

Romans Chapter 3

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Introduction:

1. The last chapter closed on the note that **a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God**. The indication is that there aren't any. So one can be saved on their own merit because God allows for that, except there isn't anyone standing in that line.

2. This can be understood by considering the first sin. Adam and Eve were in the Garden and had one simple law to keep. Folk theology is focused on the forbidden fruit. The true problem is they disobeyed God.
They were not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. There was no one to *kill*. There was no way to *commit adultery*. There was nothing to *steal*. But they sinned by *questioning God*. It was that simple. They were driven out of the Garden for that one easy sin. They were now sinners with a sin bill they couldn't pay. It was beyond serious.
For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. (Romans 5:17a NLT)

3. Paul now asks and answers four questions:
 1. What is the advantage of being a Jew?
 2. What is the value of circumcision?
 3. Will the unfaithfulness of some Jews nullify the faithfulness of God?
 4. If our sin makes God look better, isn't it unfair for Him to punish us?

(3:1) Then what's the advantage of being a Jew? Is there any value in the ceremony of circumcision?

- Beginning in the next verse, Paul describes one benefit, then in Romans 9 he returns to the list:

They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God's adopted children. God revealed His glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave them His law. He gave them the privilege of worshiping Him and receiving His wonderful promises. (Romans 9:4 NLT)

(2) Yes, there are great benefits! First of all, the Jews were entrusted with the whole revelation of God.

- **First of all, the Jews** have been **God's librarians** for the whole world. They carefully preserved everything written by God or one of His representatives for mankind, going back to the time of Adam. The earliest documents were on durable baked clay tablets and these were handed down through the generations, including the flood, and were assembled by Moses and we call it **Genesis**. (For comparison, a computer hard drive has an average five year life before it fails.) This writer's study course for Genesis 1-11 is arranged by *tablets* instead of *chapters*. See *New Discoveries in Babylonia About Genesis* by **P. J. Wiseman**.
- The Jews were entrusted with the whole revelation of God. They had rules for making new copies of Scripture. Notice the care:
 - 1) The parchment had to be made from the skin of a clean animal, prepared by a Jew only, and be fastened by strings from clean animals.
 - 2) Each column of text must have no less than 48 or more than 60 lines.
 - 3) The ink must be of no other color than black, and had to be prepared according to a special recipe.
 - 4) No word nor letter could be written from memory; the scribe must have an authentic copy before him, and he had to read and pronounce aloud each word before writing it.

5) He had to reverently wipe his pen each time before writing the Word of God, and had to wash his whole body before writing the sacred name "Jehovah!"

6) One mistake on a sheet condemned the sheet; if three mistakes were found on any page, the entire manuscript was condemned.

7) Every word and every letter was counted, and if a letter were omitted, an extra letter inserted, or if one letter touched another, the manuscript was condemned and destroyed at once.

The old Rabbi gave the solemn warning to each young scribe: "Take heed how thou dost thy work, for thy work is the work of Heaven; lest thou drop or add a letter of a manuscript and so become a destroyer of the world!"

The scribe was also told that while he was writing if even a king would enter the room and speak with him, the scribe was to ignore him until he finished the page he was working on, lest he make a mistake!

(3) True, some of them were unfaithful; but just because they were unfaithful, does that mean God will be unfaithful?

- Though **some** Jews were **unfaithful**, **God** has remained **faithful** to His promises when just a tiny group obeyed Him. The remaining **faithful** may be just one person, but God is still **faithful**.

(4) Of course not! Even if everyone else is a liar, God is true. As the Scriptures say about Him, "You will be proved right in what you say, and You will win Your case in court."

- **Everyone** may break their promises and become **liars**, but never **God**. Paul is quoting from **Scripture**:

Against You, and You alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in Your sight. You will be proved right in what

You say, and Your judgment against me is just. (Psalms 51:4)

Paul sees in Psalms a great court case before the universe and God will win His case against *all of mankind* because all have sinned. But the Devil is a master at making wrong look better than it is. His skills were first seen in Eden.

(5) "But," some might say, "our sinfulness serves a good purpose, for it helps people see how righteous God is. Isn't it unfair, then, for Him to punish us?" (This is merely a human point of view)

- *Judas* could argue that his **sin** triggered the arrest of Jesus and without that arrest, He would never have died on the cross and mankind would never have been saved. For **God** to **punish** Judas would be totally **unfair** because of the **good** that came from his **sin**. Because of his **sin**, everyone can see how **righteous God is**.

(6) Of course not! If God were not entirely fair, how would He be qualified to judge the world?

- It would be impossible for **God to judge** anyone with the kind of reasoning that pictures God as not punishing every sin as described in the previous verse. He would not be **qualified to judge the world**.

(7) "But," someone might still argue, "how can God condemn me as a sinner if my dishonesty highlights His truthfulness and brings Him more glory?" (8) And some people even slander us by claiming that we say, "The more we sin, the better it is!" Those who say such things deserve to be condemned.

- Paul repeats the argument of sinners who argue that their **sin** makes the **glory of God** look even greater so they shouldn't be **condemned**. Paul says that he has been quoted as saying that **"the more we sin, the better it is."** The scoundrels who say it **deserve to be condemned**.

(9) Well then, should we conclude that we Jews are better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin.

- There are advantages to being a **Jew**, but that doesn't make **Jews better than others**. Paul says that Jews **are under the power of sin** just like others.
- So the grand conclusion of this part of Romans is that **everyone is under the power of sin**. We have all drank the same **sin** poison. We all drank the same contaminated Kool-Aid.



(10) As the Scriptures say, "No one is righteous -- not even one.

- Paul appears to be quoting King David:

Only fools say in their hearts, "There is no God." They are corrupt, and their actions are evil; not one of them does good! God looks down from heaven on the entire human race; He looks to see if anyone is truly wise, if anyone seeks God. But no, all have turned away; all have become corrupt. No one does good, not a single one! (Psalms 53:1-3 NLT)

Next, Paul pulls quotations from many Scriptures. **Barclay** claims that pulling Scripture from many locations is characteristic of the writings of the Jewish rabbis.

(11) No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. (12) All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one."

- From Psalms 14:2-3 NLT.

- Gentiles, for the most part, were not **seeking God** and Jews thought that **God** would give them a special pass if something was not right at judgment. **Every single one failed to do good.**

(13) "Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are filled with lies." "Snake venom drips from their lips."



- **Their talk is foul:** **Foul talkers** know what they're doing. They offer comments like "Excuse my French" and "I didn't know there were women here."
- **Tongues filled:** From Psalms 5:9 NLT. **Lying** has been developed into an art form. Gone are the days when a contract was agreed on with a handshake. This writer sold a house and had to hire a professional to assist with the two inches of paperwork because businesses were protecting themselves against prevaricators.
- **Snake venom:** From Psalms 140:3 NLT. The **lies** were not only misleading, but deadly like the **venom of a snake.**

(14) "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."

- Quotes Psalms 10:7 NLT. **Moses Lard** aptly remarked:
 "These are aimed against God. Thus the mouth which he created to bless him is used to grieve him. By bitterness is meant those wounding, stinging words which the wicked utter."

(15) "They rush to commit murder.

(16) Destruction and misery always follow them.

(17) They don't know where to find peace."

- These three sentences are from Isaiah 59:7-8.
- **Murder** (15) is rising sharply in the United States. In addition to murders of youth and adults, we *must* add all abortions. Some District Attorneys refuse to prosecute **murder.**

- Can't **find peace** (17): Our current word for this condition is *dysphoria* -- the opposite of euphoria.
 - ◆ Our land is overrun with dissatisfied people. Some want to change from men into women and others want to change from women into men. For some of these *sex-change* victims, suicide is the next step.
 - ◆ Some want to move to another *location* but may not be satisfied in the new digs either.
 - ◆ They want different *employment*, but can't find a work that they like. There is always something wrong after they have been on the job for a few days.
 - ◆ Some want to change *mates* and so divorce the person they married so happily. While some do settle on the second marriage, others continue the pattern of marriage and divorce and bitterness.

(18) "They have no fear of God at all."

- From Psalm 36:1 NLT.
- **God's** holy Name is used to affirm a truth -- or even a lie. They take offense at a statue of Abraham Lincoln and want it removed, but have no trouble insulting the name of their Creator.

(19) Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. (20) For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.

- The purpose of God's **laws** is not to *save* lawbreakers, but to provide a way for lawbreakers to measure themselves and realize their **guilt**. The **law** does not have any mechanism to save ANYONE.
- A related purpose of **the law** is to open the portal to the marvelous way of living encapsulated in the term "pleasing God" (or "bringing *joy* to God" as in the NLT). It was the way of life for Jesus:

After His baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on Him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is My dearly loved Son, who brings Me great joy." (Matthew 3:16-17 NLT)

Jesus had lived these 30 years flawlessly, bringing *great joy* to the Father. He continued, later challenged His critics:

Which of you can truthfully accuse Me of sin? And since I am telling you the truth, why don't you believe Me? (John 8:46 NLT)

This continued throughout His life:

And the One who sent Me is with Me -- He has not deserted Me. For I always do what pleases Him." (John 8:29 NLT)

Paul says that believers are to use the same rule for life:

Carefully determine what pleases the Lord. (Ephesians 5:10 NLT)

Pleasing the Lord is accomplished by finding out what He wants us to do and, in turn, that is learned by reading His laws. So the law serves a very important purpose for every believer who wants to please the Lord.

(21) But now God has shown us a way to be made right with Him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago.

- If keeping the **law** can't make us **right**, how can we be **made right** with **God**? The answer is in that library **God** has provided.

- **Burton Coffman** summarizes *one* of the ways that **Moses and the prophets** introduced this new way of being made right through the person of the Messiah:

The verbal prophecies, numbering some 333, foretold the coming of the Messiah in such detail and clarity that hardly any phase of our Lord's life and character was omitted. The time and exact place of his birth, the particular tribe of Israel through whom he would be born, the fact of his betrayal by a friend, even the very amount of the betrayal price, the details of his crucifixion, that he should be buried but not see corruption, that he would speak in parables, that he would be despised and rejected by human beings, and that not a bone of him should be broken.

(22) We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.

- So the way to being **made right with God** is by **placing our faith in Jesus the Messiah**. The requirement is the same for Jews and Gentiles.

(23) For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.

- We **ALL** have sin poisoning. It isn't limited to one continent, one nation or one city.

(24) Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when He freed us from the penalty for our sins.

- **God** works out the details to make us **righteous**. Not that we **deserve** any of His **kindness**. The very **God** who, to **be fair**, must see that the penalty for our sin is paid is also the One Who frees us from the penalty for that **sin** by paying the price Himself. **Unbelievable!**

(25) For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed His life, shedding His blood.

- We commend the translation team for clarity here. Many translations use *propitiation*, a word in itself that needs clarification.
- Just as Abraham *presented his son* Isaac for **sacrifice**, so **God has presented His son Jesus** who **sacrificed His life** for our **sins** by **shedding His blood** (25).

(25b) This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when He held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, (26) for He was looking ahead and including them in what He would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate His righteousness, for He Himself is fair and just, and He declares sinners to be right in His sight when they believe in Jesus.

- **God** foreknew this would happen (26) and held back the **sin** punishment of those who lived and died before **Jesus**. **God** was still **fair** because He knew the bill would be paid. The justice of God was satisfied by the **sacrifice of Jesus**.
- The marvelous outcome is that **sinners become right in His sight by believing in Jesus**. This is entirely apart from law keeping.

(27) Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith. (28) So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.

- We can't **boast** because we didn't create the solution and we didn't earn the solution. It is based entirely on our faith in **God's** solution. **Jack Cottrell** expresses it this way:

The exclusion of boasting is not just an arbitrary divine decree, but it is true from the very nature of the human predicament and its resolution by grace. Justification through the law system would permit boasting, but such

justification is not possible since all have sinned. The grace alternative excludes boasting since the only meritorious works that produce salvation within this system are done by God himself through Jesus Christ. The only thing sinners can do is react to and respond to these divine works and passively receive the benefits generated by them. The defining element in this completely unmeritorious response is faith. Even the great Old Testament saints -- Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah -- were sinners whose relative righteousness fell short of the divine standard and were saved only by God's grace. Even they had no room for boasting.(4:2).

(29) After all, is God the God of the Jews only? Isn't He also the God of the Gentiles? Of course He is. (30) There is only one God, and He makes people right with Himself only by faith, whether they are Jews or Gentiles.

- The solution to the sin problem is not related to being a **Jew** or a **Gentile** because it is for all mankind. Being made **right with God** is not related to our obedience to a system of law. Everyone has failed at this. **Faith** is the only route to harmonizing with the Judge of all mankind.

(31) Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law? Of course not! In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law.

- Paul addresses a challenge to this idea of being saved without good works. **Law** still has a place in the life of a believer. **Cottrell** expresses it this way:

Here is a point we must not forget: as a revelation of God's will to us, his law is absolutely binding upon us and we have an absolute obligation to obey it. Grace does not change this fact. We are not under law as a way of *salvation* (6:14) but we are always under law as a way of *life*.

To put it another way, law is not involved in the first part of the double cure, which is *justification*; but is absolutely necessary for the second part of a double cure, which includes *sanctification*.

MUSIC BOX		
<i>Come, let us sing to the LORD! (Psalms 95:1 NLT)</i>		
<i>Verse</i>	Link:	Put in Browser:
2	<i>Ancient Words</i>	http://bitly.ws/oJyT