



Photo by [Vlad Kutepov](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Today's topics are not ones I approach eagerly. There is the potential for lots of controversy and hurt. There are strong opinions on every side of these issues. There are convincing theological arguments that support multiple perspectives on this.

Here is the specific question I got so you know right where we're starting from today:

*The world church's stance on women's ordination and homosexuality. Both of these subjects appear to be Fluff that divide. Both sides can be argued Biblically. However, the current arguments supporting the church's stance tend to restrict rather than encourage use of God given talents. My question is why does the Seventh-day Adventist church place restrictions on the contributions that women and members in committed same-sex relationships might bring to the body of Christ?*

These are important issues in today's world. And, I can't really speak for the World Church. I will try to clearly state their position as I understand it and how they got there. But, the bigger issue is how we deal with these things right here in our congregation and in our community.

In one sense, both of these issues can be fluff drawing our attention away from our real mission. Satan is very good at distracting us with issues that feel urgent and critical, to keep us from seeing what is most important.

There are those who have become so focused on one or both of these issues to the point of being hateful and intolerant of anyone holding a different viewpoint. It is causing them to lose their relationship with God, which ultimately is the only real solution to any problem caused by sin.

I know we won't settle either of these issues here today in the few minutes we have together. My goal is to share a couple of principles to help us set aside our differences and work towards our real mission, which is sharing the Good News that Jesus' grace and love is for *everyone*.

## Women's Ordination

The first part of this question deals with the question of Women's Ordination.

First of all, I must point out, pastoral ordination is not a Biblical institution. It's a tradition going a long way back in the Christian Church to set aside priests or ministers for their work.

It doesn't go against the Bible, but there is no special procedure or ordination process outlined in Scripture. There was no paid clergy in the early Christian Church.

In the organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Unions were given the authority and responsibility to create the guidelines for pastoral ordination in their area. This was done for two reasons. They were most likely to understand the needs and culture of the area they were serving. And, it was a way to de-centralize power.

Over time, some of the Union guidelines became widely different and there was a need to bring a bit of consistency to them.

And, almost right from the start of our Church as an organized Denomination, there was pressure to consolidate power at the General Conference level. Mrs. While fought against this. This has been accelerating over the past 50 years or so, and the issues surrounding Women's Ordination in recent years has been at the center of that push.

When you look at the world, it's true that most cultures are male dominated where a women pastor would not be able to function effectively. Since these cultures now make up the majority of the world church, it's not surprising that women's ordination was not approved by the General Conference vote at the last session.

As a result, some of the Unions in Europe have done away with ordination all together so they can treat all pastors the same. They simply issue every pastor – male or female – a ministerial license rather than expend energy continuing to fight this battle.

The truth is, here in the United States, a women who feels called to Pastoral Ministry can usually find a place to minister. In reality, there are countless opportunities in all areas of ministry for women.

While I personally support ordaining women who work in Pastoral Ministry or following the example of the Unions in Europe, I have been greatly disturbed and disappointed by *many on either sides of this issue* who lash out with hateful comments towards those they disagree with.

Many statements have shown a decidedly unChristian tone that turn people away from Jesus and cripple the mission God has given us. When this happens – and it does far too often – Satan wins.

Unfortunately, for many, it has become a distraction that has taken far too much time and energy from our real mission – reaching people for Jesus.

If you're tempted to lash out at someone with a different point of view with anger, hate, or sarcasm, ask yourself this question: Would I say this to Jesus?

Because, according to Jesus in the story of the sheep and goats, you are! (See [Matthew 25:31-46](#))

## Committed Same-Sex Relationships

The other part of the question deals with committed same-sex relationships. As far as I know, our church does not have an official, written position on this. In practice, however, it's restrictive like most conservative, Christian groups.

I would like to expand this discussion a bit beyond same sex marriage.

Many people speak of homosexuality as a *sexual preference* which isn't generally true. The only time it's a *sexual preference* is with those people who decide to experiment a bit back and forth and this is generally celebrities looking for headlines and their followers.

Through my 35 years of working with Christian high school students, I have known several who were homosexual. Some I worked closely with. It was not a preference for any of them. Without exception, they tried for years to not be homosexual, but failed.

Some saw suicide as their only solution. The rest, finally gave up trying to be someone they were not, admitted who they were – coming “out of the closet” and then left the church. They believed – with good reason – the church had no place for them. They are now all living in committed same-sex relationships but will have nothing to do with Christianity because they feel Christianity wants nothing to do with them.

Here is an important consideration. You *cannot choose who* you're attracted to. You cannot simply choose to be attracted to men or to women. Referring to it as a sexual preference is simply wrong, it is correctly referred to as sexual orientation.

However – and this is true for all of us – you *can choose what you will do* with your attraction.

Now, it's true that even a casual reading of Scripture will tell you the Bible condemns homosexual practices. It clearly says so in half a dozen places.

But, I have no idea why it has become the poster child of horrible sin in the conservative Christian Church.

The Bible condemns straight sex outside of marriage dozens of times. The Bible condemns gossip, slander, selfish ambition, way more! We rarely say anything about these.

Jesus never once mentioned homosexual practices; but, He mentioned adultery and divorce. And He hit the religious folk over and over for pride and hypocrisy.

Why are we as Christians so afraid of homosexuals; but, we welcome prideful gossips? And, most of the time, we will at least reluctantly forgive and support a teenager who becomes pregnant outside of marriage – as we should.

So, what's the point of my little rant here?

If you read the chapters of our assignment this week, [Romans 1 – 3](#), you might have noticed a couple of things.

One, we as church folk, have no edge over non church folk. We're all in the same boat; we're all sinners by nature. Paul wrote:

*... All people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin. As the Scriptures say, "No one is righteous – not even one. No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one." ([Romans 3:9-12](#), NLT)*

And all of us have the same chance, the same opportunity to enjoy the grace God freely offers. No one deserves it any more than anyone else. It's not offered because we deserve it, it's offered because it's the only way we can be saved. A few verses later, Paul wrote:

*For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. ([Romans 3:23-24](#), NLT)*

Every sinner, regardless of where they are in their relationship with Jesus should feel loved and accepted at our table, because we are all recovering sinners. And where you are in your recovery is not based on your ability to resist temptation, but on your choice to submit your life to Jesus and His revealed will for you.

So, here's the point. While this issue isn't as cut and dry as we would like it to be – most things aren't; and, we're not going to make a difference on a national level, we can make a difference right here in our community.

If we can show the LBGT community the same unconditional love that Jesus has shown us rather than condemning, marginalizing, and fearing them – they may be startled enough to take a look at Jesus.

And then, rather than trying to change them, focus on teaching them how to develop a deep connection of love with Jesus. We can trust God to lead them into whatever change He wants in their lives – you know that cleanup, new heart, and Holy Spirit thing He promised (see [Ezekiel 36](#)).

Come to think of it, this is the way we should approach everyone. If we became known for this, we'd soon have a hard time fitting everyone in.

## Our Mission

There are two critical messages Jesus gave near the end of His time here on earth. The first, just before His arrest and death, was:

*"... Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." (John 13:33-35, NLT)*

He repeated this message several times that evening. This love is the identifying mark of Jesus' followers – His disciples. This is what Jesus wants to be known for through the lives of the people representing Him.

The other message, related to the first, is the last thing Jesus said before being taken to Heaven:

*"... Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations ...*

And what is supposed to be the identifying mark of a disciple? Loving like Jesus did!

*... baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20, NLT)*

When Jesus commanded us to make disciples of all nations, He's really telling us to teach people how to be real lovers. He wants us to teach others how to trust in the wonderful love of God and then share that love with others.

This love lived and shared will do more to advance the Gospel than any amount of condemnation, Daniel and Revelation flow charts, or demonstrations against laws about gay marriage or abortion. Why do we Christians think we have a right to dictate the standards by which non-Christians should live anyway?

This love can only be lived and shared if God has given us the new heart and put His Spirit in us as He promised to do in [Ezekiel 36](#) – which we discussed a bit last week.

Because He is a Gentleman, He will only do it with your permission.

Have you given Him permission to change out your heart?

Have you accepted His Spirit in your life?

Maybe now's the time to do that!

## Notes

Text you find in **this color** is a link to more information. It may take you to the Bible verse in context and/or in several different translations utilizing [BibleGateway.com](https://www.biblegateway.com). In some cases, it may take you to a website where there is additional information. And, it may take you to a PDF copy of previous sermons in this series.

## Previous Messages in this Series (click on the title to download it)

- May 9, 2020 – *Dead or Alive?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- May 16, 2020 – *Symptom or Disease?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- May 30, 2020 – *Out or In?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- June 6, 2020 – *Starve or Eat?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- June 13, 2020 – *Atrophy or Exercise?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- June 20, 2020 – *Just Love?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- July 4, 2020 – *Am I a Hypocrite?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- July 11, 2020 – *Burn Out or Rest? – Part 1* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- July 18, 2020 – *Burn Out or Rest? – Part 2* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Aug. 1, 2020 – *A Look Back* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Aug. 15, 2020 – *Love Like Jesus!* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Aug. 22, 2020 – *Distracted or Focused?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Aug. 29, 2020 – *Mortal or Immortal?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Sept. 5, 2020 – *Tortured or Destroyed?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Sept. 12, 2020 – *Now or Later?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Sept. 19, 2020 – *No or Yes? Part 1* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Oct. 3, 2020 – *No or Yes? Part 2* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Oct. 10, 2020 – *No or Yes? Part 3* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Oct. 17, 2020 – *Judge or Judged?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)

## Scripture References

**Leviticus 18:22 (NLT):** “Do not practice homosexuality, having sex with another man as with a woman. It is a detestable sin.” ([Leviticus 18:22](#), NLT)

**Leviticus 20:13 (NLT):** *“If a man practices homosexuality, having sex with another man as with a woman, both men have committed a detestable act. They must both be put to death, for they are guilty of a capital offense.”* (**Leviticus 20:13**, NLT)

**Proverbs 3:5-12 (NIV):** *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; <sup>6</sup> in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

*<sup>7</sup> Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. <sup>8</sup> This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.*

*<sup>9</sup> Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; <sup>10</sup> then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.*

*<sup>11</sup> My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, <sup>12</sup> because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.* (**Proverbs 3:5-12**, NIV)

**Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NLT):** *“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. <sup>32</sup> It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.*

*<sup>33</sup> “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. <sup>34</sup> No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”* (**Jeremiah 31:31-34**, NIV)

**Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NLT):** *And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.* (**Ezekiel 36:26-27**, NLT)

**Matthew 25:31-46 (NLT):** *“But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.*

*<sup>34</sup> “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. <sup>36</sup> I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’*

<sup>37</sup> “Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink?’ <sup>38</sup> Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing?’ <sup>39</sup> When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

<sup>40</sup> “And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’

<sup>41</sup> “Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, ‘Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry, and you didn’t feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn’t give me a drink. <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger, and you didn’t invite me into your home. I was naked, and you didn’t give me clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn’t visit me.’

<sup>44</sup> “Then they will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?’

<sup>45</sup> “And he will answer, ‘I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.’

<sup>46</sup> “And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life.”  
([Matthew 25:31-46](#), NLT)

**Matthew 28:18-20 (NLT):** Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. <sup>20</sup> Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” ([Matthew 28:18-20](#), NLT)

**John 13:33-35 (NLT):** Dear children, I will be with you only a little longer. And as I told the Jewish leaders, you will search for me, but you can’t come where I am going. <sup>34</sup> So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. <sup>35</sup> Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”  
([John 13:33-35](#), NLT)

**Romans 1:1 – 3:31 (NLT):** This letter is from Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News. <sup>2</sup> God promised this Good News long ago through his prophets in the holy Scriptures. <sup>3</sup> The Good News is about his Son. In his earthly life he was born into King David’s family line, <sup>4</sup> and he was shown to be the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is Jesus Christ our Lord. <sup>5</sup> Through Christ, God has given us the privilege and authority as apostles to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, so that they will believe and obey him, bringing glory to his name.

<sup>6</sup> And you are included among those Gentiles who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> I am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be his own holy people.

*May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.*

### **God's Good News**

*<sup>8</sup> Let me say first that I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith in him is being talked about all over the world. <sup>9</sup> God knows how often I pray for you. Day and night I bring you and your needs in prayer to God, whom I serve with all my heart by spreading the Good News about his Son.*

*<sup>10</sup> One of the things I always pray for is the opportunity, God willing, to come at last to see you. <sup>11</sup> For I long to visit you so I can bring you some spiritual gift that will help you grow strong in the Lord. <sup>12</sup> When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours.*

*<sup>13</sup> I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to visit you, but I was prevented until now. I want to work among you and see spiritual fruit, just as I have seen among other Gentiles. <sup>14</sup> For I have a great sense of obligation to people in both the civilized world and the rest of the world, to the educated and uneducated alike. <sup>15</sup> So I am eager to come to you in Rome, too, to preach the Good News.*

*<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes – the Jew first and also the Gentile. <sup>17</sup> This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, “It is through faith that a righteous person has life.”*

### **God's Anger at Sin**

*<sup>18</sup> But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. <sup>19</sup> They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. <sup>20</sup> For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.*

*<sup>21</sup> Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. <sup>23</sup> And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.*

*<sup>24</sup> So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. <sup>25</sup> They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen. <sup>26</sup> That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. <sup>27</sup> And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with*

*lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved.*

*<sup>28</sup> Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. <sup>29</sup> Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. <sup>30</sup> They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents. <sup>31</sup> They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy. <sup>32</sup> They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.*

### **God's Judgment of Sin**

**2** *You may think you can condemn such people, but you are just as bad, and you have no excuse! When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things. <sup>2</sup> And we know that God, in his justice, will punish anyone who does such things. <sup>3</sup> Since you judge others for doing these things, why do you think you can avoid God's judgment when you do the same things? <sup>4</sup> Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?*

*<sup>5</sup> But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself. For a day of anger is coming, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. <sup>6</sup> He will judge everyone according to what they have done. <sup>7</sup> He will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality that God offers. <sup>8</sup> But he will pour out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and instead live lives of wickedness. <sup>9</sup> There will be trouble and calamity for everyone who keeps on doing what is evil – for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. <sup>10</sup> But there will be glory and honor and peace from God for all who do good – for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. <sup>11</sup> For God does not show favoritism.*

*<sup>12</sup> When the Gentiles sin, they will be destroyed, even though they never had God's written law. And the Jews, who do have God's law, will be judged by that law when they fail to obey it. <sup>13</sup> For merely listening to the law doesn't make us right with God. It is obeying the law that makes us right in his sight. <sup>14</sup> Even Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, show that they know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. <sup>15</sup> They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right. <sup>16</sup> And this is the message I proclaim – that the day is coming when God, through Christ Jesus, will judge everyone's secret life.*

## The Jews and the Law

<sup>17</sup> You who call yourselves Jews are relying on God's law, and you boast about your special relationship with him. <sup>18</sup> You know what he wants; you know what is right because you have been taught his law. <sup>19</sup> You are convinced that you are a guide for the blind and a light for people who are lost in darkness. <sup>20</sup> You think you can instruct the ignorant and teach children the ways of God. For you are certain that God's law gives you complete knowledge and truth.

<sup>21</sup> Well then, if you teach others, why don't you teach yourself? You tell others not to steal, but do you steal? <sup>22</sup> You say it is wrong to commit adultery, but do you commit adultery? You condemn idolatry, but do you use items stolen from pagan temples? <sup>23</sup> You are so proud of knowing the law, but you dishonor God by breaking it. <sup>24</sup> No wonder the Scriptures say,

*"The Gentiles blaspheme the name of God because of you." (Isaiah 52:5)*

<sup>25</sup> The Jewish ceremony of circumcision has value only if you obey God's law. But if you don't obey God's law, you are no better off than an uncircumcised Gentile. <sup>26</sup> And if the Gentiles obey God's law, won't God declare them to be his own people? <sup>27</sup> In fact, uncircumcised Gentiles who keep God's law will condemn you Jews who are circumcised and possess God's law but don't obey it.

<sup>28</sup> For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the ceremony of circumcision. <sup>29</sup> No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by the Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise from God, not from people.

## God Remains Faithful

**3** Then what's the advantage of being a Jew? Is there any value in the ceremony of circumcision? <sup>2</sup> Yes, there are great benefits! First of all, the Jews were entrusted with the whole revelation of God.

<sup>3</sup> True, some of them were unfaithful; but just because they were unfaithful, does that mean God will be unfaithful? <sup>4</sup> Of course not! Even if everyone else is a liar, God is true. As the Scriptures say about him,

*"You will be proved right in what you say, and you will win your case in court."*

*(Psalm 51:4)*

<sup>5</sup> "But," some might say, "our sinfulness serves a good purpose, for it helps people see how righteous God is. Isn't it unfair, then, for him to punish us?" (This is merely a human point of view.) <sup>6</sup> Of course not! If God were not entirely fair, how would he be qualified to judge the world? <sup>7</sup> "But," someone might still argue, "how can God condemn me as a sinner if my dishonesty highlights his truthfulness and brings him more glory?" <sup>8</sup> And some people even

slander us by claiming that we say, "The more we sin, the better it is!" Those who say such things deserve to be condemned.

### All People Are Sinners

<sup>9</sup> 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.* <sup>10</sup> As the Scriptures say,

*"No one is righteous – not even one. <sup>11</sup> No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. <sup>12</sup> All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one."*

(Psalms 14:1-3, 53:1-3)

<sup>13</sup> *"Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are filled with lies." "Snake venom drips from their lips."* (Psalms 5:9, 140:3)

<sup>14</sup> *"Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."* (Psalm 10:7)

<sup>15</sup> *"They rush to commit murder. <sup>16</sup> Destruction and misery always follow them. <sup>17</sup> They don't know where to find peace."* (Isaiah 59:7-8)

<sup>18</sup> *"They have no fear of God at all."* (Psalm 36:1)

<sup>19</sup> *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. <sup>20</sup> 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.*

### Christ Took Our Punishment

<sup>21</sup> *But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. <sup>22</sup> We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.*

<sup>23</sup> *For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. <sup>24</sup> Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. <sup>25</sup> For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, <sup>26</sup> for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.*

<sup>27</sup> *Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith. <sup>28</sup> So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.*

<sup>29</sup> After all, is God the God of the Jews only? Isn't he also the God of the Gentiles? Of course he is.

<sup>30</sup> There is only one God, and he makes people right with himself only by faith, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. <sup>31</sup> Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law? Of course not! In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law.

(Romans 1:1 – 3:31, NLT)

**1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (NLT):** *Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, <sup>10</sup> or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people – none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*  
(1 Corinthians 6:9-11, NLT)

**1 Timothy 1:8-17 (NLT):** *We know that the law is good when used correctly. <sup>9</sup> For the law was not intended for people who do what is right. It is for people who are lawless and rebellious, who are ungodly and sinful, who consider nothing sacred and defile what is holy, who kill their father or mother or commit other murders. <sup>10</sup> The law is for people who are sexually immoral, or who practice homosexuality, or are slave traders, liars, promise breakers, or who do anything else that contradicts the wholesome teaching <sup>11</sup> that comes from the glorious Good News entrusted to me by our blessed God.*

<sup>12</sup> I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength to do his work. He considered me trustworthy and appointed me to serve him, <sup>13</sup> even though I used to blaspheme the name of Christ. In my insolence, I persecuted his people. But God had mercy on me because I did it in ignorance and unbelief. <sup>14</sup> Oh, how generous and gracious our Lord was! He filled me with the faith and love that come from Christ Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" – and I am the worst of them all. <sup>16</sup> But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life. <sup>17</sup> All honor and glory to God forever and ever! He is the eternal King, the unseen one who never dies; he alone is God.

(1 Timothy 1:8-17, NLT)