

Portrait of an Unconverted Life

Text: Romans 3:13-20

Introduction:

1. Review context: In this section the Apostle arraigns the whole world before the high court of heaven.
2. This lesson: The Apostle moves from general descriptions of man's fallen condition (Vs. 10-12) to referencing specific sins.
3. This section concludes in Vs. 19-20 with the whole world pronounced guilty before God.

I. Their Conversation (Vs. 13-14)

A. The Source – the heart

1. Matthew 12:34 *"O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? **for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.**"*
2. Luke 6:45 *"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: **for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.**"*
3. Jeremiah 17:9 *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"*

B. The Manifestation

1. Their throat – defiled
2. Their tongues – deceitful
 - a. Has the idea of baiting a hook
 - b. Examples of deceit: Blatant lies, half-truths, exaggerations, manipulation of the facts to suite one's own agenda
 - c. Jeremiah 9:3-5 *"And they bend their tongues like their bow for **lies**: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD. Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with **slanders**. And they will **deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity.**"*
3. Their lips – deadly
 - a. Egyptian Cobra: The fangs lie folded back in the upper jaw, but when it throws up its head to strike, those hollow fangs drop down and when the serpent bites, the fangs press a sack of

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deadly poison hidden under its lips at the root, thus injecting the venom into the wound.

- b. Prov. 18:21 *“Death and life are in the power of the tongue...”*
 - c. Prov. 18:8 *“The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.”*
 - d. Psalm 64:2-4 *“Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity: Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words: That they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not”*
 - e. Prov. 17:4 *“A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.”*
4. Their mouth – denigrations
1. James 3:6 *“And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.”*
 2. David’s testimony: 2 Samuel 23:2 *“The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.”*

II. Their Conduct (Vs. 15-18)

A. Murder & Violence (Vs. 15)

1. Mankind inclined to shed blood. Note word ‘swift’
2. Cain, the first murderer (Gen. 4:8)
3. Antediluvian world: Genesis 6:11 *“The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.”*
4. History attests to the truth of this verse
 - a. The wars of the last century
 - b. The abortion industry: Over 1 billion babies aborted worldwide since the 1970’s (conservative estimate)¹ According to right to life NSW, there are an estimated 80-90 thousand abortions every year in Australia. This equates to approximately 250 abortions per day. 1 in 3 Australian women will have an abortion in their lifetime.
 - c. Read the news!
5. Even if men do not commit acts of physical murder, he is still a murderer at heart: 1 John 3:15 *“Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer”* (See also Titus 3:3)
6. Haldane: “The most savage animals do not destroy so many of their own species to appease their hunger, as man destroys of his fellows, to satiate his ambition, his revenge, or cupidity.”

B. Destruction (Vs. 16)

¹ Lifesitenews.com

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1. 'destruction' = a compound word that denotes breaking in pieces and completely shattering, causing total devastation.
 2. 'misery' = sorrow and heart break
 3. Note: Many falsely claim the human race is "improving" and "progressing".
- C. Unrest (Vs. 17)
1. They are not acquainted with peace.
 2. Peaceful circumstances does not necessarily mean peace of heart
 3. The prophets and priests of Jeremiah's day proclaimed a false peace: Jeremiah 6:14 *"They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace."*
 4. The peace that God gives is a peace that *"passeth all understanding"* (Phil. 4:7)
- D. Irreverence (Vs. 18)
1. "before their eyes" = speaks of something that is in focus
 2. This is the most serious and explains all the other sins
 3. 1:18 *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all **ungodliness** and **unrighteousness** of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness."* 'ungodliness' = irreverence or disrespect towards God. Unrighteousness the fruit of this sinful root.
 4. Prov. 16:6 *"By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil."*
 5. "The text exposes the root error that gives rise to the manifold sins of humanity: lack of "fear of God". (Moo)

III. Their Conviction (Vs. 19-20)

- A. Guilty (Vs. 19)
1. "the law" = its function is to show a sinner his guilt
 2. Galatians 3:24 *"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."*
 3. "mouth may be stopped" = imagery of the courtroom. The defendant has no more response to the charges laid against him.
 - a. Men tend to speak of their own goodness or of others badness or both (e.g. the Pharisee praying in the temple in Luke 18:11-12) Most men proclaim their own goodness (Prov. 20:6)
 - b. Contrast to judgments in this life. Even convicted criminals of the worst kind even continue to affirm their innocence! On that day, no excuse or defense will be voiced. All will be utterly and totally convinced of their guilt before God. No one will point their finger at God on judgment day and accuse Him of injustice (as people often say they will)
- B. Helpless (Vs. 20)

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1. 'therefore' = the final conclusion drawn from the whole of the preceding discussion, beginning at chapter 1:18
2. "deeds of the law" = insufficiency of human works
3. "no flesh" = not one person!

Conclusion: Against the dark backdrop of man's sin and depravity, shines the light of hope. Righteousness is available through faith! Thank God for the word 'but' in Vs. 21

"Justification is the declaration of a competent court that one tried before it is acquitted." B.H. Carrol

1. Eph. 2:1-9
2. 1 Timothy 1:12-16 "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord..."
3. Titus 3:3-7 "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish..."