

Series: God Saves #1431

**Title: Romans 8.29b; Romans 3; Ephesians 2
No One Seeks for God**

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. Today we continue our Bible based conversation on predestination, picking up where we left off on Friday with this emphasis on spiritual death. *Before* God saves us from our sin we are spiritually dead. *When* God saves us from our sin we are made spiritually alive. There we were, dead, *until* God made us alive. Let me prove this to you in a couple of passages of Scripture. The first will be in Romans chapter 3 and the second will be in Ephesians chapter 2. And let's begin in Romans 3. I will read verses 10-12.

This is the Apostle Paul writing to the early church in Rome and he says, Romans 3, verses 10-12, **“There is none righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; ¹² all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.”** Here, Paul is quoting part of Psalm 14, and you heard him. None are righteous, not even one. No one seeks for God. No one does good, not even one. That's pretty clear. Does anyone want to suggest this is confusing in any way? Would someone interrupt the Bible reading and say, “Well, we can interpret this in a few different ways.” I do not think so.

This is another way for the Apostle to say: every human being is so damaged, so thoroughly corrupted by the Fall, by original sin, by our sinful nature that every part of us, every nook and cranny of our being has been infiltrated by sin. Sin dominates us. It effects all of us – our body, our mind, our soul, and yes, our will. Sin *kills*. We become like the walking dead. We are alive physically, but dead spiritually. Therefore, there is *none* who seeks for God. No one is righteous. No one understands. All have turned aside. All have become useless. No one does good. Not even one! That's because we are all *dead*.

Friends, Romans 3.10-12 confronts us and offends us, because it pounds truth that we do not like to hear, and that we do not like to accept. We find it very difficult to accept that we are spiritually dead, that there is nothing we can do to be saved because we are incapable of it. The idea that we are a rotting corpse of wretched sin with no ability to resurrect ourselves from the dead, this is offensive to our pride, to what we imagine to be our moral ability to choose spiritual life if we want. And so we build up entire ministries and churches whose vision is to reach those who are seeking God. Perhaps you have heard of or even belong to a “seeker sensitive church.”

A what? Romans 3 says, “There is none who seeks for God.” There are no “seekers.” The whole movement was (still is) based on an unbiblical philosophy or idea. For us to imagine that there are bunch of people in this world seeking, searching around for God is just not right. RC Sproul puts it this way: “The idea is that there are people all over the place who are searching for God. Their problem is they just haven't been able to find Him. He is playing hide and seek. He is elusive. In the Garden of Eden when sin came into the world, who hid? Jesus came into the world to *seek* and to save the lost. Jesus wasn't the one who was hiding. God is not a fugitive. We are the ones on the run. Scripture declares that the wicked flee when no man pursues. As (Martin) Luther remarked, “The pagan trembles at the rustling of a leaf.” Fallen men are fleeing from God. There is no one who seeks after God (*Chosen By God*, 217).” Close quote. That is really well said.

Some one of you may want to object, “Not true, Swallow! I know people who are searching for God but have not yet found Him!” Well, I say to you by way of response what Thomas Aquinas said. (In case he is a new name to you Saint Thomas Aquinas is one of the greatest theologians to ever live. Roman Catholics love to claim all of him unto themselves, but there is much in his writing that is thoroughly biblical and Reformed. (And if you do not know what I mean by “Reformed,” write to me and ask.) Aquinas had a brief but fruitful life in the 13th century and he said that when we assume someone is seeking after God, here is what is happening.

That person *is* searching, perhaps desperately searching, for peace of mind, relief from guilt, trying to find meaning and purpose in his or her life. We Christians know these things can *only* be found in Christ. And so we assume that anyone searching for these things is searching for God, but that is not so.

People are not seeking after God. All they are doing is seeking after the things that God can provide to them. Sproul again, "Man seeks the benefits of God while at the same time fleeing from God. We are, by nature, fugitives (217)." I love how Sproul says that God is not a fugitive. We are the fugitives. We must be careful that we do not confuse the two.

Ah, but someone else may persist in their objection to what I am saying. You might quote Isaiah chapter 55 and verse 6 which says, "**Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.**" Or you might quote Matthew 7, verse 7, "**Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.**" And then you say, "These verses tell us to *seek* God!" Ah, allow me to respond. Please, if you would, note the context of these verses. Please notice the audience. Isaiah addressed his words to the people of Israel, God's people, in the Old Testament. And Jesus addressed His words to His believers in the New Testament. These are words to people who already have a relationship with the Living God. They have already been made spiritually alive, *then* they seek God.

The point here is: *unbelievers* will not seek God and will not knock on God's door. *Believers* will and do and must, but that is because God has already acted in our lives and predestined us for faith in Jesus Christ. Romans 3, verses 10-12: none seek for God. That is the first passage I want to look at as we begin this week together, and now let's go to Ephesians chapter 2. I quoted from this very briefly at the end on Friday. Today I want to read the first 10 verses of this magnificent chapter and begin comment.

I hope that you will give ear, give your full attention to these words in Ephesians 2, verses 1-10. "**And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.**

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." (Ephesians 2.1-10.)

This passage is loaded in truth. Our purpose is not to teach this word by word and verse by verse. We would be here a long time. Our purpose, and *my* purpose in reading this, is to affirm what we have been saying. Predestination rests on our spiritual death. Let me tell you what I mean by that, primarily tomorrow, because we are running out of time.

And so let me sneak this one insight into your brain: the Apostle Paul's words here are written primarily to Christians. He will cause us to reflect back on what our lives *were* like before God saved us and what our lives are like *now* that He has saved us. He speaks of a before and an after. I hope you are curious and that you, and perhaps someone you will invite, will join us tomorrow because God Is.

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