

# lincolnberean

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**SERIES:** The Gospel Is  
**MESSAGE:** God's Response to Our Desperate Need Pt. 3  
**PASSAGE:** Romans 3:1-20  
**SPEAKER:** Andy MacFarlane

Well, good evening. My name is Andy McFarlane. I'm the pastor at North Pointe Community Church. We planted out of Lincoln Berean 21 years ago. September of 2005? Yeah. I hired on as the singles pastor in 2002, and talked it through, and felt like Lord was leading us to launch this church, and but when I get an opportunity to come back, I always take it. It's a really fun place to be, but it's also a chance to say thank you, because a lot of you were here and praying and giving before I showed up on the scene or a lot of our staff were in the picture. So we're grateful. And we're grateful that you sent us out.

Couple snapshots. I won't be long, but talking about it, it was about 3 or 4 weeks ago, and most of our traffic comes in at one particular door, and I'm meeting people, and that day I had 3 people say, "Andy, this is my sister and her husband"... "this is my friend, I invited them to church." You know, and, this is why we did this, we launched this thing. The vision for it in 2004, Brian Clark said, you know, if you're just looking for a smaller church man, Berean gotten so big or I don't want to drive as far, don't go. We're going on mission to reach people in North Lincoln. And I want you to know that's happening, it's encouraging people are inviting people to their neighborhood church.

Second little snapshot. Right before we launched, a friend of mine said, "Andy, if the church you're in ceased to exist, would anybody outside the church care?" Now, certainly people who were there who were being fed would, but, but, and that was to say that the people who think, "Maybe you're a little nutty about Jesus, you're a little extreme about it, you're a little crazy about the Bible"—are they still glad you're in the community? Well, one of the things we do is the food bank brings in food on pallets once a month. And we have a volunteer team that puts it in backpacks and takes it to Kooser Elementary. It's about a half mile from us. So every weekend, 70 kids who have food shortage in their home will have food. You know, and maybe the people at Kooser, maybe they don't understand the whole Jesus thing, maybe they think it's a little far, but they say, "We're glad you're in the community." And we're reflecting the grace and the compassion of Jesus. So I want you to know, you sent us out, the gospel is going forth in North Lincoln.

For most of my 30, almost 32 years, of marriage, my wife has told me, "Dude, you need a hobby. You need a hobby. I love you, but you're a candidate to drive me crazy." Well, our kids are 27 and 24 now, and so they've been out about 5 years. So that has become more frequent, because the kids are gone, like, "You really need a hobby." Well, she said that in our small group the spring of 2023, and somebody said in the group, "I'll find him one." It's like you go for it. Dude, you go for it. So about 6 weeks later, he calls me. He said, "Andy, my son and a couple others are down here at Peterson Park. We've gotten one of these pickleball kits. You want to come down and hit the ball with us?" So that started once a week the summer of 2023.

And I thought, well, this is this is pretty fun. So we get to the winter season and what are we going to do? And then I get introduced to this playtime scheduler, and I find that all these places in Lincoln, you can play. And I meet this community of people, and it's like, "I'm in." As an extrovert, I have connection with these people. And as somebody likes sports, I like the competition. Can I get



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the skills to get to this level and that level? I mean, it's working, and it's working for my wife too. Because if you play pickleball, you know you have to learn to dink. And so I get, somewhere in that first year, I get a dink master, and it's downstairs in the basement, and when I would be walking around driving her crazy with nervous energy, I'm downstairs hitting against the dink master. People, this is working.

So let me roll ahead to Labor Day weekend of 2024. I go up for a shot. It's like, oh, man, that hurt. I'll just play through it. Play two more points, I thought I'm not playing through this thing. I got home and I looked and it had begun to swell there and I said, it's Labor Day, I'll just ice it all day Monday 'til it looks bad. So I get on Google on Tuesday. They said, if you look like Popeye the Sailor, remember Popeye, when you get those things in one arm, you've torn a bicep tendon. And what's happened is the muscle's retracted. I get—a guy's a PT in our church—to come look, and he said, yeah, you know, you need to go see this doctor. I thought great, there goes my hobby. So I call, the doctor won't be available to next week, but his PA is available Friday. I'll take that appointment, do an x-ray, and then exam, do this, do that, this, and he says the x-ray is confirmed, you've torn your bicep tendon. I thought, man, how long is that? He goes, no, no, no, we don't recommend that you repair that. The risk versus gain is not worth it. John Elway, Brett Favre, NFL quarterbacks, tore that same tendon they didn't get repaired. I thought well, it was good enough for John and Brett, it's good enough for me. I said, well, I'm good to go. He said, no, I detected some weakness in your rotator cuffs. I get an MRI, that's good, small tear, I think we can manage it with physical therapy. And so we've been good.

But I say that, I want to set that all up for that time, from Tuesday 'til I realize I've got a torn bicep tendon, 'til Friday. Do you know how I felt about my hobby? I felt desperate. I've got this thing, and I've loved it, and, you know, it was still, you're wearing a short sleeve shirt, you look down, and there's this reminder. I'm desperate. I don't think this thing's happening. Well, the last two weeks, Ryan Harmon has reminded us our spiritual condition is infinitely more desperate. Romans 1 talked about, God made himself known in the creation, but we explained it away, didn't we? Professing to be wise, they became what? Fools. Then Romans 2, God gave his special revelation to a group of people called the Jews. And you know what they did? Instead of using that to gauge the relationship with God, they judged others, and they were hypocritical in it.

The doctor's prescription for my injury was rest and physical therapy. What's God's prescription for our desperate condition? That's what I want to talk about tonight. So if you got a Bible, if you'd open it to Romans 3. We're going to start in verse 1 and we're going to go through verse 20, wrestling with this question: What is God's solution to our desperate condition? What is God's solution to our desperate condition? Now, I've got to tell you before we get to the solution, I'm going to talk about the desperate some, but we will get there, if you hang with me. So here's where we start in verse 1. Paul says this:

*1 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?*

So he's just spent Romans 2 saying, you know, the Jews had the revelation of God and they blew it. He said, you know, you who teach against stealing, why do you steal? You teach against adultery, why do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, why do you rob temples? So it's not a Jew who's one outwardly, it's one inwardly. It's not the act, physical act, of circumcision, it's circumcision in the heart. And so you might think, well, Paul, is there any value to being a Jew? Paul says, actually, there is. And he starts to list them out. Verse 2, he says this:

*2 Great in every respect.*

So here goes the list.



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*First of all, they were entrusted with the oracles of God.*

So there's number one on the list. But then you know what happens? Paul gets sidetracked in this conversation. You ever get sidetracked before? That's what's going to happen in verse 3.

*3 What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?*

So Paul says, we're talking about the advantage of being a Jew, but wait a minute, wait a minute. So God goes to the covenant and he says, if some don't believe, does that nullify God's responsibility? Verse 4:

*4 May it never be!*

God forbid.

*Rather, let God be found true [or faithful], though every man be found a liar,*

We won't turn there, but Genesis 15, God is going into covenant with Abraham, he puts him in a sleep, and a goat, a heifer, and a ram are cut in half, and there's a blazing torch that passes through. And in one commentary, it says it's an enacted curse. It's God saying, "Let this happen to me if I don't keep my part of the covenant." See, we humans, we're always looking for the loophole out of the covenant, aren't we? God said, I ain't going to be no loophole. I'm going to be true to this covenant even when you're not.

*as it is written,*

And here Paul will reference Psalm 51 and we read Psalm 51 responsibly last week. It says this:

*"That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged."*

Paul turns that a little bit. What David writes in Psalm 51, verse 4, is that you're blameless. When you judge. So God will be found faithful. He will be found true, true what? To his nature and character. And part of the covenant was, I will judge disobedience. I will judge sin. Those of you who know the story, and those who don't, David was chosen of God. He was the man after God's own heart. The first king failed and David was up. Before that, David stood for God. There was a giant who was taunting the armies of living God. David said, I ain't putting up with this. He gets a sling and he drops the guy. And David becomes the king who takes Israel to the heights, but he falls. He commits adultery and then he tries to cover it up, but the soldier who's away with his men won't sleep with his wife. So David has him murdered. And he thinks he's pulled it off, but God saw it, and he sends the prophet Nathan, and Nathan says, we won't turn there, 2 Samuel 12, God won't reject you forever. You'll still have an eternal kingdom, but that child that was conceived in an adulterous relationship will die. And because of this, a member of your family will tear the kingdom from your hands. And what you did in private in adultery, he will do on the rooftops. He will set a tent up there.

Boy, if there was ever somebody where, you know, maybe God would give him a break, I mean, David, he's a good guy, man. He's done a lot for the kingdom. Maybe we clean our hands. No. And you know what David wrote about that judgment in Psalm 51, verse 4? Said, you're blameless when you judge. See, part of our desperate condition is, we don't want to believe God will judge sin. Maybe he'll let us off. Maybe he won't know. No, David makes the case that God will judge.



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So let me ask you this, if all the judges In Lincoln, or let's just say Lancaster County, decided, you know what, I just don't have it to sentence anybody. I know murder, it's bad. Arson, that's bad. Assault, that's bad. But that seems so harsh to put people away. What's life gonna be like in Lincoln when that gets around? What's life going to be in Lancaster County if the judges won't do their job and sentence convicted people? We got chaos, don't we? Look, when I when I came, we moved here in 2002, and we came up through Greeley, Colorado, and you go up 76 and 180, and you see the the sign, they go into Nebraska, it says Nebraska, and what does it say underneath? What kind of, what life is it? It's the good life, isn't it? What happens to the good life in Lincoln, Nebraska, or Lancaster County, if the judges won't do their job? That's chaos. We can't have that. But somehow we want God to step back from judging people. How much more do we need God to judge sin?

Here's what we really want: we want God to judge all those other people, right? Just not us. That's what we want. But that ain't the character of God. He says, "I always act not in accordance with your expectation. I will be faithful—what?—to my character. God will be found true, though every man a liar. That's desperation. An act of desperation. Well, the desperation continues in verse 5, here we go:

*5 But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is he?*

So here's the argument there. So my sin, my unrighteousness, shows that God is righteous, because God said, "I'll be glorified in everything." And there'll be a contrast. So then, if that's true, is God wrong to inflict wrath? Paul says

*(I am speaking in human terms.)*

Paul says in verse 6:

*6 May it never be!*

That impossible.

*For otherwise, how will God judge the world?*

If the argument is, I sin, God looked good, so he shouldn't judge me, then that's a license to sin, isn't it? But that's what desperate people do. They're looking for a reason to not be held accountable. Same kind of argument, verse 7:

*7 But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to his glory,*

So I'm a liar, and that just shows the glory of God because he's always true.

*why am I also still being judged as a sinner?*

Hey, yeah, I was wrong, but my wrong showed how great God was, so why am I being judged as a sinner? That's a bad argument. But what's our condition? We're desperate. We're desperate.

Verse 8:

*8 And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), "Let us do evil that good may come"?*



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See, if you follow that argument, if God's going to be glorified, then man, let's just throw it off. Let's just sin all the more, right? Because God will be glorified. Take that to an extreme. Paul said, look, their condemnation is just. Why would people pose those kinds of arguments? Because they're desperate.

When I was in campus ministry, I'd ask guys, hey, let's just put the Bible aside. Do you have your own moral code? "I got more moral code." Have you broken that code? "Yeah." Okay, then I don't need a Bible to convince you that you're a sinner. "No, but I'm looking for a way out." So May 2011, employee of Lincoln Public Schools is disgruntled. And they go in and they set their supervisor's desk on fire in the district office. The building burns down. And it is chaos for a while for LPS. But in the end, LPS comes out ahead, because with insurance money, they can build a more modern building. They can sell some property there. That's where Whole Foods is now, and they came out ahead in the deal. So what would you think about the person who committed arson coming back before the judge saying, "Hey, judge, after this thing came out with LPS, are you willing to commute my sentence? Because this turned out well." What do you think of that argument? Yeah, I don't think so either. But that's what's going on right here. That would be a desperate person.

Verse 9 then, Paul says:

*9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; For we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;*

We're all convinced in bondage to live in life how we want to live, and "don't tell me how to live any different." The end of the Star Spangled Banner says, we're the land of the what? We're land of the free. The Bible says, internally, without Jesus, we ain't free. Can I show you how your sin nature controls you? Okay, this is a map of my sermon. I don't want you to see it, so don't look. Don't look. What do you want to do? You want to look! "Don't tell me what to do, pastor." That's our sin nature. We're controlled by it. How bad is it? Paul's going to tell us how bad it is. He going to quote Psalm 14, starting in verse 10:

*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.*

Can you be any more thorough? Who's done good? Nobody. Anybody? No one. All have turned away. No one seeks for God. What? Not even one. Whew. That's pretty sweeping, don't you think? Nobody? Nobody? You got any evidence to support that? Well, actually, he does. He'll start in verses 13 and 14 talking about our words. And he's going to quote various psalms here, which will mention the throat, our tongue, our lips, and our mouth. Here we go, verses 13 and 14.

*13 Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving, The poison of asps is under their lips; 14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness;*

Jesus said out of the wellspring of the heart, our words flow out and our words show, we're desperate. They show we're unrighteous. So I came to faith my freshman year in college. I finished an undergraduate degree. I was somewhat involved with a campus ministry called Campus Crusade, now known as Cru, but in graduate school, I got real involved and a guy disciplined me. And they'd sit you down, he'd sit me down every semester, and he'd go through strengths and weaknesses. And here's what my strengths, blah, blah, blah, blah. And weaknesses, number one, number one—Andy, your sarcasm. See, as a high school student, I decided I was going to hone this image. I was this athlete. I was going to be this cool, wise cracking athlete, and man, I was cool. I wish you could have known me. I was just witty as I could be. But they'd say, your words are cutting, And I thought, yeah, yeah—but yeah, I think more than that, they're just jealous. They're not as quick, they're not as witty

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as I am. And they quote to me Ephesians 4:29. I won't give you the whole verse, but the first eight words are, "let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth." It's like, I'm busted. But still, I'm slow to give it up.

Well, we're about two or three semesters in, and this guy says to me, you know, Andy, you've got a gift for encouraging people from the Word of God—he had let me do some things from the front and in small group—but you're hard to figure because one time you're lifting me up and the next time you're cutting me down. So which is it? What am I getting today? Stopped me. I didn't know how to answer that. And I begin to think, and I begin to process, and I realized, you know what I'm doing with my sarcasm? I'm putting you down so I can put myself up. Isn't he funny? Isn't he sharp? And I have to push you down in the process. See, the words, my words revealed something about my heart. It revealed that I was more interested in Andy than I was in you or than I was in God's people.

I'm wondering what your words this week would say about your condition if we could play them back? And maybe it's not your words, maybe it's a post you put on social media. You know, that person with that whacked out, I mean, that really whacked out political position. I mean, you had to make them straight, right? Was it hurting? Was it personal? Was it unkind? Was it insulting? At all? If so, that post said a lot more about your spiritual condition than it said about their political position. Paul said, our words, back up—there is no one who's righteous. No one seeks after God. It shows our hearts are corrupt, living for self instead of God. But there's a second, and it's our actions. We move towards violence verses 15 to 17. It says this, quoting Isaiah 59:7 and 8, it says this:

*15 Their feet are swift to shed blood, 16 Destruction and misery are in their paths, 17 And the path of peace they have not known.*

That's people without God, quick to violence. They don't know the path of peace. So once a quarter, as a church, we'll do a night of worship. And I think children's ministry is so important. And I can't, I just can't do it on a Sunday morning because of my responsibilities. But I will do children's ministry on the night of worship. And we'll just get five or six kids, we'll have them in our toddler room, and like there's a gazillion toys in there, okay? And we'll be watching these kids and there'll be the bigger kid here and the little kid playing over here. And you know what the big kid does? He comes and he takes the little kid's toy. Why are you doing that, man? You had a toy, we got a zillion around here! And then it's kind of on, and one of the kids will swat. I'm pretty sure their parents didn't teach them to do that—that's their nature. Naturally, their feet are quick to violence. They're not working it out. Man, you got all these toys and you want the one the other guy has, and because you're stronger, you're going to take it. That's nature. That's who they are. That self-centered being passed down.

Listen, here's what Paul says:

*18 There's no fear of God before their eyes.*

They would rather please others and please themselves before they please God. Paul then says, when we realize our condition, we're going to try and make it right through our works. Verse 19:

*19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;*

Listen, listen:

*20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in his sight;*



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You cannot work your way to God.

*for through the law comes knowledge of sin.*

It doesn't give us deliverance from sin. The law makes us aware of sin. Hasn't this been encouraging so far? Aren't you glad you came tonight? Many of you thinking, man, Andy, I see why they don't invite you very often. You're kind of a downer. Do you have any good news? Any? Actually, I do. We're going to have to go back a couple chapters, Romans 1, to see the good news. Here it is, verses 16 and 17, here's what Paul says, he says this:

*16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, but the righteous man shall live by faith.*

You know what the solution is to this whole mess of Romans 3:1-20. No one's righteous. Your words give you away, your actions give you away. You got these desperate things. God won't judge sin, he shouldn't judge because he's glorified and I said, you know what covers that all? The gospel, that's the good news. That's the one shot we got for our desperate condition.

This Super Bowl, I was watching and I see a commercial command for Bounty, the paper towels. There's a couple football players, Drew Brees, and Rob Gronkowski, and one's eating, and the other wipes his sauce away with his Bounty. I thought, man, there's been a there's been a lot of Bounty commercials. I can remember 50 years of them. So I Googled them and I looked back and, do you know, in every commercial I saw for Bounty, Bounty was always equal to the task. No matter how bad the spill, Bounty absorbed it. And man, I saw science projects on the line. I saw a dinner party on the line. I saw a counter in a diner on the line, and the spill was going in, and no, Bounty comes there, and absorbs it. Do you understand? That's what Jesus does with your sin and mine. He comes and he absorbs it. And you know, when Bounty is finished with the counter or whatever it is, it is in pristine condition, it's like there's no residue, there's nothing there. You know what the Bible version of that is? We talked about David in Psalm 51, verse 4. So you're blameless when you judge. If you go down three more verses, David says wash me, and I'll be whiter than snow. As good as Bounty is about getting all that stuff, absorbing it all, Jesus infinitely more.

See, we ask this question, what's God's solution to our desperate need? Here it is: the gospel. The gospel is God's solution to our desperate need. The little phrase with Bounty is this, when spills are at their worst, Bounty is at its best. Man, Jesus has been best for eternity past. So I got to ask you, do you understand your condition's desperate? So is mine. I'm not picking you out. Individually and corporate, we're desperate people. One solution. One quicker picker upper that can take it all up. His name's Jesus. Son of God. Died for your sin. Strong enough to absorb everything you've done.

Some of you I know, it's fun talking with some of you, I know you've walked with God for a while. I know this is not news, Steve. Let me ask you, what are your words saying about the condition of your heart right now? You don't have to answer me, but before the Lord. Because they're a giveaway. What are your actions? What do you think about? What would you like to do? What is that saying about the condition of your heart before God? See, we need the gospel at the moment of salvation, but we need the gospel moment by moment, day by night. We need the power of God to clean up our mess. Would our words and would our actions be a reminder of our desperate dependence on God?

So in this last snippet from my life, I've got to tell you, if like, and this is arbitrary, but if you're like under 35, okay, what I'm about to tell you is going to blow your mind. It's going to seem dystopian, okay? Because in this snippet for my life, there are no cash machines. There are no debit cards.



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And I'm just getting started. There's no PayPal, there's no Venmo. You're saying, how far does this go back? It goes back to the last century, people. It goes back to the last millennium when I was in college.

And I go off for my freshman year, and I get a checking account for the first time. You paid by check or cash, just very few people at credit cards. And my mom said, Andrew, you know, you're gonna need to keep track of your checks, you got a registry there. And I said, Mom, I got it. And the way it worked at Texas A&M, we had to park way off campus, the guys, freshman-sophomore guys, is about fifteen minutes that way, and the bank was over there. So the university would, as a courtesy, would let you cash a check in the student center. But if you ever wrote a bad check, you could never cash a check again. And when you went to pay tuition the next semester, you would have to get a certified check or a money order, and that's another illustration for another time. That was a lot harder.

So I'm going, I'm a couple months in and I'm doing good, and I get my bank statement, I look over, yeah, it looks good. And it's about October. So I'm about two months in my freshman year, and I get something from the bank, and it's, it's just one thing, and it's yellow. It kind of pops. And I think, that's yellow, I ought to take a look at that. And I open it up and it says, notice of check drawn on insufficient funds. Then what is, what is that? I don't know what that is. So I call my mom. Mom, I got this thing. Check, don't have, insufficient funds. See, well, Andrew, that's, there wasn't money in there to cover that, and they put some money in. Wait a minute, wait a minute, I got more checks out there. And I know at least one of them's to the university, so I'm going to get on that list that you want to stay off.

Do you know how I'm feeling at that point? What's our word? I'm desperate. Because I've been two months into my freshman year, and I'm going to go on the bad checklist, and my folks are about, they're in Houston about an hour and a half away. There's no way I can get down there. How am I going to do that and get back? I'm in trouble. I'm desperate. There's one piece I'm not telling you. My mom was uniquely positioned to help me because she was a branch manager in a savings and loan. She had the ability to wire money, said, Andrew, give me your routing number, give me your account number, and start keeping track of your checks and people since that day, I've kept track of my checks.

You're desperate. I'm desperate. You're going to end up on that list. And there's one, there's one who's uniquely positioned to help you out, to get you off that list, to get you out of that condition, and his name is Jesus Christ. He lived a sinless life. He lived a perfect life and he can absorb everything you've done and will do if you'll trust him. No wonder Paul says, I ain't ashamed of the power of the gospel. Because there's nothing else for us in our desperate condition. One more time, let me ask and answer. What's God's celestial solution to our desperate need? The gospel. The gospel is God's solution to our desperate need. Would you pray with me?

Our Father in heaven, we are a desperate people indeed. We look to you. You are the quicker picker upper. You can absorb everything we've done. Father, thank you that you didn't leave us to our own devices, but you sent Jesus. You gave us the gospel. Thank you, Lord, for Jesus, his life, his death, his resurrection. It's in his name we pray. Amen.

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