

9 What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

13 Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips:

14 Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness:

15 Their feet *are* swift to shed blood:

16 Destruction and misery *are* in their ways:

17 And the way of peace have they not known:

18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law:

that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

22 Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God:

24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

25 Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

26 To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

of those is just, who thus asperse the pure truth of the gospel, which is a doctrine according to godliness. As if the apostle had said, I will not reason further with such persons, but leave them to be put to silence by their own consciences, and to answer for their slanders before the judgment-seat of Christ.

Ver. 9—19. *What then? Are we better than they? &c.*] Are we better than they whose damnation is just? “Nay, in no wise.” We, if dealt with in strict justice, deserve condemnation as well as the persons we have been speaking of. “For we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.” This is a melancholy, but a certain and infallible truth; a truth which admits of the clearest confirmation, both from scripture, and matter of fact. For such is the state of man by nature, “that it is written in a variety of passages which may be applied to the present purpose, to show that both Jews and Gentiles are corrupt, and naturally under sin, its pollution, guilt, power, and condemnation, “There is none righteous, no, not one,” Psalm xiv. 1. The psalmist’s words are, “There is none that doeth good;” from whence the apostle rightly infers, “there is none righteous;” for he that does not do good is not righteous. The words referred to are not always literally expressed, but the sense of the passages is given. “There is none that understandeth.” This is rightly concluded from what the psalmist says, “The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men,” took an impartial survey of them, “to see if there were any that did understand, Psalm xiv. 2; that is, that did understand the way of truth, their own duty, and real interest; but he found none. “There is none that seeketh after God.” No one that seeks him chiefly, and in the first place; that seeks him with his whole heart, and worships him in spirit and in truth. “They are all gone out of the way;” or, “gone aside” from the right path, or gone back from God and his commands, Psalm xiv. 3, and liii. 3. “They are altogether become unprofitable,” as to the great ends for which they were created. So that “there is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one.” The apostle is quite peremptory in his assertion; he does not satisfy himself with the universal particle none, but doubles the denial, “no, not one;” if there had been but one in all the fallen race, exempted from this depravity, God would have found him out, when he made the strict inquiry before mentioned. Even those who are now justified and saved were none of them righteous by nature. “Their throat is an open sepulchre, Psalm v. 9. Filthy, ill-scented, and unsavoury words proceed out of their mouth; what the apostle elsewhere calls corrupt, or rotten, communication, Eph. iv. 29. An open sepulchre discovers the filthiness which is within it. The damsel said to Peter, Thy speech bewrayeth thee. This is true of corrupt man. The impurity of his heart may easily be perceived by

his conversation; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. “With their tongues they have used deceit,” while they have made the fairest professions of friendship. “The poison, or venom, of asps is under their lips, while they utter the most infectious and fatal slanders; and the most shocking profaneness sometimes mingles itself with their conversation. Their feet are swift in running to mischief, and that too often to injure the lives, or shed the blood, of the innocent, Prov. i. 16, 18. They are so far from finding safety and happiness in their pursuits, that destruction and misery are in their ways. They often bring distress upon others, and inevitable destruction will fall upon themselves at last, if infinite mercy prevent not. “The way of peace with God, and of real felicity in the present or the future world, they have not known,” nor seriously regarded. To sum up all in one word, “the fear of God is not before their eyes;” they live without any true sense of his presence, any child-like reverence of his majesty, or love to his name, Psalm xxxvi. 1. “Now we know that what things soever the law saith,” in such passages as these, “it saith to them that are under the law.” They are under obligations to obey it, and, through disobedience, under its condemnation. They who are under the law are transgressors of it, and, as such, are liable to punishment; “that every mouth may be stopped,” and that all pleas arising from human merit may be cut off. Hence all the world is “become guilty before God.” The apostle says, We know this to be true, and are fully assured of it. Hence the conclusion is drawn; “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight;” that is, no person whatever. “The deeds of the law” intend works done in obedience to it, as performed by depraved and sinful men. The law is so far from discharging or acquitting such, that it condemns them, and stops their mouths, leaving them no plea which they can make before God.

Ver. 20. *By the law is the knowledge of sin.*] Far from being our justifier, it is our accuser. It arraigns and proves us guilty. It demonstrates, beyond all possibility of contradiction, that the very best among us have failed and come short of our duty; nay, that the very best among us have done amiss, and dealt wickedly. The law is undoubtedly a rule of conduct to all, and shows us what we ought to do, and what to avoid; but it is not the condition of eternal happiness to any. We can never expect justification by it, or by any acts of obedience to it.

Ver. 21—26. *But now the righteousness of God, &c.*] The evangelical system is most clearly opened in the following verses, according to what had been laid down, chap. i. 17. That in “the gospel, the righteousness of God,” for the justification of a sinner, “is revealed from faith to faith.” This is the righteousness which God has appointed, provided, and introduced in the