

We're All Under Sin's Power

Teaching Tips

July 10, 2016

Bible Study Guide 6

Words You Should Know

A. Sin ([Romans 3:9](#)) *hamartia* (Gk.)—Something that is an offense or sinful.



B. Ways (v. 16) *hodos* (Gk.)—Course of conduct, way of thinking, feeling, and deciding; road, path.

Teacher Preparation

Unifying Principle—Everyone “Blows It.” Many people are grateful for all they have in life, but others take every opportunity to abuse their privileges. Why this wide variation? Paul laments that humans have corrupted God’s creation almost from the beginning, and that all people continue to be sinful and will be held accountable by God.

- A. Pray for your students, especially that they will be impacted by the lesson to be accountable for their sins.
- B. Brainstorm a list of local laws and the penalties. Be prepared to discuss.
- C. Study the In Focus story and be prepared to share your own story of how you’ve “blown it.”

O—Open the Lesson

- A. Open with prayer.
- B. Ask, “What is the first word that comes to your mind when you think of the word ‘sin’?”
- C. Have volunteers read the Aim for Change, and the Keep in Mind verses.
- D. Read the In Focus story.

P—Present the Scriptures

- A. Invite students to read the Lesson Aim aloud.
- B. Use The People, Places, and Times; Background; Search the Scriptures; In Depth; and More Light on the Text to clarify the verses.
- C. Share the list of local laws and penalties you compiled. Ask students about their experiences keeping or breaking these. Discuss.

E—Explore the Meaning

- A. Have volunteers summarize the Lesson in Our Society.

B. Share your “everyone blows it” story. Relate it to the lesson.

N—Next Steps for Application

A. Read Make It Happen.

B. Close in prayer, asking God to open the students’ eyes to their individual sins and the need for change.

Worship Guide

For the Superintendent or Teacher

Theme: We’re All Under Sin’s Power

Song: “You Don’t Know My Story”

Devotional Reading: [1 John 1:5–10](#)



Bible Background • [PSALM 136:1–9, 26](#); [ROMANS 3:9–20](#)



Printed Text • [ROMANS 3:9–20](#) | **Devotional Reading** • [1 JOHN 1:5–10](#)



Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: KNOW that humankind began corrupting creation from the start and that God’s retribution will surely come; ACCEPT our personal role corrupting God’s beautiful creation; and BE ATTENTIVE to the biblical prophets and accept accountability with God.



In Focus



Alonzo sat nervously outside the college audition hall waiting to hear the results of his performance. He had already been accepted to this popular Historically Black College but needed a hefty band scholarship in order to enroll.

As the minutes ticked by, Alonzo feared he’d blown another chance at returning to school. It had been a few years since he’d failed classes and lost his scholarship at a different university. Today, he was much wiser. He was also eager to see how God would redeem the time spent working as a hospital aide full time, paying off student debt and volunteering in his church’s band.

“Everyone blows it,” his pastor had said in a recent sermon. Alonzo’s heart burned while listening to the timely message. Going to the altar, he finally repented for his former cavalier approach to education. Soon after, Alonzo had learned about the opportunity he had just auditioned for.

Hearing his name, Alonzo looked up to see the band director beckoning. Heart pounding, Alonzo trudged to the director’s side.

“You’re in,” the director said. “Your scholarship letter will be in the mail!”

Being accountable for our actions means taking personal responsibility for our role in sin and turning to God in repentance. What holds us back from taking personal responsibility?

Keep in Mind

“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” (Romans 3:20).



Focal Verses

KJV

Roman 3:9 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;

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.

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.

NLT

Romans 3:9 Well then, should we conclude that we Jews are better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin.



10 As the Scriptures say, “No one is righteous—not even one.

11 No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God.

12 All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one.”

13 “Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are filled with lies.” “Snake venom drips from their lips.”

14 “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”

15 “They rush to commit murder.

16 Destruction and misery always follow them.

17 They don't know where to find peace.”

18 “They have no fear of God at all.”

19 Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God.

20 For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.

The People, Places, and Times

Saul/Apostle Paul. A well-educated Roman citizen, Saul was a Pharisee who persecuted Christians as proof of his zeal for the Jewish faith and way of life ([Philippians 3:4–6](#); [Acts 26:4–5](#)). On such a mission on the road to Damascus, he had a remarkable encounter with Jesus. Shortly after, he learned of his call from God to take “[God’s] message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel” ([Acts 9:15, NLT](#)). As an apostle, Paul’s life exemplified one of great sacrifice and persecution. He wrote about his experiences in hopes of drawing people to Christ, and to strengthen and mature believers.

Roman believers. Scripture does not record who founded the church at Rome, but it boasted members of both Gentile and Jewish backgrounds. The congregation struggled with various problems, including disunity based on the differences between their Jewish and Gentile members and because of conflicting ideology about sin, repentance, and judgment.

Background

In the book of Romans, Paul helped believers understand the importance of salvation by faith, not works. Because of their need for a solid, faith-based spiritual foundation, Paul provided clarification of Christian doctrine. He offered glimpses into the Jewish way of life by the law, but stressed the importance of service to Christ by faith, rather than through legalistic activities.

Further, he emphasized the importance of repentance, salvation, and unity among believers. In underscoring that all believers—Jews and Gentiles—are equal in God’s eyes, he also confirmed that God’s promise to the Jews remains intact ([Romans 9–11](#)). As a Roman citizen and former Pharisee, the Apostle Paul was an ideal choice of missionary to teach on such issues as sin, salvation, and grace. While doing so, he refuted potential arguments, providing keys to a victorious, faith-based Christian life.

In today’s lesson, Paul addresses the fact that all human beings are inherently sinful. He reminds us: “all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin” ([Romans 3:9, NLT](#)). Thus, we equally deserve God’s judgment and grace and need continual reminders that: 1) sin is universal; 2) we all blow it at some point; and 3) only God can restore us to fellowship with Him as we repent and accept accountability for our words and deeds.

At-A-Glance

1. Sin is Universal ([Romans 3:9–12](#))
2. Sinful Deeds (vv. 13–18)
3. Sin Exposed (vv. 19–20)

In Depth

1. Sin is Universal ([Romans 3:9–12](#))



Some Jews (especially the Pharisees and their followers) believed following the letter of the Law made them righteous in man's and God's eyes. Upon converting to Christianity, they needed to be reminded that justification is based on faith, not works. Paul facilitated their understanding by exploring the notion of sin in two contexts. First, he defined it as a power that dominates all people. Second, he defined it as the unrighteous deeds performed while under that power.

And, he made it clear that sin is universal. Paul reminded Roman believers, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one" (v. 10, KJV). He was referring to [Psalm 14:2–3 \(NLT\)](#), which states: "The LORD looks down from heaven on the entire human race; he looks to see if anyone is truly wise, if anyone seeks God. But no, all have turned away; all have become corrupt. No one does good, not a single one!" This makes it clear that every single person is marked by sin, and no one is innocent.



2. Sinful Deeds (vv. 13–18)

No one is born a Christian. Rather, everyone is born in iniquity. In fact, Paul contended, nearly from the beginning of God's creation, humankind began corrupting creation and that God's retribution will surely come ([Romans 1:20–23](#)). Now Paul shows from the Jewish Scriptures how this inclination to sin applies to not only the Gentile world but also to the Jewish people.



Verses 13–18 cite specific verbal and physical deeds for which we will be held accountable. These include deceit, cursing, shedding blood, and other acts of destruction. The problem lies in the fact that sinful acts reveal that people do not truly fear God (v. 18), and thus fail to honor Him by committing such deeds. This adds on to Paul's case that the Jews are no better than the Gentiles in the sight of God.

3. Sin Exposed (vv. 19–20)

While the Jews rejoiced in their relationship to the Law, Paul pointed out that the Law had one purpose: to expose sin. The "knowledge of sin" becomes clear under the Law's requirements, as does the truth that no one can live up to them. Neither Jews nor Gentiles are righteous before God, hence our need for a Savior.

This points to later in the passage where Paul presents Jesus as the solution to sinful mankind's dilemma (vv. 23–24). Although we cannot be justified through the Law, we are shown our need for the only one who can justify us—Jesus. Thanks to Jesus, our sins are judged by God on the Cross and His blood gives us forgiveness of sins.

Search the Scriptures

1. Why does the Apostle Paul write that no one is righteous ([Romans 3:9–11](#))?
2. What verbal sins does he specify? Which others are also revealed (vv. 12–18)?



Discuss the Meaning

Today's lesson focuses on ways we blow it by committing sin. If we read them without the knowledge of Jesus' saving grace, the verses in Romans could be depressing. Explain why they are convicting, yet encouraging.

Lesson in Our Society

Some people believe their good deeds will get them to heaven. Thus, they often cite their charitable giving, volunteerism, or fulfillment of local laws as reasons they are "good people." On the other hand, some people always seem to blow it and feel unworthy of God's love, and thus delay making a decision for Christ. How does [Romans 3:9–](#)

20 address both types of people? What would you say to either if they said, “I don’t need to be saved”?



Make It Happen

Verbal abuse has received more attention in recent years than ever before. Yet many individuals still don’t view it as a “big” sin. Paul underscored the fact that sin is sin, and that everyone sins. Ask God to show you ways your words could be more Christ-like.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do.

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned.

More Light on the Text

Romans 3:9-20

9 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.



In this passage, Paul sets out to show how whether Jew or Gentile, all are under sin. He refers to the argument in [Romans 2](#) (especially vv. 11–12) which proved (Gk. *proaitiaomai*, **pro-eye-tee-AH-oh-my**), or brought a charge against previously, that all are under sin. The phrase “under sin” means to be in the sphere of sin’s power and recipients of God’s judgment of sin. This is very similar to non-Western cultures of today who consider that the world is ruled by various “powers.” For Paul, sin is one of those powers which holds sway over every human on the planet. It is not just that people sin as an action. They are trapped and imprisoned by sin and are in need of a rescue. The fact that Jews were also under sin made them worthy of judgment just like the Gentiles.



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.

Paul then goes through a list of Old Testament quotations that describe humanity’s fallen condition. The method of stringing together verses, or “pearl stringing,” was very common in first-century Judaism. This method was often used in synagogue exhortations and can be seen in some Dead Sea Scroll writings, which were written before and around the time of Christ. Now Paul uses this technique of pearl stringing to deal with an anticipated objection: Although Jews are not perfectly righteous, they are better in God’s sight than Gentiles.

By introducing them with the phrase “As it is written,” Paul points toward the Word of God as his objective support for the claim of humanity’s sinfulness and not his own subjective speculation.

He quotes [Psalm 14:3](#), which states there is none righteous (Gk. *dikaios*, **DEE-keye-ose**). This word means to be right with God and to act justly. It holds the idea of being in alignment with or conformed to His will in thinking, feeling, and acting. This lack of righteousness is expressed in that no one “understandeth” (Gk. *suniemi*, **soon-EE-ay-me**), meaning “to understand,” with the image of someone bringing together their perception with the thing perceived. They see the creation, they see good and evil, but cannot understand that they owe their loyalty and allegiance to a Creator. Not only this, but there is none who “seeketh” (Gk. *ekzeteo*, **ek-zay-TEH-oh**), or searches out and craves, for God.



12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Paul continues to describe the human race and states that we have all “gone out of the way.” This is actually one compound word in Greek, *ekklino* (**eh-KLEE-no**), and means to turn aside or deviate from a path. In other words, the Lord has given people the right path and they have intentionally chosen to follow another path. Paul further adds that they are unprofitable (Gk. *achreioo*, **ah-kray-OH-oh**), which also means useless or unserviceable. This leads into the next phrase which states conclusively: “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.

This list of proof texts is based on “gezerah shavah,” a rabbinical principle which linked Old Testament texts by key words. The key words here are the parts of the body. Paul lists Scriptures that mention the throat, tongue, lips, mouth, and feet. In other words the whole body from head to toe is subject to the power of sin.

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.

To further demonstrate his point Paul quotes [Isaiah 59:7–8](#) to show that their sins are not only restricted to their body but extend in violence toward others. The passage in Isaiah actually points toward the need for a mediator and how God’s own arm brought salvation (vv. 17–20). While the Isaiah passage shows God the Father coming with salvation, Paul would use these quotations as his argument in Romans to show how God brought salvation through Christ. This is because Christ is God Himself according to the orthodox belief in the Trinity ([John 1:1–3](#)).

Paul wraps up this list of quotations with a literary device called inclusion. The “there is no” here in verse 18 echoes the “there is none” refrain in vv. 10–11. This is done purposefully to show the finality of the reality of sin in the human race, Jew and Gentile alike. It is the final nail that drives home the point that all are deserving of God’s judgment under sin.

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.

Those under the Law are Jews and their knowledge of sin is given so “that every mouth may be stopped.” This illustration was taken from the law courts; those who were silenced had no reasonable defense. Paul points toward the Jewish understanding that all people sinned and were therefore in need of grace. The Jewish religion of Jesus’ day theoretically knew of the need for God’s grace; this was not the issue Paul was contending for. His main point is for the Jews to be consistent.

If grace was needed for the Jews to be saved, then it will also save the Gentiles. Both groups would be saved by grace, not works of the Law. The picture of a law court continues as Paul states that the whole world would be guilty (Gk. *hypodikos*, **hoo-PO-dee-kose**) before God. The compound parts of the Greek word mean to be “under judgment,” the logical result for a world that is “under sin.” The word often refers to someone who lost their suit or became a debtor. This is an adequate picture of those under sin without Christ.

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.

The implications of Paul’s argument for humanity’s guilt before God are seen in verse 20. Through the deeds of the Law, no one can be justified (Gk. *dikaioo*, **de-keye-OH-oh**), which means to be rendered and pronounced righteous. On the contrary, through the Law comes the knowledge (Gk. *epignosis*, **eh-PEEG-no-sees**), the precise and accurate acknowledgement, of sin. His point is that while those who do not have the Law know sin only in their conscience, those under the Law know exactly what wrong they have done. They have experienced the full meaning of sin: transgression of the Law.

Say It Correctly

Justified. **JUS**-ti-fide.
Sepulchre. **SE**-pool-ker.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

No One without Sin
([John 8:2–11](#))



TUESDAY

Forgiveness of Sin
([Acts 13:36–41](#))



WEDNESDAY

Confess Our Sins
([Psalm 38:17–22](#))



THURSDAY

Open Your Eyes
([Acts 26:12–18](#))



FRIDAY

Freedom from Temptation
([James 1:12–18](#))



SATURDAY

Walk Free of Sin
([1 John 2:1–6](#))



SUNDAY

We're All Under Sin's Power
([Romans 3:9–20](#))

