

OFFENDERS

PART ONE

THE LESSON: ROMANS 1-3

Remember not, Lord, our offences, nor the offences of our forefathers...

The human story is one of a beautiful relationship with God, disrupted by human disobedience. The creation account in the book of Genesis tells us that the first man and woman had only one rule to follow – and they broke it. Theologians call this event “the fall” – something that set in motion a tragic separation from God for all of humanity and the world we inhabit. All of the ugliness and evil that we find in the world and in our own hearts trace their roots back to that choice to rebel against our Creator.

Ever since the fall, the story has been of a holy God, offended by the sin of humanity, yet reaching out in love to bridge that chasm and make a way back home for us. In the meantime, we’re fallen people living in a fallen world. But God *has* made a way and the way is Jesus – this is the good news of the Gospel!

In spite of the fact that we are surrounded by evidence and consequences of the fall, human beings often cling to rebellion, shaking our fists at God for the brokenness we encounter, rather than acknowledging to him that we are all offenders – part of the problem – and we cannot fix the situation on our own.

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St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, spends the first three chapters elaborating on this truth: that God is righteous, and that we are all offenders in need of his grace. Brace yourselves: St. Paul doesn’t mince words!

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON’T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE “FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES”, WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON’T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

Spend some time prayerfully reading through the words of Psalm 32:1-7: *“Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord”, and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance”.*

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

O most mighty God, and merciful Father, who hast compassion upon all men, and hatest nothing that thou hast made; who wouldest not the death of a sinner, but that he should rather turn from his sin, and be saved: Mercifully forgive our trespasses; receive and comfort us, who are grieved and wearied with the burden of our sins. Thy property is always to have mercy; to thee only it appertaineth to forgive sins. Spare, O Lord, spare thy people, whom thou hast redeemed; enter not into judgement with thy servants, who truly repent us of our faults, but so make haste to help us in this world, that we may ever live with thee in the world to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (COLLECT FROM A PENITENTIAL SERVICE, BCP PAGE 613)

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ROMANS 1-3: **ALL HAVE SINNED. ALL ARE FALLEN.**

1 ¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools...

3 ¹⁰As it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹²All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. ¹³Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. ¹⁴Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. ¹⁵Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶in their paths are ruin and misery, ¹⁷and the way of peace they have not known..."

²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

²⁶It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.