



Romans Road Pt. 1: Seeing

Romans 3:10 *“As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one.”*

There was an assumption in the days of Paul the Apostle that being Jewish gained favor with God. Since birth, Jewish children had it drilled into their very being that they were the descendance of God’s children. They held on to verses like Deuteronomy 7:6 *“For you are a people consecrated to the LORD your God: of all the peoples on earth the LORD your God chose you to be His treasured people.”* Paul’s Jewish culture had segregated people by region. There were Jerusalem Jews, Samaritan Jews, and the common Roman gentiles. We could go further by splitting people up into Pharisee, Sadducee, and diaspora (meaning outside). I bet there were a lot more too.

The Romans Road begins with the acknowledgement that we all are without excuse. God’s majesty and power is exemplified in a complex and beautiful creation. The second leg of this road trip is similar. No one is righteous, not even one.” This would not have been received well in those early first century days. Jews believed they were the called ones. They were Gods exclusive children. I suppose that the Romans too believed they were highly favored by their Gods. Words that surround this type of thinking are: righteous, upstanding, decent, and worthy. Why is Paul going down this road?

The apostle is purposely repeating the intended word “all” to make a point. Yes, everyone can see “all” Gods work clearly. 100% of “all” are not righteous. Why make these points at all?

It's because in God's kingdom "all" are welcome. Yet, in the ancient Jewish world that was not the case. In the religious world today, that is still not the case. We have hundreds of denominations that believe they are the true heirs of God. The Jews, Muslims, and Christians all lay claim to God. Paul is taking us on a journey. He is increasing our learning curve. No matter who you are, you can see God's work clearly. No matter who you are, no one is more special than another. "All" who chose to believe are welcome.

Another word the apostle chose to use is "righteous." Paul uses that term because it claims holiness. It claims to be favored by God. Leviticus 11:45 *"For I am the Lord who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God; thus, you shall be holy, for I am holy."* There is a connection within all of us to feel holy. If your religious then you feel that you have moved your life towards God. Maybe you give money, go to church, or have compassion for the poor. Do you look good enough in the eyes of God? Now if you are reading this and do not believe in God, you're in a great place. Do you think that you are good enough to enter heaven? Are you better than those religious nuts? Is your holy as good or better than someone else's holy?

It's all the same issue and thought regardless of time. The religious rulers two thousand years ago thought they were in by birth right. Many of us today think we are good enough because of our own personal goodness. I was listening to a theological scholar talk about atheists. He asked them to define evil without examples. Most of the atheist's struggled to define evil. Why? It's because good and evil should not exist outside a devil and a holy God. We are just an insignificant creature of nature. How can evil or good exist if everything we are is just random molecules interacting. Is good and evil a solid truth or an abstract concept?

Paul is smart. If you are willing to admit that God made creation then you know that he is holy and there is evil. If you believe in evil then hell might exist. If there are no righteous people,

not even one, then who is holy? Just God? The fact that you even entertain the notion of evil is problematic. What is your line in the sand on good and evil? What if your neighbors' line is different? You see, Paul is pointing out that the maker of creation has a line. If it's his creation then it's his line. The line is: *He is God and you are not*. How can you prove your neighbors good and evil line is wrong? Where does your belief in goodness come from? What if real holiness was a holy God's fingerprint in you?

This point in the road is a good one. Why do you think your good enough? Paul will be asking you to consider God's answer in next week's lesson. What makes a person good or bad? Walk with Paul on this road. I have and am glad I did. To wake up and actually seeing Gods work in creation is stunning. I am positive that I never really noticed how complicated a body is. How diverse creation is. It seemed so simple: this world was a random act of fate. One molecule in space turned into a human. Yet, under Gods view it's an utterly amazing work of art. It's the same with righteousness. What if I wasn't as holy as I thought I was?

The whole point of this stop in the Romans road is to see clearly. What if my actions made a difference in this world? What if I could hurt others by the choices I make? The reason Paul uses words like "all or "no one" is to help you look past your own pride, greed, and holiness. To see the world in a different way. To see people in need. Finally, it's to see yourself as a person who does not measure up to perfection. That person will know in their heart that a holy God just might be able to make them better than they are? How? It's because he is the creator of you.