

1. **Introduction:** Paul nears the completion of his argument about possible distinctions between Jews and Gentiles. Beginning with verse 9, he summarizes the spiritual condition of every human apart from the grace of God through Christ. He asks are Jews in a superior position with God.
2. **Romans 3:9-11:** *What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,¹⁰ as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one;¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God.*
 - His point is that no human race is superior before God. Jews and Gentiles are alike under sin and subject to God’s wrath and final judgment.
 - Is there anyone who naturally has a godly, moral nature? His answer is “*None is righteous, no, not one.*” Fallen human minds are sinful. “*No one understands; no one seeks for God.*” Apart from Christ, humans are incapable of understanding spiritual things.
3. **1 Corinthians 2:14:** *The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.*
 - If no one naturally understands spiritual things and no one seeks God, the obvious question is “what is the cause of this problem and how can it be fixed?”
 - The answer lies in the condition of the fallen human mind and will, and the “fix” requires God’s intervention in a drastic way.
 - In Eph. 2:1, Paul says, we are “*dead in (our) trespasses and sins.*” Does he mean we are totally unable to respond to God? How can that be? Don’t we have a “free will?”
 - What did Jesus mean when He said, “*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him?*” (Jn. 6:44). And “*... no one can come to me unless it is granted to him by the Father.*” (Jn. 6:66)
 - How do these passages relate to all the Scripture passages where the gospel is freely offered to everyone? For example, Isaiah 55:1, “*Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come buy and eat!*”
 - As we learned in 2:11, God is impartial in judgment, judging based on the knowledge a person has, not on knowledge they don’t have.
 - How can a person be held accountable for failing to believe in Jesus if they haven’t been drawn to Jesus by the Father?
4. **Choices:** The key to answering such questions is to understand how people make choices. How does a person choose to take a specific action? How does a person choose to seek salvation in Christ?
 - When a choice is to be made, the human mind inclines toward one choice rather than other alternatives. Many factors and conditions may influence a choice. The alternative that dominates at one instance may not be the one that dominates at the instant of choice.

- There are moral choices, morally neutral choices, and choices that have mixed components, some moral some neutral. Moral choices are concerned with the principles of right and wrong.
 - The principles of moral behavior came from God. Nevertheless, many people who don't believe in God try to live by a selection of His moral principles.
 - Morality is good, but morality without God is missing the key ingredient of the higher way of life of seeking to obey God.
 - Practicing Godliness includes God's instructions on morality, but practicing a manmade morality doesn't necessarily lead to Godliness. Paul was not the first to say, "***no one understands, no one seeks for God.***" Such issues have been argued repeatedly
5. **Augustine and Pelagius:** In the early 400's Augustine (Bishop of Hippo in North Africa) argued against Pelagius (a Celtic Monk who moved from Britain to Rome to Carthage and then to Jerusalem).
- Pelagius didn't believe in original sin; in fact, he believed sin only occurs in deliberate acts in which the will chooses an evil action. He believed the will was an independent organ always able of itself to choose either good or evil actions.
 - Thus, when a sinner hears the gospel, whether that sinner is ultimately saved depends only on the sinner's will in choosing to receive or reject the Savior – not on the supernatural working of God through the Holy Spirit.
 - Augustine declared this view to be unbiblical. He said the Bible speaks of a sin nature and just of isolated and individual acts of sin. It speaks of an inherited depravity that makes it impossible for an individual to not sin.
 - Unaided by God, a person is "**not able to not sin.**" By themselves, fallen people cannot stop sinning and turn to God.
 - Augustine said that having abused their free will to sin triggering the fall, Adam and Eve and their progeny lost that free will. He said human wills are free from righteousness but enslaved to sin.
 - The will is free to turn from God but not to come to God. Apart from God's grace, no one can come to Him and be saved. Eph. 2:8-9 says, "***For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing: it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.***"
 - Augustine won the argument with Pelagius, but the church gradually drifted back toward Pelagianism in the middle ages.
6. **Reformation Repeat:** Similar arguments erupted in the reformation (beginning in the 1500's) – Luther versus Erasmus and then followers of Calvin versus those of Arminius.
- Erasmus challenged Luther's view that the human will is unable to choose Christ without intervention by God.
 - Erasmus considered the issue relatively unimportant, but Luther saw the question as vital.
 - Luther wrote "**The Bondage of the Will**" in 1525.

- In it, Luther acknowledged the human will makes choices but denied that human choice is possible regarding the specific area of choosing or rejecting God.
 - The reason for his concept was that human wills are enslaved to sin and choosing God is a godly moral choice.
 - Followers of Arminius and those of Calvin took opposite views on the ability of the human will to choose Christ.
 - The 5 points of Calvinism (written in response to the followers of Arminius' 5 articles of remonstrance) declares that people are unable to choose God without God's intervention.
7. **Johnathon Edwards**: The next contribution to understanding the role of the will in salvation came from Edwards.
- Edwards' book, **A Careful and Strict Inquiry into the Prevailing Notions of the Freedom of the Will**, was first published in 1754.
 - Oddly, no earlier contributor seems to have defined the "will." Before Edwards, the will was generally considered to be an independent faculty that makes choices.
 - Edwards disagreed. He defined the will as "that by which the mind chooses anything." In other words, willful choice utilizes the whole mind and is not an independent faculty that makes choices.
 - Memory, attitudes, knowledge, emotions, and sensory input impact choice. If you stand unarmed and someone is pointing a gun at you, it will impact your choices.
 - Every "choice" is an effect (a result) which must have a cause. Edwards recognized that the cause of a choice is motive-driven inclinations. The strongest motive present in the mind at the time of choice determines the choice.
 - Multiple inputs compete in making a choice. They may be external and/or internal inputs. Emotional and/or intellectual inputs. Threats or promised rewards. Etc.
 - Motives typically arise from a combination of several specific inputs, but a choice is determined by the strongest inclination at the instant of choice.
 - Once made, a choice may be instantly regretted, but at the instance of choice it was the preferred choice.
 - Making choices is as complex as the mind's production and evaluation of motives.
 - Edwards further recognized that the ability to choose has both a natural and a moral component. People can have a natural ability to choose something but lack the moral ability to make the choice.
 - An animal's choice appears to be tightly controlled by instinct. Carnivores eat nothing but meat. Herbivores eat nothing but vegetation. Their natural ability to choose is limited by instinct. Humans have a natural ability to make non-instinctive choices.
 - People have minds that can receive and process data and information. So, why won't fallen people seek God and come to Christ for salvation?
 - People have the natural ability to choose God but lack the moral ability or desire to do so.

- A great disaster of the “fall” was the loss of desire for God and His goodness. A person can intellectually understand the law of God and its obligations. They can understand the gospel. Fallen people lack the moral desire (and hence moral ability) to choose God.
 - The things of God and the gospel are foolishness to them (1 Cor.2:14). They are not inclined to seek Christ. Jesus said in John 6:44, “*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him ...*”
 - Fallen people may be impressed by Jesus’ moral teaching. They may think He is to be admired, but without God’s divine initiative, impressive moral teaching is insufficient.
 - Thus, sinners will not come to Christ, not because they can’t, but because they don’t want to. Deep in their heart, they will resent Christ and what He would require of them. There is no natural or physical hindrance to seeking God. Any who **wants** to come, **may** come.
 - That is why Jonathan Edwards says the will is free, not bound. Everyone had the natural ability to choose Christ. Everyone **may** come, but who **will** come? The liberty to choose to come to Christ makes refusal to seek Him unreasonable and increases guilt.
 - What fallen people lack is the desire, the motive to seek God. The problem is not a lack of “natural ability to choose” but a lack of ability to grasp things that must be spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14).
 - Who “wills” to come to Christ? The answer is “no one” unless the Holy Spirit works the “born again” miracle that opens the spiritually blind eyes of the fallen to see God’s truth.
 - The sinner’s depraved mind, lacking spiritual understanding, is renewed to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.
8. **Next Lesson:** Romans 3:10-20.