand, do some of the ungodly things that they do? Why is homosexuality accepted in our society? Why is abortion accepted in our society? How can they? There's no fear of God because the fear of God's the beginning of wisdom. You see, men don't fear something that they can't see but that won't change one little thing. You might walk up to a wire that is live with electricity and you don't see it, you say, "Well, it can't be because I don't see it," but you just put your hand on it and you'll find out.

"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." The law as it was given to Israel simply said it was never given to them by which they could be obedient or merit righteousness, it was given to show their inability to do so and to show all of us that the whole world, everyone might become guilty before God.

All guilty. The problem is what proceeds out of the heart because the heart is like it is. Even God's people whom he saved, they are by nature the children of wrath even as others. All the Scriptures bear witness to what I say, like in Job 15 when God says, "How much more abominable and filthy is man which drinketh iniquity like water?"

The condition that he describes in Ephesians 4 is that vanity of mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart.

John 8 he says, Christ said, "Why do you not understand my speech? It is because you cannot hear my word."

1 Corinthians 2, "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they're spiritual discerned." Men mock at what the Gospel says.

Romans 8, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Paul said to Timothy, "You're to preach, you're to be compassionate, you're to be sympathetic to those you preach to that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. If God peradventure will give them repentance." If they don't they'll be captives all their days.

And what about what he says in Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart," your heart, my heart, everybody's heart in its natural state. I'm not talking about this beating organ in me, I'm talking about the heart and the mind, "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Deceitful, desperately wicked above all things, and who can know it?

In Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar is brought to the conclusion that he confesses in verse 35, but the only reason that he can confess this truth is because God has brought him to that point. He was a king, he was powerful, he was self-righteous, he was perishing, but the Lord brought him to this truth and he confessed, "all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing." Nothing. And God does "according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" God's gonna do what he will with every single one of us and there's not one thing that we can charge him with or question him with, and that's a big pill to swallow.

You see, the truth is man is set forth in this book as being spiritually dead. That's what Paul said to the Ephesians, "And you who hath he quickened who were dead." What don't we understand about that? Dead in trespasses and sin and a dead person cannot do anything in the realm in which he is dead, and a sinner is spiritually dead to God. In himself, he cannot repent, he cannot believe, he cannot come, he cannot live. You say, "Well, that's an awful state to be in." That is exactly right. Christ said, "You cannot come to me that you might have life. No man can come to me except the Father draw him." And this inability is joined with unwillingness. He says you won't come to him. "You will not will to come to me." We say, "Well, we could if we wanted to." That's the problem. Unless God does something to your "want to," unless he makes you willing in the day of his power, unless he deals with you in your true condition in his grace, you'll never come to Christ. You'll never be forgiven of your sins. You'll never have eternal life. You'll never have peace.

And this inability does not leave us without responsibility, there's just no ability in this responsibility. We're commanded to come, to believe, to repent. And you say, "Well, if I'm unable and unwilling to come to God, that leaves me without hope. There ain't no hope." There's no hope in you, no hope in me, no hope in any of Adam's race in themselves, no hope in what you can do, no hope in what you can do, no hope in you establishing a righteousness, no hope in you dealing with your sins and that's why the

Psalmist said, "Hope thou in God." Our condition requires help, total help. It requires, our saving requires a total Savior. It requires one to act and move and do outside of ourselves, for us, and to us. It takes the grace and the power of God.

Paul says here in verse 20, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." On any principle of your doing, you'll never be declared righteous by God.

But look at verse 21, "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference." All that are saved are gonna be saved the same way. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." But verse 24 says, "Being justified freely by his grace," having been, these believers at Rome and other places, they have been justified by God through the blood of Jesus Christ. It's the work of God in Christ and that is "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then?" If we're all sinners, if we're all in the same condition, if we all have the same inability, if we're all by nature the same way, if we all came from Adam, if we're all as he says we are, how could we ever boast? He must save us by his grace through the redemption that's in Christ Jesus and if he does so, he must do it freely, that is, without a cause in us and all the cause being Christ. He reconciled his people to himself. God set forth himself. He alone does it. The atonement of Christ is the self-satisfaction of God. It meets the requirements of the divine nature which is equally in each person. God hath reconciled us to himself. It's the work of atonement. It's the work of redemption in which he is both the offended party and the one who makes up for the offense because we can't. He must do it all because not only can we not but we would not.

I'm sure, I'm sure that the truth abases man as he is in himself totally continually. It always does. If you hear a man bragging on men, and that's what most every kind of preaching is now, we'll find some way to make you feel good about yourself, we'll give you an office in the church, but not the truth. The truth will lay you as a sinner low so that the only place you can find hope is in Jesus Christ and him crucified because apart from him, we are hopeless. Hopeless. But God in grace takes such creatures as these, makes them the objects of his love, makes them righteous in his sight, gives them peace in one outside of themselves. The truth includes all those things in those who are saved by the truth.

Our Father, this morning we pray in Christ's name that you would honor yourself, save your people, get all glory to yourself because we ask it only in Christ. Amen.