

Intro:

Two weeks ago we began Paul's proof of his proposition: *all men are sinners who need to be saved by the righteousness that comes from God.*

1. God says so (Rm 3.10-12)
2. Man says so (Rm 3.13-14)

Of course, man's "say so" is not in so many words; that is, he doesn't speak up and say, "I am depraved", rather he betrays his depravity by his wicked speech.

Paul uses the metaphor of all the organs of speech: throat, tongue, lips, mouth — all seen to be full of evil — which stand for the whole man, who is completely depraved.

We hear words like those and we know they are true because they describe us.

This week we move to the next level of proof, which I suggest by our title has to do with man's deeds:

*As a Man Does**depravity displayed by conduct*

It's not just talk with man – he doesn't just say evil things and leave it at that. No, he puts action to his words and he actually *does* evil deeds.

In particular, we will see in this passage that Paul has in mind the most wicked of deeds men do to other men.

When it comes to the depravity of men's speech, we all easily identify with it — this is us. But here we might recoil a bit — I'm not *that* bad!

Our aim in this message is to show that indeed the utterly wicked deeds of some men actually indict all men.

Read Rm 3.9-20, text 15-17

Read also Isa 59.7-8

Proposition: The violent world we live in proves the utter depravity of all men, including you.

I. The futility of living in a violent world**A. Murder, Inc.: and quick to it (15)**

1. In the Gk, the word 'swift' is given first and emphatic position
2. The phrase 'shed blood' is literally 'to pour out blood', a euphemism for murder

- a. Also used of the Lord's description of the cup in the communion service: "for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." Mt 26.28 NAS
- b. The Lord's death was particularly violent, a literal pouring out of blood

*"As to the principle of existence, men are murderous; they do not hesitate to take life. ... The first son of Adam did not hesitate to take the life of his brother. This meant that he neither valued the source of life, the span of life, nor the benefits of life."*¹

I named this point, "Murder, Inc." — this comes from a name given by the press to an organized group of the New York City mob in the 1930s.

- These men carried out hits on mob informers and witnesses in trials against the mob.
- A wide spread network who could be hired to kill men all over the United States.
- "The killers were paid a regular salary as retainer, plus an average fee of \$1,000 to \$5,000 per killing. Their families also received monetary benefits. If the killers were caught, the mob would hire the best lawyers for their defense."²

Our passage is epitomized by men like this, but the murderous hearts of men are found everywhere, even in respectable homes and neighbourhoods.

- A murder-suicide occurred in a home not too far from our house; they were customers of our kids on their newspaper route.

*"At the slightest provocation they commit murder. The lives of their fellow man mean nothing to them in comparison with the gratification of their pride or malice."*³

¹ Herman A. Hoyt, *The First Christian Theology*, p. 56.

² "Murder, Inc.", Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder,_Inc.. (Accessed 2.27.09).

³ Charles Hodge, *Romans*, p. 75.

William Newell comments: “*For further details, read your daily papers!*”⁴

B. Mayhem and misery: both a path and a destination (16)

1. What is conceived by ‘destruction and misery’

a. Destruction = “*that which is broken or shattered, a fracture ... calamity, ruin, destruction ... a devastation, laying waste*”⁵
(mayhem)

b. Misery =

1) “Hardship resulting in wretchedness ... ‘Wretchedness’ may be expressed idiomatically in some languages as ‘to have nothing’ or ‘to have even one’s shirt in rags.’”⁶

2) “An emotional condition that arises from inner or outer torment”⁷

These conditions can be produced immediately by violent men or eventually in the course of life lived in this world...

2. What it is to have these characteristics ‘in their ways’ or ‘in their paths’

a. This world is headed for destruction – every effort of man apart from God will be destroyed, dust and ashes

1) You labour on maintaining your home

2) You labour on filling your home with this world’s goods

3) Your labours will end one day — and your efforts will eventually fall into ruins

I don’t mean to discourage you so that you decide, “what’s the use” and just let your house fall into ruins right now!

But what is left of ancient Rome? A few old large stone ruins, but nothing else.

⁴ William R. Newell, *Romans Verse by Verse*, p. 84.

⁵ Thayer’s *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*.

⁶ Louw-Nida

⁷ Friberg Lexicon

b. This world is full of destruction on the way to the final destruction

1) By the selfish agendas by which men accomplish their dreams – they often spread misery in their wake

“Their path through life is marked not only with blood, but with the ruin and desolation which they spread around them.”⁸

2) By the futility of the things men set their sights on: they cannot produce eternal satisfaction or happiness and so misery is a constant companion

3) By the frailty with which men are afflicted – the world, the universe, and the forces which move in them are much bigger than man – no matter how magnificent the structure, men’s best cannot last

“It is said that the ancient Troy of which Homer sang was built upon the ruins of an earlier Troy, — and that seven other Troys, each constructed upon the ruins of the former, have been found!”⁹

Men were commanded by God to ‘have dominion’ over the earth – but our efforts at rule end in disaster.

The twin towers in New York City are nothing but a hole in the ground today. Perhaps it would be better to leave them as they are, for surely whatever is put in their place will eventually become a dusty hole again ... *someday*.

C. Strangers to peace (17)

1. A path opposite to the path of destruction and misery: the path of peace

a. The Hebrew in this quotation is ‘Shalom’

b. Shalom = wholeness, wellness, well-being; all is full, at peace, at rest

On the seventh day, God rested – all was at *Shalom*, at peace, everything was very good.

⁸ Charles Hodge, *Romans*, p. 75.

⁹ William R. Newell, *Romans Verse by Verse*, p. 84.

“From the beginning it was God’s purpose that men should possess life, engage in productivity, and enjoy the fruits of their achievement in the atmosphere of tranquility.”¹⁰

2. The path of peace is not known by men in their natural state

“But not only have men not known peace with God, they have not enjoyed peace among themselves; and this fact and left them without peace in their own hearts.”¹¹

a. Current well-known conflicts

- 1) The war in Iraq – thousands dead
- 2) The war in Afghanistan – thousands dead
- 3) The conflict in the Sudan – thousands dead, enslaved, brutalized
- 4) Cold war between North and South Korea
- 5) Cold war between China and Taiwan
- 6) Terrorists in Ceylon
- 7) Terrorists in Central and South America
- 8) Drug lords in Columbia
- 9) Israeli/Palestinian conflict
- 10) Not to mention gang wars on the streets of Surrey and Greater Vancouver

b. In the homes, schools and workplaces of our nation, hidden conflicts

c. In men’s hearts, the absence of peace that means all is not *shalom* with them

- 1) At war with God
- 2) Under the condemnation of a guilty conscience
- 3) At odds with men

This is your world. It is a futile, broken, violent, destructive, miserable world where peace is really not known.

¹⁰ Herman A. Hoyt, *The First Christain Theology*, p. 57.

¹¹ Herman A. Hoyt, *The First Christain Theology*, p. 57.

But I want to impress on you that this is not merely just the world you live in, it is what you are in yourself apart from God.

II. The reality of living among violent people (it's not them, it's me)

A. It is quite easy to look at our newspapers and say, "Yeah, they're crazy out there."

B. Paul's point in these verses is this: "You are crazy in there, in your heart, this is you."

"The idea is taken in its broadest form, as the apostle aims to prove, not from any specific type of violence, but from the general prevalence of sins of violence, that human nature is depraved. The tree which produces such fruit so abundantly must be evil."¹²

1. The murderer is depraved (we can readily admit to that)
2. But I haven't ever murdered anyone (so I am not depraved)

This is how we think.

3. Paul is pointing to something else, not THEM, but YOU

Let me illustrate it this way:

How many of you know a murderer personally?

What do you think a murderer is like?

The murderer I know was like this:

- An affable, pleasant fellow in personal conversation
- Someone enjoyable to have coffee with, quite funny and entertaining
- A successful business man
- A man with a good reputation (as far as worldly people go)

But a few years ago, he murdered his wife with a belt and his bare hands.

¹² Charles Hodge, *Romans*, p. 75.

He was sent to William Head Prison, where he later took his own life.

What was the difference between him and me?

- Some difference in family backgrounds, etc
- But basically the same in our culture – normal Canadian boys (we were both Realtors here in Victoria)
- The difference: *the grace of God*
- In nature, *we are the same.*

His act of murder, the apostle Paul is saying, proves that I am depraved – our natures are the same.

Every act of murder proves we all are depraved – we are all made of the same stuff.

Conclusion:

Proposition: The violent world we live in proves the utter depravity of all men, including you.

Do you believe that?

This is the message of the Bible to you. You are a sinner, and you need to be saved.

You have no righteousness of your own, you need the righteousness that comes from God.

You can have it by faith in Jesus Christ. Are you sure that you have that grace from God brought about by faith?