

So. Wolf - Dec. 26, 71 A.M.
Shore Park Aug 8, 90 P.M.
Prayer meeting -

THE DARKEST VERSE IN THE BIBLE

Romans 3:23

INTRODUCTION:

A missionary in China gave a copy of the New Testament to a man and told him that this was God's Word written almost 2,000 years ago. The man took it home to read it. And for some reason, he began with the book of Romans - after reading through Romans 3:23, he stopped.

The next day he returned the book to the missionary. You did not tell me the truth. You said that this book was written 2,000 years ago - but I know better. You missionaries wrote it to describe the sins of my people.

The man was partly correct - Romans was written by a missionary Paul. But he wrote not in the 20th century, but in the first. And he wrote not to describe the sins of the Chinese people, but the sins of the whole world in every generation. That which he wrote comprises the blackest picture of the human heart.

If I were to ask you today, what is the darkest verse in the Bible? Many passages in the Bible can be found which describe sin.

- ✓ Adam and Eve.
- ✓ David and Bathsheba.
- ✓ Judas betraying Jesus.
- ✓ Peter denying his Lord.

But none of these Scriptures would qualify for the darkest verse. They describe the particular sin of certain people. To chose a verse that would take in all the sins of all the people who ever lived, who live now, or will ever live on this earth. This verse is chosen today - is the blackest and the darkest

verse in the Bible. Paul says, for all hath sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Someone has described sin as a moment of gradification. And an eternity of remorse.

2/ Three words will due to remind us of the situation in this verse. Inclusion, exclusion, and conclusion.

I. INCLUSION

Let us look at the word, all. Includes the entire human race.

This is fully revealed, Rom. 1:19-3:23. It shows that both Jew and Gentile are without excuse. The Jew has sinned in that he does not live up to the written law of God.

The Gentile is guilty because he does not live up to the moral law of God inscribed in his heart.

In today's language, this would correspond to those who possess a knowledge of God's written word, the Bible. And you do not keep it.

And second, the reason we are without the written word, but still have God's moral law in their hearts.

What do we mean by the word sinned. Many words speak of sins—crookedness, lawlessness, iniquity, wickedness, and offense.

The word in the ~~text~~ "to miss the mark". As though one shot at a target and missed it by an inch or by a mile.

The point is not how far he missed it, but that he missed it.

In this case, the target is the character and (will of God). To miss this target is sin in God's sight. And the entire human race has been doing this.

~~Many~~ people resent the idea. Human pride seeks to glorify man's virtues. And minimize his faults.

Man also likes to use terms unadjusted or diseased, or moral lax, or temporary stumbling. But the Bible says something terribly is wrong with man. In plain terms, the Bible says, that all have sinned.

It is difficult for proud men to say that all have sinned.

The most ~~difficult~~ words for you to speak are these. I have sinned.

It is easy to confess your neighbor's sins, or to speak about the sins of society. Or to talk about the compromises men make concerning God's will and his moral law. But God recognizes no such escape goat, as the sins of society.

Paul gives a ~~portrait~~ of the inclusion, of the moral situation, in the natural man's life. It is your picture and mine. And it is not so nice.

2-9-10
Rom. 3:9 - there is none righteous, no, not one. There never has been one man from Adam to this hour, not one, that has been rightly related to God. Something has been wrong with all.

V. 11

2 - There is none that (understandeth.) Without spiritual understanding. He is without the capacity for spiritual things. He is dumb in spiritual matters.
V. 11.

V. 11

3 None (seeketh after) God. V. 11. Lost men are not trying to find their way back to God. What did the first sinner do. Did he run after God, crying for mercy and for pardon. Not at all. He ran away from God. And hid in the garden. God had to call to him and bring him out of hiding.

But you say, that you do not feel that I am lost. But God does! He says you are. You are like the child at the circus, looking for her mother. Seeing a policeman she says, would you please find my mother. She is lost. No, God is not lost from you. He knows where you are. You are lost from him.

V. 12

4 They have all (gone out of the way - turned aside.) Abandon God's way. They had light, but did not follow it. They knew the right way, but did not take it. All like sheep, have gone astray.

Self-centered instead of God centered.

V. 12

5 They are together and become (unprofitable.) This means worthless, useless, and sour. They may be smart and build big enterprises, and universities - wonderful accomplishments to add to the comfort and delight - but they are worthless to God. He cannot use them for spiritual purposes. The Word is used by the Greeks to describe rotten fruit. Inner-corruption of men and women. Worthless to men. Unprofitable.

V. 12

6 There is (none that doth good,) proud, selfish, etc. What one does takes on the character of what one is.

v. 13

7. Their ^{v. 13} throat is an open sepulchre. It means to gape and yawn. The idea of emptiness in empty space. It is like an uncovered grave with a body at the bottom giving forth odors.

v. 13

8. With their ^{v. 13} tongue, they have used deceit. Smooth talker, slick tongues, speaking like a hypocrite - try to hide in the open grave.

v. 13

9. The ^{v. 13} poison of asps is under their lips. It is like the serpent that bites. A poison sac that is pressed and countless thousands of hearts are broken. Homes are left desolate, churches are led and broken through quarrels, graves are dug, the devil is the slauder.

v. 14

10. Whose ^{v. 14} mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Profanity, hate, anger, strife.

v. 15

11. Their ^{v. 15} feet are swift to shed blood. Crime and murder are major factors.

v. 16

12. ^{v. 16} Destruction and (misery) are in their ways. The waste of sin - it's cost can scarcely be recognized. There are so many up-to-date illustrations that could be given.

v. 17

13. And the ^{v. 17} way of peace have they not known. There is only one way of peace. Peace programs fall to pieces. We talk peace, we vote for peace, we pray for peace, we organize. Having no peace with God, they cannot realize peace among themselves.

v. 18

14. That is ^{v. 18} (no fear) of God before their eyes. They have no reverence of God, irreverence has been called the mother of evil. Where this is lacking - restraint is gone. This is the most awful of all. There is something in God to be feared.

He holds our lives in his hands. Be not afraid of them that kill the body. But are not able to kill the soul. But rather fear him that is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell. Matt. 10:20. Yes, God is going to do something with men after death. Fear him!

6/19 ✓ *1:19 - Guilty before God*
Each of us lives in the midst of a wicked generation. You must chose between the will of Satan and the will of God. You are born with a sinful nature. Your choice tends towards the former rather than the latter. You have sinned, he includes you and me along with all the others.

✓ II. EXCLUSION *V, 23 B:*

And comes short of the glory of God. Here is suggested, because of sin, we are all excluded from fellowship with God.

Sin has been the big word. It has dominated this text. It is a word that describes not the condition of a few but of all.

✓ You have heard about bad eggs. What makes an egg bad. Something has gone wrong inside. The shell may look alright but it is inwardly tainted. Crack the shell and you get a bad odor. We are all bad eggs - tainted inside. Some have good looking exteriors. But there is that inner part.

✓ The words come short - means to fall behind in a race. It means to fail to reach the target. He is a good man, but he is not good enough. Now which of these men fail to hit the target. Why, both come short of the glory of God. Their sin separates them from God's presence. And so they are lost from God.

Man learning / play Accord. - Music - hardest thing keep the music going while you turn pages

✓ And what is the goal--it is the glory of God.

Now what does Paul mean by the glory of God. In Isa. 6:3, the Seraphim cried, holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts. The earth is filled with his glory. This suggests the supreme excellence of his holy and righteous person.

✓ Therefore to fall short of God's Glory, is to be incapable of standing unblameable in his presence.

Isa. 59:2, but your iniquities are separated between you and your God.
And your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

✓ In Gen., God made man in his own image. This referred to a spiritual likeness.
In such a condition man lives in the presence of God. With unbroken fellowship.
When man sinned, he was driven from the presence of Jehovah. His sin separated him from God. He had fallen short of the glory of God.

Paul says, because men through Adam, inherit this sinful nature. And like Adam, enter into personal sin.

Someone will say, surely not all men come short of the glory of God. There must be a difference in degrees of sin.

✓ The Ten Commandments forbid both lying and murder. One man crosses God's will and tells a lie. Either white or black. Another man crosses God's will and commits murder. Men say, that one man lied, and another man murdered. But God says two men crossed his will. What they did after that was secondary.

I know that sounds like strange doctrine - but God's Word, James 2:10-11, whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in (one) point, is (guilty) of all. For he that said, thou shalt not kill, shall not commit adultery, shall not lie - becomes a transgressor. Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor. Any act that misses the mark of God's character or will is sin. And causes you to come short of the glory of God.

We might illustrate it - here is a man that scorns God's character. Lives in open defiance of his will. He deliberately aims far and wide of the target. And misses it a mile. He is a notorious sinner, and an example of violence, crookedness and wickedness.

Here is another man who recognizes God's goodness. He desires to obey it. He is a kind person. But through his dismay, he discovers through his sinful nature, he is unable to keep God's law. He approves of the target. He aims his arrow carefully. But his boasting of self-effort is so weak, that his arrow falls to the ground - long before it gets to the target. He is a good man but he is not good enough. Now both men fail to hit the target. Both of them came short of the glory of God.

Therefore this is the exclusion about which we speak.

Chapter 1:24, 26, 28 / 3 times in Romans - Paul says God gave them up. They are terrible words. Dr. Robertson says these people had already willfully deserted God, who merely left them to their own self-determination. And self-destruction is part of the price of man's moral freedom.

It is like taking the bridal off of a rebellious horse. Men wilfully reject God of their own chosing - he has no choice but to respect their own personality.

John Fitzpatrick - Cleveland - Buried ^{35 yrs old} - Funeral service on Christmas Eve
 Home decorated for Christmas - left widow & 4 children - Stabbed to death as stood in line with
 this children to visit Santa - 75 people witnessed the stabbing - A man attempted to push in the long
 line & used foul language. Fitzpatrick told man wait his turn & objected to foul language - Stabbed
 4 "Knife" four times. Peggy told mom, daddy's been stabbed. He came home early last Tuesday to go
 shopping with the family.

And it is an awful choice.

1:24

V. 24 - God gave them up to uncleanness through the lust of their hearts
 - to dishonor their own bodies between themselves. This speaks of sexual
 immorality - between men and women.

1:26

V. 26 - God gave them up unto vile affections. For even though women did
 change their natural use, into that which is against nature. Likewise, also
 men, burning in lust toward one another. This speaks of homosexuality, and
 immorality. It is a terrible picture indeed.

But the compounded tragedy is that these verses are so utterly modern. Sex
 has become one of the most widely worshipped Gods of this age. It has come to be
 one of the most discussed subjects of modern times. You would think that nothing
 else exists.

It makes the headlines in crime. Raw sex is in stories and in scenes - that
 used to be restricted to houses of ill-fame. But now they are typed - through
 T. V. into every home. Numbers of commercials have the sex theme. Smut literature
 - but such things are not freedom. They constitute enslavement.

These were the things, the major things contributing to the downfall of
 societies and civilizations.

Do these things constitute a rejection of God. Or are they the fruit of
 a rejection that has already taken place. It would seem that the latter is the
 case. The principle reason for sex is loss of believe in God.

Once men lose God, they lose the purpose of life. And when the purpose of

living is forgotten, the universe becomes meaningless. Men then tries to forget his emptiness.

1:28
Fitzpatrick
V. 28 - Paul says a third time, and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, or to acknowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind. When they rejected God, he rejected them. Given them up - to a mind, void of judgement. This description of our own age. We deal with human intellect and reject God's written revelation.

✓ What am I saying? I am saying that God does not weigh sin as petty and light - he does not measure sins as big or little.

Sin is sin - in God's sight. Any violation of his will is sin.

God does not compare you with other sinners. He gauges you by himself. It is not enough for you denounce the sins of the notorious wicked. Or to rationalize your own sins.

✓ Dwight L. Moody said, the best way to show that a ^{stick} sin is crooked is not to argue about it, or spend time denouncing it - but to lay a straight stick along side it.

✓ So, lay your twisted life along side the character of God and you soon will see how far you have come short of the glory of God.

But you ask, you do not expect me to be as good as God, do you?

God does. And you reply, but that is impossible. Of course, it is. And that is exactly why God has moved to do for you what noone else can do for you.

✓ III. CONCLUSION

V. 24

Now had the Chinese gentlemen who read verse 23, and thought it to be a horrible picture of these people, just read one more verse - he would have had the true light.

3:24 ✓ Verse 24, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, this is the conclusion of the whole matter - because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, in Christ, God has provided redemption for all who will receive it.

The word justify means to declare righteous. It does not mean that you are righteous or free from sin - that God will, that in Christ he will regard you as such.

How can this be possible. God being righteous cannot ignore or condone your sins. Being loving and merciful, he could not leave you hopelessly in your sins.

✓ So what could he do. In his justice, he punished sin in the person of his son, Jesus Christ. The wages of sin is death. Rom. 6:23. So in Jesus' death on the cross, God paid the price, the ransom for your sins. He paid it to -himself. In the death of Jesus Christ.

Notice, that this is only for those which believe in Jesus. Your own efforts. V. 26, at self-righteousness come short, of the glory of God. But by faith, in Jesus Christ, you are justified.

What can you do.

✓ First, you can recognize that you are a sinner - lost from God.

You can repent of your sin. And confess it to God.

You can receive his forgiveness through your faith in his Son.

Until you do so, you will continue to come short of the glory of God.

Did you not know that the only people on the face of the earth for whom Christ can do anything are sinners.

There is no distinction in the matter of sin. All have sinned.

There is no distinction in the matter of requirements - all must believe. I remember a story that a preacher told as he was visiting a home - and he remembers there was a puddle of water along the walk. And there was a small boy, four or five years of age, dressed in clean clothes. Who had pleaded with his mother to allow him to go outside and play. Finally, she gave her permission. He was to stay on the porch. Finally, he worked his way down the steps. And on the bottom step. In a little while he was out on the sidewalk. Minutes later he was down the walk - and still later, down by the gate. And then he was off to the racers. But suddenly there was an out-cry from the boy. He had fallen from the sidewalk into the mud puddle. Covered with mud and water, he came crying toward the gate. His mother met him at the gate, she took him by the hand firmly, and as they went by the house, the preacher said - the little boy said don't whip me, don't whip me Mama. As they passed the window, I heard the mother saying, stop your crying - I forgive you. When his mother told him that he was forgiven, his crying stopped. Forgiveness for him meant but one thing - remission of penalty. He would not receive the whipping he deserved. But forgiveness meant much more to the mother. She stripped the dirty clothes from him, and then the boy had to be scrubbed and

Little Boy - Christmas program - Behold, I bring you good tidings
ask mother what that meant - Told good news -
right of program forgot his time -13- suddenly all came back -
" Hey I've got good news for you people "

she had to put on fresh clothes - and in a few minutes, she brought him into
the room and sat him down in a chair. And said, now sit there and talk to
the preacher.

Gift - There is a gift for you because of God's gift at Christmas -
" The first step's which lead ~~from~~ to his love -

The application is simple - we are all sinners. By virtue of God's grace,
through Christ, God pronounces us forgiven. It means the remission of penalty.
The blood of Christ cleanses us and we are dressed in Christ's righteousness.
And we are declared righteous in the sight of God.

That's Why Christ came -

Now, no man can imagine this feeling in his heart until he has trusted
God's word. It is impossible for us to repair our lives that would be satisfactory
to God. But Jesus purchases us and gives us an entirely new nature and new life.
The darkest text in the world is followed by one of the most brightest opportunities
ever offered to man.

Luke 1:16 7-80

This is what Christmas is about - For unto you is Born This day
in the City of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord "

Wise men came to see for themselves -

Shepherds " " " " " "

you must come & see for yourself! - Firsthand experience!

"The Darkest Verse in the Bible" should help each of us
to come to the Star of Bethlehem and you into light -