

Introduction

- https://www.upi.com/Odd_News/2025/11/03/Guinness-World-Records-David-Rush-ice-cream-scoop-catch/6821762180877/ - World record for catching ice cream scoop in a cone - 55 feet 5 inches - Sounds like a Dude Perfect video. How many attempts do you think it took to accomplish this feat? Just keep trying and you'll eventually get it...
- We tell our kids that all the time — practice more, work harder, and you'll accomplish your goals. And honestly — in a lot of areas in life — that's true. Try harder and you can make better grades, get out of debt, improve your marriage, get the promotion.
- We say things like, "I just need to buckle down. It's time to get serious. I'm turning over a new leaf. I just need to tighten up. I'm going to push myself, etc."
- Trying harder works in a lot of life - but trying harder will NOT earn you favor with God.
- Christianity is not about self-improvement. It's about coming to the end of your self and depending solely on Jesus to make you right with God.
- [Romans 2-3](#) is an indictment on religious "try hard" people - people who think they're good with God because they go to church, know the lingo, and try to do the right thing.
- [Romans 3:1-20](#) forces us to ask three questions of ourselves that expose the fact that we are not nearly as good as we think we are...

Do you waste your spiritual privilege?

- Paul addressing religious Jews - thought they were good with God because of their heritage. After all, they were the people of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They claimed Moses as their leader - the Lawgiver. They went to the synagogue, and they tried to keep the Law of God.
- However, Paul has been reminding them that their heritage didn't earn them salvation. Religious Jews were no different than Gentiles. In fact, they were hypocrites - claimed godliness, but lived just like the Gentiles.
- Paul knows religious Jews would object to his claims. Paul presupposes several objections the Jews might have.
- Objection 1: If religious Jews shared the same fate as pagan gentiles, was there any advantage to being a Jew? What's the point?
- Paul wanted religious Jews to know there was an advantage to being a Jew - they were a privileged people - they just wasted the privilege.
- Jews were entrusted with the very words of God. God had revealed Himself to the Jewish people - an opportunity to know Him - but they wasted that privilege by not doing what God said.
- Objection 2: Is God unfaithful? If the religious Jews were no better off than the Gentiles, what does that say about the faithfulness of God (vs. 3). No! God was not unfaithful. He never lies. He is faithful to all His promises. Reference from [Psalm 51:4](#) - God's words are always true - He was faithful. He sent His Son, the anticipated Messiah, but the Jews rejected Him. God was faithful, the Jews were not.
- Objection 3: Is God unrighteous? Some Jews might say, "If my sin just makes God look more righteous, then why would He judge me? Isn't my sin actually helping God?"
Paul's answer is: No. God doesn't need human sin to make Himself look

glorious. God is righteous in judging sin because sin is always a human choice.

- Bottom line - Israel was a privileged people but wasted that privilege by choosing to reject the God who revealed Himself to them.
- Now think about you. You may not be Israel — but you are privileged. You live in the Bible Belt. Church on every corner. You've sat under preaching. You've heard the gospel for years.
- Privilege will either spoil you or humble you. Spoil you = God, you owe me. Humble you = God, I need you. How many of us live with a “God, you owe me” attitude?
- How do you know if you're wasting spiritual privilege:
 - **You mistake proximity for holiness.** (Close to the things of God, but not actually walking with God.)
 - **You mistake knowledge for obedience.** (You can win Bible trivia, but you don't do what the Bible says.)
 - **You mistake a good life for approval.** (You've got your act together, you're doing well. God must be pleased with you.)
 - **You mistake ministry activity for intimacy with God.** (Doing things for God is not the same as being with God.)
- What about you? Are you wasting privilege? Are you counting on privilege to save you? Are you expecting that for your children?

Do you see the corruption of your own heart?

- The religious Jews would say, “Look at our privilege. Look at our effort. Look at our good works.”

- Paul: While privileged, Jews no different than Gentiles. All under sin. Paul walks the religious Jew through their Scripture to show them the depths of their sin.
- Vs. 10-12 = quote from [Psalm 14:1-3](#). No one is righteous - if everything is known about you - everything you've done, everything you've said, everything you thought - Would you be considered righteous? Reality: God knows it all. Every thought, action, word... All is laid bare before Him - Can you really claim to be righteous?
- No one understands, No one seeks God; all have turned away. The argument of [Romans 1](#) - Everyone suppresses the truth. We want a god that we make in our own image. People might be spiritual or religious, but they don't seek after the true God and conforms to His image. Sin has corrupted our minds. Our self-centered hearts warps our ability to see God for who He is apart from a miraculous work of the Spirit.
- All have turned away and become worthless ([Isaiah 53](#)) - We prefer our way to God's way. Who hasn't thought they know better than God?
- No one does good. Wait... What about the unbelieving husband that loves his children well. Or the unbelieving soldier that sacrifices his life for his country. Haven't they done good? In God's eyes - a good work is only good if it's completely motivated by love for God, love for others, without any hint of self-interest. If the standard is perfect love - then who here is actually "good?"
- Their throat is an open grave...([Psalm 5:9](#)) - The place our corruption most reveals itself is in our words. Our words are the best indicator of what's going on in our hearts. Just think about the things you said last week. Did any of you gossip? Lie? Lost your temper and said something you regret? [Proverbs 18:21](#) - Life and death in the tongue - and we bring about much death with our words.
- Their feet are swift to shed blood - [Isaiah 59:7-8](#) - We naturally resort to violence to get what we want - whether physical violence or verbal

violence. We use our words to manipulate. We resent others who have what we want. We don't live at peace with people we oppose.

- There is no fear of God before their eyes - [Psalm 36:1](#) Proverbs - the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom - but apart from Christ no one fears God. Instead, apart from Christ, we mock God by living as if He is not the King of our lives.
- Paul succinctly describes our heart using the Old Testament - whether Jew or Gentile - we're corrupt to the core of our being. You are depraved. Not as outwardly depraved as the murderer on death row. But the same verdict - guilty - hangs over you without Christ.
- **You must let God's Word diagnose your heart.** If you think trying harder is going to get you into eternity, just remind yourself of what Paul writes in these verses. Let's these verses show you who you really are.
- **You must stop hiding behind religion.** Religion says, "I can try enough and be good with God." Every religion in the world says "try harder." Not Christianity. The Christian faith says "stop trying and start depending."
- **You must start confessing.** This is what Paul wants! He wants us to confess our need for a Savior! The entire Old Testament is given to us NOT to show us what we must do but what we can't do. The entire Old Testament points us to our need for a Savior.
- Religion says try more. Christianity says stop trying and start depending.

Do you know God's verdict over your life?

- vs. 19-20 - Whatever the Law says it speaks to those who are subject to the Law... Who is subject to the Law? Everyone! Jew and Gentile - written on the hearts of Gentiles, revealed to the Jews.

- We don't behold the Law and say, "I can do this! I'll try harder!" But.. "I can't do this..." vs. 19 - The Law shuts every mouth... We have no argument left... You can't defend yourself before God.
- When we really understand God's requirements, can we really say, "I'll try harder. I can do this?"
- vs. 20 - No one will be justified by the works of the Law. The Law simply shows us our need for a Savior - NOT a path to salvation.
- As you think about the truths of [Romans 3](#) - question to ask yourself, "Do you know God's verdict over your life?" Only one of two verdicts.
- **Are you guilty?** When you stand before God on the day of judgment, will you be declared guilty? The evidence is mounted against you. Will you stand before God condemned because of your rejection of Him? Religious privilege and trying harder will NOT make you right before Him.
- **Or, are you justified?** You don't have to stand before God guilty because at the cross Jesus took your guilt upon Himself. He is the only One to ever live who actually did perfectly what God required, and He did it for you. Then, He went to the cross to die in our place. At the cross, He died as a guilty one, absorbing the wrath of God, so your sins could be forgiven. He rose from the dead so you could have victory over sin and death. If you repent of your sins and place your faith in Jesus, you can be justified. You can be brought into a right relationship with Jesus.