

# Help! I'm Sick

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[ 0 : 00 ] Kirsty is going to read from Romans 3. Okay, so Psalm 53, for the director of music according to the Mahalath of David.

The fool says in his heart, there is no God, they are corrupt and their ways are vile, there is no one who does good. God looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.

Everyone has turned away, they have together become corrupt, there is no one who does good, not even one. Will the evildoers never learn, those who devour my people as men eat bread, and who do not call on God?

There they were, overwhelmed with dread, where there was nothing to dread. God scattered the bones of those who attacked you, you put them to shame, for God despised them.

O that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion, when God restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad.

[ 1 : 05 ] And Romans chapter 3, verses 9 to 20. What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all.

We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written, there is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away. They have together become worthless. There is no one who does good, not even one. Their throats are open graves. Their tongues practice deceit.

The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Ruin and misery mark their ways.

And the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

[ 2 : 16 ] Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law. Rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. Well, please keep your Bibles at that passage in Romans chapter 3.

I think I've said this at the beginning of every talk in Romans so far. These are difficult passages. They tell us things we really don't want to hear.

And this morning is no different. So we need help as we face up to these words before us. Let's pray together and ask for God's help.

Amen. Our Father, we thank you so much for this book of Romans. We thank you for the way it has been preserved over so many hundreds of years.

Has spoken to many individuals. Spoken to many churches. Has impacted nations. And here we are today gathered in this community centre.

[ 3 : 49 ] Looking at these words. Words that are not ordinary words. But the word of God. Which is powerful. And active.

Which has the ability to change us. And transform us. And so we ask this morning that you would speak to us afresh. Help us to hear what you say about us.

Even though it's hard. Help us to take it in. And in the midst of it. See the wonder. Of your amazing love towards us.

Amen. I don't think there was anybody here around in 1348.

Was there? Well in 1348. A plague swept around the globe. Killing more than a quarter of the world's population. It became known as the Black Death.

[ 4 : 55 ] Within two days of exposure. You were dead. It started in Asia. And it spread like wildfire up into Africa. And then up into Europe.

Up to 60% of Europe's population. Was wiped out. In just two years. And in efforts to stamp it out. Those with the disease were quarantined. Others were even burnt alive. But nothing it seemed could be found to cure. Or to stop its destruction.

The Black Death respected no one. Man, woman or child. It killed the rich and the poor. The weak and the strong.

There was no culture. No race. Or no religion. That was immune from its devastating effects. Now thankfully today there is no such plague.

[ 5 : 52 ] Because of modern medicine. But there is a disease that is more widespread and more devastating than the Black Death. In many ways we could say it's more sinister.

Because we think that we're all immune from it. But within each one of us. There is a disease that is slowly destroying us.

And the world in which we live. And we have got no cure for it. You want to know what this disease is?

We'll look at chapter 3. The end of verse 9. We have made the charge. That Jews and Gentiles. Doesn't matter who you are. We all alike. Are under sin. The disease that we all have.

[ 6 : 52 ] Is what the Bible calls sin. It's something we have all been infected with. From the moment we were born. Now sin is not so much the things we do.

Or don't do. Rather sin is a condition. A determination on our part. Not to submit to God.

As the loving ruler of our lives. I'll say that again. Sin isn't so much the things we do or don't do.

Rather sin is a condition. It's a determination on our part.

Not to submit to God. As the loving ruler of our lives. And as we've gone through Romans. We see examples of this. So in chapter 1. We met the immoral person.

The person who doesn't like going to church. You won't find them here this morning. They don't read their Bible. They think it's a load of nonsense. And they try to live outside of God's control.

[ 7 : 53 ] They live in a way that life suits them. They make up their own rules. And do their own thing. They live outside of God's control. Then in chapter 2.

We meet somebody at the opposite end of the scale. The moral person. And you'll probably find them here this morning. The person who loves going to church. The people who love reading their Bibles.

Now they don't want to live outside of God's control. They actually try to control God. They try to force God to do what they want.

Because of their good behaviour. They say to God. Look at me. Look at what I've done. Do something good for me. So on the one hand or one extreme.

We have the immoral person. The person who tries to live outside of God's control. On the other side we have the moral person. The person who tries to control God.

[ 8 : 53 ] Now both positions are a determination on our part. Not to submit to God. So whatever your religious background. Whether you see yourself as a moral person.

Or an immoral person. Whether you think yourself as a Protestant or a Catholic. Whether you are black or white. The conclusion is still the same. And here is the conclusion after two chapters.

In chapter 3 verse 9. This is what he says. What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all.

We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles. All alike. Are under sin. Now hang on a minute.

You may be thinking to yourself. Are you saying that we're exactly the same? That we're all the same? Yes we are all the same.

[ 9 : 52 ] Are you saying that the immoral murdering rapist. Is no different to the moral dad. Who cares and provides for his children?

Are you trying to say that they're both the same? Yes. And as shocking as it may sound. That's exactly what we're saying.

You see there's a common belief. That we are all basically good people. If you were to weigh yourself up on the scales. Of good and bad. We always have ourselves tipping.

In favour of good. Some days it might be 55, 45. Some days we might even see ourselves. With 70 good and 30 bad. Whatever it is.

We're always. In the good position. But that's actually a wrong diagnosis. Look at verse 10. As it is written.

[10:52] Now what follows is a list of quotes from the Old Testament. We read one of them from Psalm 58 earlier. Or 53 I think it was. And it reads like a doctor's report of our human condition.

Look at verse 10. There is no one righteous. Not even one. There is no one who understands. No one who seeks God. No matter our moral standards. Or our religious beliefs. God sees us in exactly the same way.

Verse 12. All have turned away. They have together become worthless. There is no one who does good.

Not even one. You could scour the whole world. And the Bible is telling us that you won't find one good person. Now reading that.

[11:59] I'm sure you're troubled. Because I'm terribly troubled by it. I'm thinking that this is just a little bit over the top. You can't really expect us to believe this kind of thing.

You're just getting a little bit fundamental this morning Johnny. He must be just exaggerating to make his point. I mean after all. Look at my life.

I've done many good things in my life. And look at my neighbours. Lots of them seek God. How can you say that there is no one who is good. And there is no one who seeks God.

Well let's remember. This is a diagnosis of our condition. As seen by God through his eyes. Not through our eyes. You see it's true that no one seeks God.

And it is true that we have all turned away from God. Our natural position. Our primary heart's desire. Is to reject God.

[13:04] To push him out. And to put ourselves in his place. If you've got a computer at home. When things all get messed up in your computer.

Sometimes you go back to a default setting. And everything goes back the way it is. Well that's what we're like. We've got this default position. That always has us going back.

Against God. Of course if there is anybody who does seek God. If there is anybody who does turn back to God. And they do.

It's only because God has given you the desire to do so. Without God's intervention. Without his initiative in your life. Without him giving him.

Giving you that spark in your life. By the Holy Spirit. None of us. Would ever want to run to him. None of us would ever want him. That is what our condition is like.

[14:06] And it's also true that no one does good. And there is no one who is righteous. Now that doesn't mean that we're not. That we're incapable. Of doing kind acts.

I know because I've received kind acts from lots of people here. It doesn't mean that we're unable to be generous. I know people are very generous. But what it does mean is that we are not good in our motives.

And we are not righteous in our desires. Think about this scenario. Suppose I'm walking down Cargilline Main Street.

I'm outside Barry Collins. And I see. An old lady with her bags full of shopping. And she's struggling to cross the road.

Immediately. I run up alongside her. I grab her arm. And I help her across the road. Carrying the two bags. Get her to the other side. And give her the bags back.

[15:10] Now nobody is going to say to me. That that isn't a good thing to do. Isn't that a good thing to do? And we would all like to think that. Yeah. I'd do exactly the same. But here's where I fail to be good.

First of all. I just leave the poor lady there. I don't bother to make sure that she gets home. I haven't a clue how far she has to walk. You see.

I only help. If it suits me. And there's a limit. As to how much we're going to help another person. If it gets in the way of our life.

Well then. Help will have to be put off to another day. And second. I began to think about. How good I was.

I felt very proud of myself. Throughout the rest of the day. Tapping myself on the back. Thinking. What a good person you are Johnny. You. You amaze me. How good you are.

[16:09] And I look at other people. And I think. Not one of them bothered to help. Only me. In fact.

We actually use our good acts. To manipulate others. We do good things for people. Not just for the sake of good. But so that people will like us.

That people will accept us. We don't tell them we're doing it that way. But we do things. So that people will think that we're good. And that they'll be our friends.

And we also act like that with God. We say to God. Did you see the way that I helped that poor lady yesterday? Did you see how kind I was?

Now give me something in return. Bless my life for the good things that I did. Now can you see how our motive and our reasoning behind the good act.

[17:08] Is itself sinful. The good act is actually very selfish. Because it's all about me. It's all about what people think of me.

It's all about what people are going to give in return. It's all about what God is going to do for me. Because of the good things I have done. So we do good things.

But underneath. Our motives and our drives. Our motives. Are very sinister. But that's not all.

The diagnosis goes further. The sin in our lives is actually progressive. It eats away and it affects our lives like some kind of cancer. Firstly it affects our words.

Look at verse 13. Their throats are open graves. Their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips.

[18:10] Maybe you can relate to this. But it shames me. That when I'm on the telephone speaking to people.

I can be so caring. So kind. So gentle. My words can be the right tone. And everything can be good. Speaking words of encouragement.

But as soon as the phone goes down. I can start roaring and shouting at my kids. You're making too much noise. Be quiet. I can give off to Kirsty.

Because I need something done. I need it done now. Our words become like poison. Verse 14.

Their mouths are full of cursing. And bitterness. It also affects our actions.

[19:14] Verse 15. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Ruin and misery mark their ways. How many times have you gone through the day.

And then look back and you say to yourself. I wish I hadn't done that. Why did I do it? If only I had done something else.

If only I had walked away. Things would be so different. Now while we might never pull a trigger.

Or ever get involved in terrorism. And physically shedding blood. We all have this uncontrolled habit. Of doing things. That cause hurt and pain.

To those we most love. Verse 17. The way of peace. They do not know. Have you ever gone into a room.

[20:14] And everybody is sitting quiet. Reading or watching the telly. And by the time that you leave. There is an argument going on. The way of peace.

They do not know. You see we all like to think. That we are basically good. But the hard truth is. We are basically bad.

We are all infected. With this terrible disease. Called sin. That causes us to live a life. As we want. Verse 18.

Is a summary. Of our condition. Look at verse 18. There is no fear. Of God. Before their eyes. We live as if we are answerable.

To no one. We speak and act. As if we are accountable. To no one. We laugh. People laugh. At the fact. That one day. We are going to have to stand. Before God. As our judge. There is no fear.

[21:16] We live. As we want. The reality is. We face a hopeless prospect.

Verse 19. Now we know that. Whatever the law says. It says to those who are under the law. So that every mouth may be silent.

And the whole world held accountable to God. The other day we discovered that. Rebecca. Our daughter. Had been throwing her sweet wrappers.

And empty yogurt drinks. Around the park. So she was summoned. To face dad. Rebecca. Did you throw rubbish on the ground?

Do you know what our first response was? Ethan. The brother. Now. I don't want to know about Ethan. Did you throw sweet papers away?

[22:17] Her second response was to kind of throw her head back. And as if to say. What a stupid question dad. Surely you've got better things to be doing than to asking me about whether I threw rubbish around the place.

And I asked again. And what followed was a series of. But dad. But. But. Um. And. I don't know. Now.

Isn't that how we all behave when we're confronted with something we've done or we've said? We get a little bit more sophisticated because we're all grown up and big now. Because we've had years of practice.

But we all try to justify our actions. Yes. But. Well. If you hadn't said that.

Then I wouldn't have done that. Oh. Well I'm only doing what you did. We've always got a clever answer. Haven't we? But here's the hard truth.

[ 23 : 17 ] Not before God. Do you see what it says at the end of verse 19? Every mouth. May be silenced. Will not have any answers.

But God. Shh. But. But you see. If they hadn't. Be quiet. You.

I was only doing what. You. Shut up. You don't understand. Silence. You see.

There will not be one piece of evidence in our lives. That will justify us. We'll not have anything to say. It'll be a terrible moment. When we are confronted with our whole life.

And it will all be shown to us. And we'll have no answer. Look at verse 20. Therefore no one will be declared righteous.

[ 24 : 24 ] No one will be made right before God. By observing the law. By doing good things. Rather through the law. We become conscious of sin.

Now our daughter knows. That throwing rubbish on the ground is wrong. But knowing something doesn't stop you from doing it. The rules only tell you what you should do.

They only tell you when you've broken the rules. They can't make you keep them. And it's no different for us. For the religious person. The person who loves God's word. Who loves coming to church.

Who likes to think of themselves as a moral good person. Being good. Or wanting to be good. Doesn't give you the power to live rightly. All of the time.

The only thing the Bible does for us. Is. It doesn't make us righteous and without sin. It makes us conscious of our sin. Which goes back to the truth of verse 9.

[ 25 : 24 ] Are we any better? Not at all. We all alike. Are under sin.

We're all controlled by its power. We're all infected. We all have this crippling disease. That's eating away inside of us. It's really a devastating diagnosis.

It's a hopeless prospect. I wish there was something else I could tell you about yourselves and me. But I'd only be telling a lie.

This is the truth. Stop thinking good of yourself. But what are we to do? If this is what we're like.

What can we do about it? Well there is a cure for this disease. There is an antidote for this illness. It's called grace. It's the hope of the gospel.

[ 26 : 29 ] Which is what the rest of the book is going to get into. The black death caused scientists and doctors to search for a cure. And looked for other ways of treating other infections.

But it wasn't until the early 1900s that a Scottish scientist named Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin. The first antibiotic that could be mass produced to treat common disease and infection. That otherwise would have caused death. That otherwise would have caused death. That means that a lot of people are going to get into. Now God's grace is the antibiotic for the incurable disease of sin.

Taken into our lives, it deals with the infection inside. And it brings life. It changes us and it transforms us.

And it makes us be a different kind of person. We're going to look at this cure in more detail next week. But for now I just want us to look at two ways in how we can receive this cure.

[ 27 : 45 ] Firstly, you can't get this cure unless you see the sin infection in your life. We mightn't like God's diagnosis of our life.

But we are never going to be cured unless we accept our condition. We have to stop looking at our lives from our perspective. We have to stop listening to the voices that say, It's everybody else's fault, it's not mine.

We've got to see ourselves as we really are. Now this doesn't turn us into helpless and depressed people where there's no light at the end of the tunnel and we all go out with our heads down, drooping around, thinking, Woe is me.

No, this news actually fills us with hope because our condition is so bad but there is a cure that is so great that completely reverses it.

And the reality of it is that when we take grace into our lives we are changed completely. Once we see who we are we will want to drink in the grace of God.

[ 29 : 01 ] We'll want to swallow the pill and let it do its saving work in our lives. But first, we've got to see the infection in our life.

And second, we can't get the cure unless you see you can't cure yourself. You see, some people will come across this and they'll accept a little bit of it.

They'll think, yes, this is a correct diagnosis but you know what? I can deal with it myself. But trying to deal with the disease of sin is like trying to perform open heart surgery by yourself.

It can't be done. You'll kill yourself. So we have to stop playing the games of I'm sorry God and I'm just going to try harder tomorrow.

Well, next week I'm going to be better. I won't let the same thing happen again. Just try harder. We all know we've all been there. Trying harder never gets us anywhere.

[ 30 : 09 ] It's only when we see that we can't save ourselves that we're in a position to receive the cure. Once we see how helpless we are we will want to drink in the grace of God.

And that grace is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. We read from Romans 5 verse 8 at the very beginning of this morning.

God demonstrates his own love for us in this. While we were still sinners Christ died for us.

The antidote is the cross where Jesus died. Jesus who was pure and sinless took the disease and the infection of our sin on himself.

On the cross Jesus was quarantined for us. He suffered hell for our sin. He was destroyed for us.

[ 31 : 15 ] He endured the wrath of God that we deserve for our sin. And God loves the sin infected world so much. He loves the sin infected person so much that he offered his son the Lord Jesus as a cure for you and for me.

And he brought that cure that grace to us and he says here's this grace drink of it take it and see a healing that comes about in your life that will transform you and change you.

A cure that will not only change you and transform you but you will be able to hand this cure out to a world that is being destroyed by sin and lives that are being destroyed because of sin.

God's grace grace is the cure for our desperate condition. Let's pray together. Amen. Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the person whose sin the Lord will never count against them. Our Father God, we thank you for your word this morning, for showing us exactly what we are like, but also showing us what you are like, a God of grace, a God who has come into this world to offer a solution, to offer us the medicine for our infection, for the disease of sin.

[ 33 : 31 ] We pray that you would give us a greater understanding of your grace, that we may leave this place on the one hand realising how wicked we really are, but amazed at how loved we are.

Thank you so much that Christ died for us. In Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing together one that helps tie together some of these themes that we've been looking at.

You'll recognise the tune, What Grace is Mine? And the response, If we do receive his grace, that we would go wherever he's calling, that we would lose our life, to find our life in him.

Let's stand together, as we celebrate and remember God's amazing grace to us. Amen. Thank you.