

## SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

Good morning, church family... today we step into Week 3 of the series “Time Is Running Out”... and today’s message is titled “Wake Up!!!” – not “wake up...” but “WAKE UP!!!”... and our key passage comes from Romans chapter 3. Before we open it, I want to slow us down... take a minute to set the course... and remind us why this moment matters.

And before we begin, I want to remind you about **Digging Deeper**. [CLICK p2]

This is where we prepare ourselves for continued study throughout the week. You see on the slide that Romans 3:11–14 is our keystone verse... and we want you to take this with you... read it... study it... meditate on it... and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you through it.

Write down your answers to the questions... “What does the Bible say?” – write the Scripture out with your own hands so you engage another method of interacting with it... “What does it mean?” – listen for the Holy Spirit, study it, experience it, and write down the insights you gain... and then “How does it apply to your life?” Don’t just read it like a fictional story for entertainment... discover how it shapes the way you live to become more Christlike.

“What changes do you need to make to continue to grow?”... “Why should you change?” Yes, to become more Christlike, but make it personal and specific. And that’s how you answer the final question on the page – “What will I do to change and obey?” That’s the heart behind Digging Deeper.

So looking back... in Week 1 we heard God say through Ezekiel, “Turn and live”... in Week 2 we heard Peter say God’s heart is that “none should perish”... and now Week 3 asks the question underneath all of it... the question beneath every spiritual struggle... every season of drift... every moment where we say, “I don’t know why I’m like this.”

**If God wants us to turn... and God wants us to live... and God wants none to perish... then why don’t people turn?**

Why don’t we turn? And the answer is painfully simple... and spiritually devastating...

**You can’t respond to an invitation you don’t realize you need.**

That’s the heartbeat of this message... that’s the lane I’m in today... Pastor Ray brings heat and heart... today I’m bringing light and clarity... the system diagnosis... the diagnostic readout of the human condition.

[CLICK p3]

Have you ever seen an OBD2 scanner for your car? OBD2 stands for On-Board Diagnostics... the 2 is because it is the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation and has a different style plug than the first. There’s a little port usually under the steering wheel... and when you plug this device in, it reads the diagnostics... it tells you why the car is running well or not – if you have a check engine light on, this will tell you why... Romans 3 is going to be our spiritual OBD2 device... helping us peek into our internal system... giving us a readout of our personal spiritual diagnostics.

And here’s the big idea that sits over everything we’re about to see...

**Humanity isn’t spiritually curious or even spiritually neutral... apart from divine intervention, we are asleep... unaware... unresponsive... and drifting toward destruction.**

Romans 3 doesn’t whisper this... it doesn’t hint at it... it doesn’t soften it... Romans 3 shows us the diagnostic readout... the spiritual MRI... our own personal OBD2... the truth beneath the surface.

And the shocking part is this...

## **The readout hasn't changed.**

The Psalms said it... Paul restates it here... and our world today proves it.

Human nature hasn't changed... God hasn't changed – He tells us He is the same yesterday, today, and forever... and our need for awakening hasn't changed.

Now... I know this is heavy... it's not the kind of passage people embroider on pillows... but this is where the Gospel begins... not with **flattery**... not with **comfort**... but with **truth**... truth that **wakes us up**... truth that **opens our eyes**... truth that **prepares us** for the **rescue**.

Because most people don't reject God out of hatred... people don't usually run from God just for the sake of being rebellious... that's more often self-satisfaction... wanting to be their own god... wanting control...

But most people ignore God because they don't even realize they're asleep... they don't realize they're drifting... they don't realize they're in danger... and sometimes they just keep hitting the snooze button...

[CLICK p4]

And that's why this message matters... because if you don't know you're asleep, you won't wake up... Romans 3 is God saying, "Let Me show you what you can't see."

So today we're going to walk through this passage slowly... honestly... reverently... and we're going to let God show us the truth beneath the surface... to help us see the danger we don't see... so we can receive the rescue we desperately need.

But before we read the text... before we walk through the diagnosis... before we talk about judgment or grace or rescue... I want to start with something simple... something human... something we've all experienced... a moment where you thought you were fully aware... but you weren't... a moment where danger was closer than you realized... a moment where the warning signs were there... but you didn't see them until afterward.

Because that's the world Romans 3 describes... a world full of people walking toward danger... and they don't even know it.

And that brings us to the story that opens this message.

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## **SECTION 2 – STORY OF UNRECOGNIZED DANGER**

It was early morning... not too early, but early enough that the sun hadn't fully committed to the day yet... that time when the sky is awake but the world isn't. I was driving... nothing dramatic... nothing unusual... just a normal commute... coffee in the cup holder... radio low... mind already thinking about the day ahead.

And I was tired... but not *that* tired... or at least that's what I told myself. "I'm fine... I'm good... I'm awake enough."

[CLICK p5]

And then it happened... not a full sleep... not a dramatic movie moment... just a blink that lasted a little too long... one of those "microsleeps" they warn you about... the kind you don't even realize happened until you jerk awake and think, "Wait... how did I get here?"

I didn't drift into another lane... I didn't hit anything... I didn't crash... but for a split second, I wasn't in control... and I didn't even know it.

That's the scary part... not the sleep... the unawareness... the danger wasn't that I was tired... the danger was that I didn't realize how tired I was.

If you had asked me in that moment, “Brian, are you fully aware of what’s happening right now”... I would’ve said, “Absolutely... I’m good... I’m fine.” Because I felt like I was... But I wasn’t... I was in danger... and I didn’t know it.

And some of you know exactly what I’m talking about... you have experienced that “How did I get here” moment. It might not be actual, physical sleep that causes it... but somehow you wind up on auto-pilot...

Somehow you wind up somewhere and don’t remember how it happened... Somehow, you are in control, but not really. And others may have experienced something similar maybe not with driving... but with life.

Moments where you thought you were fully present... fully aware... fully in control... and you weren’t... moments where you look back and think, “How did I miss that... how did I not see what was happening... how did I not realize the danger I was in... how did I drift that far without noticing?”

It happens in marriages... it happens in finances... it happens in friendships... it happens in careers... it happens in faith.

You think everything is fine... until it’s not... you think you’re awake... until you realize you’ve been sleepwalking... you think you’re in control... until you realize you’ve been drifting... you think you’re aware... until you see what you missed.

Here’s the thing about danger... it’s not always **loud**... it’s not always **dramatic**... it’s not always **obvious**... sometimes danger is **quiet**... sometimes danger is **subtle**... sometimes danger is **slow**... sometimes danger feels **like normal**... and that’s what makes it so **dangerous**.

If a lion jumps out of the bushes, you know you’re in danger... if your house catches fire, you know you’re in danger... if the doctor says, “We need to talk,” you know you’re in danger. When you go to the ATM and it says “Insufficient balance”... you know you are in danger.

But when danger creeps in **slowly**... when it feels like **nothing is happening**... when it feels like **just another day**... that’s when we’re **most vulnerable**... because we don’t **see it**... we don’t **sense it**... we don’t **recognize it**... we don’t **respond to it**... we don’t **wake up**.

And that’s exactly what Romans 3 is describing... not dramatic rebellion... not obvious wickedness... not cartoon villains twirling mustaches... Romans 3 is describing unrecognized danger... a world full of people who think they’re fine... but they’re not... a world full of people who think they see clearly... but they don’t... a world full of people who think they’re in control... but they’re drifting... a world full of people who think they understand... but they’re blind... a world full of people who think they’re awake... but they’re asleep at the wheel.

Romans 3 is not God yelling at us... it’s God waking us up... it’s God saying, “You don’t understand the danger you’re in... you don’t see what’s happening beneath the surface... you don’t realize how far you’ve drifted... you don’t know how close you are to judgment... you don’t know how blind you are... you don’t know – how lost you are.”

And here’s the thing... if you don’t know you’re in danger, you won’t seek rescue... if you don’t know you’re drifting, you won’t grab the anchor... if you don’t know you’re asleep, you won’t wake up... if you don’t know you’re blind, you won’t ask for sight... if you don’t know you’re lost, you won’t look for a Savior.

Romans 3 is God saying, “Let Me show you what you can’t see.”

So before we read Romans 3... before we walk through the diagnosis... before we talk about judgment or grace or rescue... I want you to hold onto this simple truth... the most dangerous place to be spiritually is not rebellion... it’s unawareness... it’s thinking you’re fine when you’re not... it’s assuming you’re safe when you’re not... it’s believing

you have time when you don't... it's drifting without realizing it... it's being on auto-pilot and just going with it... it's sleepwalking toward danger.

Romans 3 is God shaking us gently and saying, "Wake up... look... see... understand... you're not as awake as you think you are."

And that's why we need this passage... not to shame us... not to crush us... not to condemn us... but to awaken us... to open our eyes... to reveal the danger... to show us the truth... to prepare us for the rescue.

Because the Gospel is not good news for people who **think** they're **fine**... the Gospel is good news for people who **realize** they're in **danger**... and Romans 3 is a moment God says, "Let Me show you why you need saving."

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### SECTION 3 – SCRIPTURE READING

Before we go any further... before we explain anything... before we analyze anything... before we try to make sense of anything... I want us to simply hear the Word of God... because sometimes Scripture doesn't need commentary... sometimes Scripture doesn't need explanation... sometimes Scripture just needs space... space to speak... space to confront... space to reveal... space to awaken.

And Romans 3 is one of those passages.

So if you're able, I want to invite you to stand for the reading of God's Word... not out of ritual... not out of tradition... that's like being on auto-pilot... but out of reverence... because what we're about to read is not Paul's opinion... it's not a rant... it's not a theological lecture... it's not a motivational speech... it is God's diagnosis of the human condition... and it is devastatingly honest.

Now before I read it... I want to prepare you... this is not the kind of Scripture you see on Instagram with a sunset behind it... this is God holding up a mirror and saying, "Let Me show you what's really going on beneath the surface."

And if we're willing to look... really look... it explains so much about our world... so much about our culture... so much about our relationships... so much about our own hearts.

So let's hear it... Romans 3:11–14. [CLICK p6]

And as I read this, notice something... Paul is quoting Scripture... he's pulling from multiple Psalms... stitching together the testimony of the Old Testament to show that this diagnosis is ancient... universal... true of every generation... this is not new... not modern... not cultural... this is human.

Romans 3:11-14 (NASB)

<sup>11</sup> THERE IS NO ONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,  
THERE IS NO ONE WHO SEEKS OUT GOD;

<sup>12</sup> THEY HAVE ALL TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME CORRUPT;  
THERE IS NO ONE WHO DOES GOOD,  
THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

<sup>13</sup> "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE,  
WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING,"  
"THE VENOM OF ASPES IS UNDER THEIR LIPS";

<sup>14</sup> "THEIR MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS";

Let's pause there... let that sit for a moment... let the weight of those words settle.

Because this is not God describing **bad people**... this is God describing **all people**... this is **not** God describing the **worst of humanity**... this is God describing the **truth of humanity**... this is not a passage about **criminals** or **dictators** or **villains**... this is a passage about **the human heart**... your heart... my heart... every heart.

And if we rush past this... if we try to soften it... if we try to explain it away... if we try to make it more palatable... we will miss the entire point of the Gospel... because the Gospel is not good news for good people... the Gospel is good news for people who are lost... blind... drifting... decaying... broken... guilty... and unable to save themselves.

Romans 3 is God saying, “Let Me show you why you need a Savior.”

And notice something else... there is no wiggle room in this passage... no loopholes... no exceptions... no “but I’m trying”... no “but I’m better than most people”... no “but I grew up in church”... no “but I’m spiritual.”

[CLICK p7]

Look at the absolutes in just the first 2 verses... no one... no one... all... no one... not even one.

God is not grading on a curve... He’s not comparing you to your neighbor... He’s not evaluating your intentions... He’s not measuring your potential... He is revealing the truth... and the truth is not flattering... but the truth is freeing... because the truth prepares us for grace.

Romans 3 is God saying, “You don’t understand the danger you’re in... but I do... you don’t see the drift... but I do... you don’t recognize the decay... but I do... you don’t realize how far you’ve wandered... but I do... you don’t know how close you are to judgment... but I do.”

And because He sees it... because He understands it... because He knows the danger... He speaks... He warns... He reveals... He diagnoses... He awakens... not to condemn you... but to rescue you... not to shame you... but to save you... not to push you away... but to pull you close.

Romans 3 is not the **end of the story**... it is the **beginning of the rescue**... but before we get to the rescue... we have to understand the danger... before we get to the cure... we have to understand the disease... before we get to grace... we have to understand why grace is necessary.

And that’s where we go next.

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## SECTION 4 – EXPOSITION

So now let’s walk through the diagnosis God gives us... line by line... and let His Word speak for itself starting with verse 11:

### **“There is no one who understands.”**

Paul begins with perception... not intelligence... not education... not IQ... but understanding... the ability to see reality clearly... to interpret life correctly... to recognize danger when it’s near... to discern truth from lies.

And Paul says humanity doesn’t have that... we think we see clearly... we think we’re self-aware... we think we’re perceptive... but Scripture says we are blind to the most important realities of life.

### **Illustration: The Fog of Familiarity**

Have you ever driven through fog so thick you could barely see the road... you slow down... you grip the wheel... you lean forward like that’s going to help... you turn off the high beams because they make it worse... but spiritually, most people are driving full speed in fog... and they don’t even know it.

We assume clarity... we assume awareness... we assume we're reading life correctly... but Paul says no one understands.

### **Illustration: The Wrong Diagnosis**

Imagine going to the doctor with chest pain... sweating... short of breath... left arm tingling... and the doctor says, "Eh, it's probably indigestion... go home and drink some ginger ale." You'd be furious... because the danger is real... and the diagnosis is wrong.

[CLICK p8]

Paul is saying humanity has misdiagnosed itself... we think we're basically good... we think we're spiritually fine... we think we're morally healthy... but the Bible says we don't understand the danger we're in.

### **Reflection Moment**

Where in your life have you assumed you understood... only to realize later you were blind... where have you trusted your perception... when God was trying to show you something deeper?

[CLICK p9]

### **Second half of verse 11: "There is no one who seeks out God."**

This is where God tells us a truth we don't want to hear... because we like to think of ourselves as spiritual seekers... open... curious... searching... but Paul says no one seeks God... we seek comfort... meaning... spirituality... inspiration... peace... purpose... but God Himself... no.

We seek the gifts, not the Giver... the blessings, not the Blessor... the benefits, not the King.

### **Illustration: The Vending Machine God**

Many people treat God like a vending machine... press the right buttons... say the right prayer... insert the right behavior... and hope something good drops out... but when the machine jams... when the blessing doesn't fall... when the prayer isn't answered the way we want... we walk away... because we weren't seeking God... we were seeking what God could do for us.

### **Illustration: The Spiritual Buffet**

We live in a culture that treats spirituality like a buffet... a little Christianity... a little mindfulness... a little self-help... a little "positive energy"... a little "manifesting"... a little "universe, send me a sign"... we want spirituality without surrender... comfort without conviction... God's peace without God's presence.

Paul says no one seeks God.

### **Reflection Moment**

What are you seeking... really... deep down... are you seeking God... or are you seeking what God can give you?

### **Continuing with verse 12 – "They have all turned aside."**

This is not dramatic rebellion... this is drift... not a hard left turn... There is just no course correction... "all have turned aside" means we wander... we drift... we follow our impulses... we choose the path of least resistance... and we don't even notice it happening.

### **Illustration: The Drifting Boat**

If you've ever been on a boat without an anchor, you know what happens... you don't feel movement... you don't sense danger... you don't notice the drift... until you look up and realize you're nowhere near where you started... that's the human heart... we drift... we wander... we move away from God without realizing it.

A few weeks ago, we were in Aruba... the water was calm... no waves... and I was floating, swimming, relaxing... but I had to keep looking back to shore... because even in calm water, I was drifting... slowly... quietly... without feeling it... and if I didn't look back, I would have never noticed how far I had gone.

### **Illustration: The Slow Leak**

Most people don't blow up their lives with one catastrophic decision... they leak... slowly... quietly... imperceptibly... a compromise here... a distraction there... a neglected prayer life... a skipped Sunday... a little bitterness... a little pride... a little self-reliance... and then one day they wake up and think, "How did I get here?" Paul answers... all have turned aside.

### **Reflection Moment**

Where have you drifted... where have you moved away from God without noticing... where have you assumed you were anchored... but you weren't?

### **Down to verse 13 – “Their throat is an open grave... their tongues deceive... the venom of asps is under their lips... their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.”**

Paul shifts from the heart to the mouth... because what comes out of us reveals what's going wrong inside us. I recently saw a preacher talking about making orange juice. He said, "When you squeeze an orange, what comes out? Orange juice – because that's what's inside." You're not going to get apple juice by squeezing an orange... you only get out what is already in there.

Then Paul talks about an "open grave" and it is a powerful image... what should be buried... sealed... hidden... is exposed... and it reeks of death... Paul says that's what our words are like.

Jesus said, "Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks"... and Paul might add, "Out of the overflow of the heart, the internet speaks."

### **Modern Parallel: Social Media Toxicity**

If you want to see Romans 3 in real time, just open your phone... social media has become an open grave... a breeding ground for deception... a place where venom spreads... a platform for cursing and bitterness... a megaphone for outrage... a factory of comparison, envy, and contempt... we don't just have a communication problem... we have a heart problem.

### **Illustration: The Poisoned Well**

Imagine a well in a village... everyone drinks from it... everyone depends on it... everyone trusts it... but one day someone poisons it... not enough to kill instantly... just enough to sicken slowly... people drink... people get sick... people blame the weather... people blame stress... people blame anything but the well... that's social media... that's our speech... that's our culture... the well is poisoned... and we keep drinking.

### **Reflection Moment**

What do your words reveal about your heart... what does your online presence reveal about your soul... where is bitterness leaking out... where is deception creeping in?

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## **SECTION 5 – THE JUDGMENT WE ARE IGNORING**

We've walked through Paul's diagnosis... we've seen the blindness... we've seen the drift... we've seen the decay... we've seen the danger we don't recognize... but now Paul forces us to face something deeper... something heavier... something we would never choose to think about on our own... judgment.

And let's be honest... judgment is one of those topics we instinctively avoid. We don't like thinking about it... we don't like talking about it... we don't like imagining it. We prefer comfort... encouragement... inspiration... something that makes us feel uplifted. But Scripture doesn't give us that option. Scripture refuses to let us sleep through the most important reality of our lives. Scripture says, "Wake up... look... see... understand... this is real."

Romans 3 is not trying to scare us... it's trying to wake us up.

So let's walk slowly through what Scripture says about judgment... not to crush us... but to help us see the danger we're in and the rescue God offers.

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## **1. Judgment is not a metaphor... it's an appointment**

[CLICK p10]

Hebrews 9:27 says, "And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment"... there is a day on God's calendar with your name on it... a day you cannot postpone... a day you cannot reschedule... a day you cannot negotiate.

You can avoid the dentist... you can avoid the gym... you can avoid your email inbox... you can avoid hard conversations... you can even avoid your taxes for a little while... just ask Al Capone – they didn't get him on racketeering or murder, but on tax evasion... but this appointment? You cannot avoid this appointment.

### **Illustration: The Court Summons**

If you've ever received a court summons, you know the feeling... you can't ignore it... you can't pretend it didn't arrive... you can't say, "I'm busy that day"... the date is set, and your presence is required.

Robin's niece's husband works for a coroner's office... and a case he worked on up in Boston is now going to trial. He doesn't even work there anymore... he's in a different state... a different job... a different season of life... but when the court called, he had to go. He had to take vacation time... travel back... rearrange his life... because his presence wasn't optional. It was required.

Judgment is like that... except infinitely more serious... because the One summoning you is the holy and righteous God.

And here's the part we don't like to think about... you don't get to choose the day... you don't get to choose the hour... you don't get to choose the moment... we live like we have unlimited time... we live like tomorrow is guaranteed... we live like we can deal with God "later"... but Scripture says there is no "later"... there is only "appointed."

And the appointment is not with a pastor... not with a counselor... not with a friend... it is with God, the holy and perfect Creator of the universe.

### **Reflection Moment**

Have you experienced a moment where you thought you could deal with something "later"... and then discovered "later" wasn't as far away as you imagined... and suddenly you were rushing... scrambling... doing a poor job just to get it done... or realizing you ran out of time altogether?

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## **2. Judgment is universal... no exceptions**

[CLICK p11]

Romans 3:19 says, “every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God”... that phrase “every mouth may be stopped” is one of the most sobering lines in the Bible.

Because right now we have **a lot** to say... we **justify** ourselves... we **explain** ourselves... we **defend** ourselves... we **compare** ourselves... we **excuse** ourselves... “I’m not **that** bad”... “I’ve done as good as I can”... “I’m better than **most** people...or at least **those** people”... “I’ve made mistakes, but who hasn’t”... “I have **good intentions**”... “I’m **trying my best.**”

But on that day... every mouth will be stopped... not because God silences us... but because we will have nothing left to say... no excuses... no explanations... no “but I tried”... no “but I didn’t know”... no “but I’m better than him”... just silence before a holy God.

And Paul says “the whole world”... not some of the world... not the worst of the world... not the people **we** think deserve judgment... the whole world... the religious... the irreligious... the moral... the immoral... the church kid... the prodigal... the pastor... the atheist... the skeptic... the spiritual-but-not-religious... the “I’m a good person” crowd... the “I don’t need God” crowd... everyone.

And this isn’t just a warning for unbelievers... it’s a wake-up call for the church... because spiritual sleep doesn’t care what label you wear... you can drift in a pew just as easily as you can drift in the world... you can be religiously active and spiritually asleep at the same time.

### Reflection Moment

At one time or another we’ve all experienced the mountain tops and the valleys... seasons where life felt clear and seasons where it felt cloudy. Have you experienced a time when your spiritual activity felt strong... but your spiritual awareness was fading... where busyness looked like closeness, but your heart wasn’t actually drawing near?

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### 3. Judgment is separation... and separation is terrible

[CLICK p12]

Isaiah 59:2 says, “but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God”... separation from God is not like being separated from a friend... or a job... or a routine... separation from God is separation from joy... beauty... meaning... purpose... love... hope... life itself.

And this goes all the way back to Genesis 2 and 3... when God warned Adam and Eve that the penalty for eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was death. Satan twisted that warning... saying “You certainly won’t die”... as if God meant only physical death.

But God was talking about something far deeper... death as separation... separation from **His** presence... **separation** from the **Source of life**. The moment they sinned, that separation became real... and physical death entered the world because spiritual death – and they experienced separation from God.

And that’s the pattern Scripture shows us again and again... sin separates... sin isolates... sin distances... sin pushes us away from the God who is our source... our anchor... our life.

Second Thessalonians 1:9 describes it as “eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord”... not annihilation... not ceasing to exist... but existing without God... without His goodness... without His mercy... without His presence... without His light.

We don't grasp how terrible separation is... because even in our broken world, we still live in the spillover of God's goodness... the warmth of the sun... the taste of food... the beauty of creation... the laughter of children... the comfort of friendship... the joy of music... the gift of breath...

And if separation from God in **this life** is devastating... separation from God in eternity is unthinkable and unbearable.

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Judgment is real... judgment is certain... judgment is universal... judgment is separation... but judgment is not the end of the story. Judgment is what makes the rescue necessary. Judgment is what makes grace amazing. Judgment is what makes the Gospel good news.

Romans 3 shows us the danger... so we can see the Savior.

And that's where we go next.

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## **SECTION 6 – THE RESCUE WE DIDN'T SEE COMING**

We've sat in the diagnosis... we've faced the danger... we've acknowledged the judgment... and if we stopped there, this would be the most hopeless sermon you've ever heard. But Scripture doesn't stop there... God doesn't stop there... Paul doesn't stop there.

Right when the weight is heaviest... right when the truth is undeniable... right when every mouth is stopped... right when we realize we cannot save ourselves... Paul gives us the two most beautiful words in the Bible.

**“But God...”**

[CLICK p13]

Romans 3:21–22 says, “But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law... the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe” ... those two words change everything... those two words are the hinge of history... those two words are the doorway from despair to hope... from judgment to grace... from death to life.

“But God”... meaning something has happened... something has broken into the story... something has interrupted the drift... something has stepped into the danger... something has entered the judgment we deserved.

And that something is Someone... **Jesus Christ**.

The rescue is not a plan... the rescue is a person.

[CLICK p14]

Romans 3:23–24 says, “<sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” ... justified by His grace as a gift... justified freely... not earned... not achieved... not deserved... freely... by grace... through Jesus.

We could not climb our way to God... so God came down to us... we could not fix our condition... so God stepped into it... we could not escape judgment... so God absorbed it.

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**Illustration: The Riptide Rescue**

Imagine being caught in a riptide... the waves pulling you farther and farther from shore... you're kicking... you're fighting... you're trying everything you know... but you're getting weaker... and the current is stronger... and you realize you cannot save yourself.

And then a lifeguard dives in... not shouting instructions from the beach... not telling you to swim harder... but entering the water... entering the danger... entering the current... grabbing hold of you... and pulling you back to life.

That's Jesus... He didn't stand on the shore of heaven shouting advice... He entered the water... He entered the danger... He entered the judgment.

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### **My Aruba Moment**

A few weeks ago in Aruba, I had my own moment like this... not dramatic, not life-threatening, but eye-opening. We were at Baby Beach... beautiful water, calm on the surface... but there's a channel where the current rips straight out to sea. I swam over to it while I was snorkeling... and I could see that there were a lot more fish, all the beauty, everything people said was worth swimming out to see.

But the current was roaring... there was no lifeguard on duty... and I didn't have fins. I knew I could go back to the beach and walk around to the other side and cross over to that area, but if I stepped into that channel, I already knew couldn't swim against it... And all I could see was the pull of that current. So I stayed out. I wasn't willing to step into something I couldn't fight on my own.

That's the human condition... currents stronger than we think... danger deeper than we realize... and no ability to fight our way out on our own.

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### **Illustration: The Firefighter**

Imagine a firefighter running into a burning building... not because the people inside **deserve** it... not because they **earned** it... but because they **need it**... they **need** the rescue... because they cannot get out on their own... because the flames are too strong... because the smoke is too thick.

Jesus ran into the burning building of our sin... our guilt... our judgment... and He carried us out.

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### **Illustration: The Courtroom Exchange**

Imagine standing before a judge... guilty... no excuses... no defense... no way out... and the judge steps down from the bench... takes off his robe... stands beside you... and says, "I will take the sentence... and you will go free."

That is the Gospel... that is the rescue... that is the righteousness of God revealed in Jesus.

Romans 3:25–26 says Jesus is the One whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood... to demonstrate His righteousness... so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Just and justifier... meaning God does not ignore sin... He deals with it... He does not pretend we are innocent... When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, He declares us righteous because Jesus took our place.

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**The rescue is costly... but it is free to all of us... a free gift to you and to me.**

John 3:16–17 says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son... that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life... for God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world... but that the world might be saved through Him.”

God did not send Jesus to condemn you... you were already condemned... God sent Jesus to save you.

First Thessalonians 1:10 says Jesus “rescues us from the wrath to come”... not from inconvenience... not from discomfort... not from bad habits... from wrath... from judgment... from separation.

**The rescue is not God lowering the standard... the rescue is God fulfilling the standard Himself – for you, in your place, on your behalf.**

We could not reach Him... so He reached us... we could not climb to Him... so He came down to us... we could not pay the debt... so He paid it in full.

And here’s the part that still amazes me... God didn’t wait for you to wake up... He didn’t wait for you to fix yourself... He didn’t wait for you to seek Him... He didn’t wait for you to understand... He didn’t wait for you to drift back.

Romans 5:8 says, “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”... while we were blind... while we were drifting... while we were asleep at the wheel... while we were walking toward danger... Jesus stepped into our story.

**The rescue came before the response.**

And now the question is simple... not easy... but simple... will you receive it... will you trust Him... will you turn to Him... will you wake up to the rescue that has already come?

Because the Gospel is not good news for people who think they’re fine... the Gospel is good news for people who know they’re in danger... and know they need a Savior.

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## **SECTION 7 – THE CALL TO WAKE UP**

We’ve walked through the diagnosis... we’ve faced the danger... we’ve looked at the judgment... we’ve seen the rescue... and now we’re standing at the crossroads... the moment where truth becomes decision... where hearing becomes responding... where awareness becomes awakening.

Because the Gospel is not just information... it’s invitation... it’s not just something to understand... it’s something to receive... it’s not just something to agree with... it’s something to surrender to.

And the question that sits over this entire message... the question that sits over this entire series... the question that sits over your life... is simple:

**Are you awake?**

Not “Did you hear the sermon”... not “Do you know the verses”... not “Do you agree with the theology”... not “Do you believe God exists.”

Are you awake... awake to the danger... awake to the drift... awake to the blindness... awake to the judgment... awake to the rescue... awake to the God who has been calling you... pursuing you... loving you... even while you were asleep at the wheel.

Because here's the truth... you can sit in church and still be asleep... you can know Scripture and still be asleep... you can sing the songs and still be asleep... you can nod your head and still be asleep... you can be spiritually active and spiritually unconscious at the same time.

Awakening is not about activity... awakening is about honesty.

It's about saying, "God, I see it now... I see the drift... I see the danger... I see the sin... I see the separation... I see the Savior... and I don't want to sleep through this anymore."

Awakening is not about trying harder... it's about turning sooner... not about fixing yourself... but about admitting you can't... not about proving your worth... but about receiving His grace.

Romans 13:11 says, "It is time to wake up from sleep, for salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed"... time to wake up... time to see clearly... time to stop drifting... time to stop delaying... time to stop assuming you're fine... time to stop sleepwalking through spiritual danger.

And maybe for you... this is that moment... the moment where God is shaking you gently and saying, "Wake up... look... see... understand... you're not as awake as you think you are... but I am here... and I am ready to rescue."

Maybe you've been drifting... maybe you've been numb... maybe you've been distracted... maybe you've been running... maybe you've been pretending... maybe you've been asleep for a long time.

But you are not too far... you are not too late... you are not too broken... you are not too blind... you are not too lost... you are not beyond the reach of grace.

Jesus has already stepped into your danger... Jesus has already absorbed your judgment... Jesus has already paid your debt... Jesus has already made the way home.

The only question left is... **will you wake up to Him?**

Will you turn to Him... will you trust Him... will you surrender to Him... will you let Him rescue you... will you let Him lead you... will you let Him open your eyes... will you let Him bring you back to life?

Because the Gospel is not good news for people who think they're fine... the Gospel is good news for people who know they're in danger... and know they need a Savior.

And today... right now... in this moment... the invitation is simple... wake up... turn to Him... trust Him... follow Him... let Him rescue you.

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## **SECTION 8 – CLOSING**

As we close today... I want you to feel the weight of what we've seen... but I also want you to feel the hope... the rescue... the invitation... because Romans 3 does not leave us in despair... it leads us to grace... it leads us to Jesus... it leads us to the God who wakes us up so He can bring us home.

And maybe today... God has been nudging you... whispering to you... shaking you gently... saying, "Wake up... this is for you... this is your moment... this is your turning."

Maybe you've been drifting... maybe you've been numb... maybe you've been asleep spiritually for a long time... and today God is calling you back... calling you to see... calling you to turn... calling you to trust.

And if that's you... hear this clearly... you don't have to fix yourself first... you don't have to clean yourself up... you don't have to earn anything... you don't have to prove anything... you don't have to pretend anything.

You just have to wake up... and turn to the One who has already done the work.

Jesus has already stepped into your danger... Jesus has already absorbed your judgment... Jesus has already paid your debt... Jesus has already made the way home... and the invitation is simple... come to Him... trust Him... surrender to Him... follow Him.

Because the Gospel is not good news for people who think they're fine... the Gospel is good news for people who know they're in danger... and know they need a Savior.

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### **SALVATION PRAYER**

If today you're ready to wake up... ready to turn... ready to trust Jesus as Lord and Savior... I want to lead you in a simple prayer. There's nothing magical about the words... it's the posture of your heart that matters... but if this is your moment, you can pray something like this...

"Jesus... I see it now... I see my sin... I see my drift... I see my need for You.

I believe You died for me... I believe You rose for me... I believe You are the only One who can rescue me.

Today I turn to You... I trust You... I surrender to You.

Wake me up... forgive me... save me... make me Yours.

Thank You for loving me... thank You for rescuing me... thank You for giving me new life.

I am Yours... now and forever."

Amen.

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And next week... we're going to take this even deeper... because Romans 3 has shown us the diagnosis... and now we're ready for what comes next in this journey of awakening.

So this week... stay alert... stay honest... stay open... stay awake to what God is doing in you... and come back ready for the next step.

Because God is not done... not with you... not with us... not with this series... and He's not done with the story He's writing in your life.

**Remember – Wake up!!! Turn to Him. Walk in the rescue.**

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