

Discussion Guide | Romans 3:1-20 | The Paradox of Sin and Grace

Gathering Question:

What is one way you've seen God at work in your life this week?

Gathering Prayer

Father, by Your Spirit, would you guide us into all truth. Help us to hear and be attentive to Your voice as we work through this study. In the name of Jesus, Your Son, we pray. Amen.

Opening Questions

- What stood out to you in the sermon?
- What insights did you gain?
- What questions did it raise?

Read Romans 3:1-20

The Power of Sin | Romans 3:9

- What difference does it make to think of sin as a power rather than simply a list of things we do wrong?
- Why is self-improvement ultimately inadequate to deal with the problem Paul describes in Romans 3? What can self-discipline accomplish, and what can it not accomplish?

Universal Sin | Romans 3:10-12

- Why is it easier to recognize sin in other people than in ourselves? What happens when we begin comparing our righteousness to the people around us?
- Sin is not limited to one kind of person, culture, political group, social class, or level of morality. Why is that truth both humbling and hopeful?

Pervasive Sin | Romans 3:13-18

- Sin affects our speech, relationships, actions, desires, and even our relationship with God. What does that tell us about the depth of the problem?
- Why can a focus only on outward behavior give us a false sense of righteousness? What might we miss if we only ask, "What am I doing wrong?" rather than, "What is happening in my heart?"

Trust Structures

- A "trust structure" is a deep inner posture where we rely on something other than God for our well-being, identity, security, or purpose. What are some things people commonly look to for those things?
- What is something you are tempted to believe you cannot be okay without? What might that reveal about where you place your trust?
- Think about a good thing—money, marriage, children, career, health, politics, ministry, reputation, etc.—that can become a "savior." Why is it so easy for good things to become things we ultimately trust instead of God?

- Consider these three questions from the sermon: “What am I trying to control? What am I afraid of losing? What am I trusting to take care of me?” Which of those questions is most revealing for you right now, and why?

The Paradox of Grace

- How does a deeper awareness of your own sin change your understanding of the cross? What happens to our view of Jesus when we minimize the seriousness of our sin?
- The sermon ends with the thought, “If Jesus can save a sinner like me, he can save anybody.” Who is someone you find difficult to believe Jesus could really save or transform? How might the gospel challenge that attitude?

Closing Prayer