

**"RESPONDING TO SIN AND GUILT"**  
**(Romans 3:9-20)**  
John Stott

In conclusion, how should we respond to Paul's devastating exposure of universal sin and guilt, as we read it [in the twenty-first] century? We should not try to evade it by changing the subject and talking instead of the need for self-esteem, or by blaming our behavior on our genes, nurturing, education or society. It is an essential part of our dignity as human beings that, however much we may have been affected by negative influences, we are not their helpless victims, but rather responsible for our conduct. Our first response to Paul's indictment, then, should be to make it as certain as we possibly can that we have ourselves accepted this divine diagnosis of our human condition as true, and that we have fled from the just judgment of God on our sins to the only refuge there is, namely Jesus Christ who died for our sins. For we have no merit to plead and no excuse to make. We too stand before God speechless and condemned. Only then shall we be ready to hear the great "But now" of verse 21, as Paul begins to explain how God has intervened through Christ and his cross for our salvation.

Secondly, these chapters challenge us to share Christ with others. We cannot monopolize the good news. All around us are men and women who know enough of God's glory and holiness to make their rejection of him inexcusable. They too, like us, stand condemned. Their knowledge, their religion and their righteousness cannot save them. Only Christ can. Their mouth is closed in guilt; let our mouth be opened in testimony!

