

Romans 3:10-12

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/rom/rom-3/romans-310-12/>

Paul further makes his point that all are under sin by quoting the Old Testament, reiterating that we are all sinners and cannot do good apart from God.

Paul continues his point from verse 9, that all are under sin, by appealing to Scripture (*as it is written*). This verse is a quote from what we call the Old Testament, which at the time Paul wrote this letter to the Romans would have been the Holy Scriptures. The Jews considered it the Word of God, and it is clear that the Roman Gentile believers did as well.

This quote of Old Testament passages runs from verse 10 to verse 18 and is from various sections of Psalms and Isaiah. Paul is not inventing a new idea that all are under sin. King David and the prophets said it a millennium before Paul. The phrase *not even one* (v 12) corresponds well with the Apostle Paul's statement about himself, that he is no better than those hypocritical slanderers of his gospel message; we are all under sin (Romans 3:9). That is why grace is so essential, because without the grace of God all of humanity is lost.

Continuing the quote from Psalms and Isaiah from verse 10–18, Paul makes the point using Scripture that not only is no one righteous on his own, but also no one understands, and no one seeks God. *There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God* (v 11–12). The competing Jewish “authorities” contesting Paul would be good examples of this. They claimed to know the law thoroughly and be excellent Bible teachers (Romans 2:17–24) but actually contradict and are opposing God and God's way through their actions.

God set up the world so that humanity could seek and find Him; He is very close and if we just search a bit we will find Him, according to Acts 17:27. Sadly, we do not even reach out for God even though He is near. Which is why God draws us, why Jesus came to die on our behalf, and why God gave us His Spirit to convict, regenerate, and empower us to overcome temptation.

In verse 12, Paul continues with his point that he, like every other person, is wholly incapable of generating goodness on his own: *All have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one*. Paul here is quoting from Psalm 14. The wording of Paul's quotes from the Old Testament sometimes varies from our own translations. The meaning does not change, but we are used to thinking of a quote as being exact, and often, just like here, it is not. In these instances, it is possible Paul is simply paraphrasing Scripture, without changing the meaning.

There are several other possible explanations for the differences in these quotes. The Meturgeman (a Jewish leader who performed religious ceremonies) stood and was not allowed to look at the written text. He had to translate (from memory) what the preacher said, from Hebrew to Aramaic. The people only understood the Aramaic, so he was the conduit for the oral tradition among the people.

This is how the oral tradition developed. An educated biblical lawyer like Paul was educated from his teenage years on. He would have been exposed to the LXX (the Greek translation of the Bible) primarily since he spoke Greek, which was the common language of the day. The average person did not have access to the Hebrew because there were precious few copies, and if they wanted to learn Hebrew they would have to study at a Jewish seminary (a Yeshiva) under the scribes.

Paul could probably quote from the Hebrew or the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (the LXX). With his thorough knowledge, he might have used either language at different times or even his own translation, just as various contemporary translators can vary words without altering the meaning.

Biblical Text

**10 as it is written, "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."**