

Romans 3:1-8
So, What Good is it to be Jewish?

Introduction: A legitimate question stands: if the Jews, like the Gentiles, are under God's wrath, what good is it to be one of God's "chosen people"?

1) God is self-revealing—3:1-4

- a) The first pair of questions (concerning Jewish identity) is asked—3:1-2
 - i) Question # 1: *What (distinct) advantage has the Jew?*—3:1a
 - (1) If the final judgment will be solely on the state of the heart, how is a Jew any better off than a Gentile?
 - (2) If both Jew and Gentile are in equal danger, what is the advantage for Jews?
 - ii) Question # 2: *What is the value of circumcision?*—3:1b
 - (1) In other words, don't ethnic purity and external obedience count for something?
 - iii) The answers are given—3:2
 - (1) *Much in every way* (but Paul only gives us one of advantage)
 - (2) *To begin with, the Jews were entrusted [pisteu,w] with the oracles of God.*
 - (a) i.e. the custodians of God's commands, promises (of blessing and judgment), and covenants, who were then required to be faithful and obedient stewards
- b) The second pair of questions (concerning Jewish unbelief) is asked—3:3-4
 - i) Question # 1: *What if some (but not all) were unfaithful / untrusting, faithless [avpiste,w]?*
 - (1) With what they had been entrusted (i.e. the OT revelation)
 - ii) Question # 2: *Does their faithlessness/lack of trust [avpisti,a] nullify the faithfulness/trustworthiness [pi,stij] of God?* (assumes "No" answer)
 - (1) i.e. will God be faithful to His Word?
 - (2) Israel is worthy of condemnation: Is man's inability or refusal to obey stronger than God is? Is God dependent on man?
 - iii) The answers are given—3:4
 - (1) By direct statements—3:4a
 - (a) Emphatic rejection: *By no means!*
 - (b) Objective reality: *Let God be true (reliable, trustworthy) though every one were a liar,*
 - (i) Perhaps an allusion to Ps. 116:11?
 - (2) By explicitly quoting Scripture—3:4b (from Psalm 51:4 LXX)
- c) God's punishment of sin exhibits God's perfect faithfulness to His perfect purity, holiness, and righteousness. We are to defend the righteousness of God, at whatever expense to ourselves.

2) God is just—3:5-8

- a) The 4 questions (concerning God's righteousness) are asked—3:5-8a
- i) Question # 1: *But if our* (the Jews) *unrighteousness* [avdiki,a] *serves to show the righteousness* [dikaiousu,nh] *of God, what shall we say?*—3:5a
- (1) Israel's unrighteousness is seen in at least 4 things:
- (a) They were proud of their position as possessors of God's Word.
 - (b) They did not properly understand the true meaning of God's Word.
 - (c) They disobeyed the clear teaching of God's Word.
 - (d) They so neglected God's Word that at one time there was only 1 copy left (in the time of Josiah)
- ii) Question # 2: *God is unrighteous / unfair* [a;dikoj] *to inflict wrath on us* (the Jews)?—3:5b
- Paul essentially says, "Pardon me for this line of argument."
 - (1) The emphatic rejection: *By no means!*—3:6
 - (2) *For then how could God judge* [kri,nw] *the world* (all nations)?
 - (a) If God condoned sin, He would not be righteous. (cf. Gen. 18:25)
- iii) Question # 3: *"But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned* [kri,nw] *as a sinner?"*—3:7 (restating 3:4-5)
- (1) i.e. If God is shown to be in the right by man's sin and error, then God is honored by our shortcomings. How then can God punish us when we have helped display his righteousness? (CSB Study Bible)
- iv) Question # 4: *"And why not do evil that good may come?"*—3:8a
- (1) Paul's teaching was often misrepresented. Some were accusing him of preaching a form of pragmatism that encouraged people to sin because he stated salvation was possible apart from the Law.
- b) The unmistakable answer is given—3:8b
- i) *Their condemnation* [kri,ma] *is just* (deserved) [e;ndikoj].

3) Things we need to remember:

- a) See God's **faithfulness**: it is ultimately to His PERSON, His PURPOSES, and His PROMISES, not simply to Israel or to us. God's creatures must respond rightly to the Creator.
- i) Douglas Moo reminds us: Too easily do we forget that God's ultimate concern is for his own glory and not for our blessing; that his righteousness is beautifully displayed when he judges as well as when he saves.
- b) See God's **righteousness**: it is evidenced when He judges people for their sin.
- c) See God's **justice**: God remains the **faithful judge** with the right to condemn ALL unrighteousness and faithlessness.
- i) No person deserves salvation, can demand salvation, or can justly accuse God of unfaithfulness in not providing salvation.
- ii) We must say with Abraham, "Will not the Judge of all the earth do what is right." (Genesis 18:25)

Next time: Romans 3:9-20

Romans 3:9-20
Universal Guilt

Introduction: We come today to the end of the first section of the book. We have learned much about man's desperate need for salvation. Our condemnation before the infinite, perfect righteousness of God is just. There are no valid arguments in our defense.

But not everyone agrees. Robert Schuller, former apostate pastor in CA, once said, "Once a person believes he is an unworthy sinner, it is doubtful if he can really honestly accept the saving grace God offers in Jesus Christ."

This morning we summarize the dark portrait of humanity. What we will see this morning is not popular today, even among so-called Christians. The essence of what we will see is what theologians refer to as Total Depravity, which means that man is corrupt morally and spiritually. His **understanding** is darkened, his **mind** is at enmity with God, his **will** to act is enslaved to his darkened understanding and rebellious mind, his **heart** is corrupt, his **emotions** are perverted, his **affections** naturally gravitate to that which is evil and ungodly, his **conscience** is untrustworthy, and his **body** is subject to mortality. This is God's evaluation of mankind, regardless of what mankind thinks. Man is guilty, and therefore feels guilty.

- 1) **The UNIVERSAL CHARGE**—Everyone is under sin—**3:9** (9x "all" or "none")
 - a) There is no final advantage to be Jewish. This would be like equating professing Christians and atheists today!
 - b) There have been enough legal accusations in Romans 1-3 to settle the case.
 - i) The evidence is unavoidably incriminating.
 - c) To be "*under* [u`po,] *sin*" means to be under its power and penalty (Gal. 3:22).

- 2) **The EVIDENCE SUPPORTING THIS CHARGE**—13 points from Scripture—**3:10-17**
 - ❖ "*As it is written*", from Ps. 5:9; 10:7; 14:1-3; 36:1; 140:3; and Is. 59:7-8
 - ❖ Paul has left the use of Scripture for the end of his argument
 - ❖ Note all of the body parts corrupted by sin mentioned in this section.
 - ❖ Paul does not list every possible sin people can commit.
 - a) The SUMMARY—*evil*—*None is righteous* [di,kaioj], *no, not one*;—3:10b
 - i) No one meets God's perfect standard of what is right
 - b) We are sinful in our **CHARACTER**—3:11-12 [cf. Ps. 14:1-3]
 - i) **Ignorant**—*No one understands* [suni,hmi]
 - (1) Man is unable and unwilling to comprehend God's truth or to grasp His standard of righteousness or his own precarious condition
 - ii) **Independent**—*No one seeks for* [evkzhte,w] *God*
 - (1) Man's religions are actually man's attempts to escape God, not to seek and find Him.
 - (2) Man will only seek God when God works in His heart first (John 6:44; 6:65; 12:32)

- iii) **Rebellious**—*All have turned aside* [evkkli,nw];
 - (1) They avoid the right direction, like a deserting soldier
 - iv) **Harmful**—*together they have become worthless* [avcreio,w]
 - (1) More than spoiled milk, but totally wrong and harmful
 - v) **Unhelpful**—*No one does good* [crhsto,thj], *not even one*
 - (1) Everything unsaved man does is mercenary at its core (Rom. 2:8).
Simply ask them what they are depending on to stand before God.
That will reveal the mercenary attitude rather quickly.
 - c) We are sinful in our **SPEECH**—3:13-14 [cf. Ps. 5:9; 140:3; 10:7]
 - i) **Putrid**—*Their throat* [la,rugx] [Eng. larynx] *is an open grave*;
 - (1) The mouth of unsaved reveals the decay of his heart, as an open tomb reveals the rotting corpse. Why does a medical doctor insist on looking in your mouth and down your throat when you go for a visit?
 - ii) **Deceitful**—*they use their tongues to deceive*
 - (1) Lies are commonplace in our culture, deceptive flattery
 - iii) **Harmful**
 - (1) *The venom of asps is under their lips.*
 - (a) A quick, fatal poison
 - (2) *Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.*
 - (a) Caustic, emotional hostility
 - d) We are sinful in our social **BEHAVIOR**—3:15-17 [cf. Is. 59:7-8]
 - i) **Violent**—*Their feet are swift to shed blood*;
 - ii) **Ruinous**—*in their paths are ruin and misery*,
 - (1) Unsaved man damages and destroys everything he touches, leaving a trail of suffering in his wake
 - iii) **Turbulent**—*And the way of peace they have not known.*
 - (1) Perpetual conflict with others
- 3) The ROOT THEOLOGICAL FACTOR—3:18** [cf. Ps. 36:1]
 - a) *There is no fear of God before their eyes.*
 - i) In their view, God is not worthy of awe (submission, respect / reverence).
 - ii) Their knowledge of God does not positively impact their worship, trust, obedience or service. He is weightless to them.
- 4) The universal final VERDICT—3:19-20** (concluding all of 1:18-3:20)
 - a) *Now we know* [perf. tense], only because God has revealed it to us
 - i) God's word speaks to everyone, Jews and Gentiles.
 - ii) All are *under/better* "in the sphere of" [evn] *the law*
 - (1) The Jews from the external law, the Gentiles from the internal
 - b) Why?
 - i) *So that every mouth may be stopped* (silenced)
 - (1) This is not an easy task! There is no defense against the guilty verdict God pronounces on the human race. The defendants have nothing more to say in response to the charges brought against him.

- ii) *And the whole world may be held accountable* [u`po,dikoj] (subject to prosecution and condemned guilty; he has lost his case) *to God*.
 - (1) We all stand guilty before the Judge.
 - (a) To reject the teaching that Jews are sinners before God contradicts the Old Testament.
 - (2) *For by* [evk] *works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight*,
 - (a) God is not only the Judge of the case; He is also the injured party. If the Jews, with the best law that one could have, could not find salvation through it, then ANY system of works is revealed as unable to conquer the power of sin. No person is capable of doing ANYTHING to gain acceptance with God.
 - (3) *Since through* [dia,] *the law comes knowledge* [evpi,gnwsij] *of sin*.
 - (a) Law only reveals sin. It reveals God's demands. It cannot achieve righteousness, nor can it rescue from sin. Sin creates a situation for every person of utterly helpless and hopeless bondage.
 - (b) The law is an instrument of condemnation, not justification. Or as Luther said, its function is not to justify but to terrify.

5) Things we need to remember:

- a) Mankind is immersed in the **misery** of his sin, he is guilty of **contentment** in his sin, and adamantly refuses God's **solution** to his sin.
 - i) The Biblical doctrine of man can be summarized in 3 points: total depravity, total inability, and total guilt.
 - ii) Existentialism concludes that people are damned and hopeless but concludes that people are simply pathetic. Biblical Christianity concludes that people are damned and hopeless but concludes that people are putrid rebels. (Francis Schaefer)
 - iii) Evidence of this when you defend yourself as being "not too bad."
- b) God is perfectly just in judging both Jews and Gentiles. (Gen. 18:25)
- c) Spiritual rescue is all of God—Ps. 65:4
 - i) If we are to be rescued, it must be from God and God alone.
 - ii) This is the sparkling glory of grace.

Next time: Romans 3:21-26

Romans 3:21-26
God's Solution for Universal Guilt

Introduction: Unfortunately, what we are about to study is not that gospel commonly proclaimed since substance has given way to sentiment, truth has yielded to methodology, doctrine has been supplanted by cultural relevance, and true saving faith has been replaced by decisionism. (Barry Horner)

We tend to underestimate the hopelessness of our sinful state. There must be **no** deviation from this stark reality. There must not be a hair's breadth left of human pride. There must be no hope in anything, positively or negatively (i.e. something we have or have not done), internally or externally, religious good works or moral good works. There must not be one single shred of hope, or we're not presenting what the Bible teaches. People need salvation because they are under the infinite wrath of the holy God. We are all in desperate need of the imputed righteousness of God.

1) The divine contrast—"but now"—3:21a

- a) Since people cannot achieve righteousness by their own efforts, Paul turns now to explain the righteousness that God (and only God) has provided.
- b) God intervened to rescue us from our eternal dilemma.

2) God's righteousness is REVEALED—3:21-22

- a) It is **introduced**
 - i) *the righteousness* [dikaiosune] of God (cf. 1:17)
 - (1) Righteousness is found 7x in 6 verses (cp. 8x in the prior 2 chapters)
 - (2) God's method of bringing people into a right relationship with Himself.
- b) It *has been manifested* [phanero, w, perfect aspect]
 - i) Paul is talking about how the righteousness is **revealed**, not how it is received. It has always been received by faith.
 - ii) *apart from* [cwri, j] law
 - (1) No law of any kind can produce righteousness.
 - (2) Justification was possible before the Law was revealed.
- c) It is **supported** by the OT: *the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it* [marture, w, present aspect]
 - i) Paul's teaching was not unique to him. The entire OT, like the NT, shows both the lostness of mankind and the means of salvation for mankind. A true Bible-believing Christian is just as interested in reading the OT as the New, because they are one complete unity. (F. Schaeffer)
- d) It is **further defined**
 - i) The immediate object of faith—*the righteous* [dikaiosune] of God through [dia,] *faith in Jesus Christ*
 - (1) Not simply believing that there is a God, but what the Bible teaches about that God and His finished work for our salvation.

- (2) True saving faith involves a sinner, using intellect, will, and emotions, who first encounters gospel truth, then acknowledges this gospel truth to be true in general and in particular regarding himself, and then personally embraces this gospel truth. (B. Horner)
- (1) Faith is not some work we do that earns points with God. Faith is not a leap in the dark. Faith is neither illogical nor unreasonable. Faith is taking God at His Word, depending on what He has clearly revealed.
- (2) This is legal righteousness, just as our guilt was judicial. He legally declares our guilt to be gone!
- ii) The universal promise—*For* [eivj] *all who believe* [pisteu,w, pres. act. ptc.]
 - (1) **Inclusive:** *For there is no distinction* [diastolh,]
 - (a) Refers back to “all who believe”; equal access for Jews and Gentiles
 - (2) **Exclusive:** available *unto all* who believe—notice the limitation of the intended application of this righteousness (i.e. those who are characterized by trusting)

3) God’s righteousness is NEEDED—3:23

- a) *For all* [each and every one] *have sinned* [in Adam and individually]
- b) *And* [continually] *fall short* [u`stere,w] *of the glory of God*
 - i) Cp. Rom. 1:21, 23; Jer. 2:11
 - ii) Failing to reflect His glory, i.e. conforming to His image
- c) There is no sense in asking a person, “Do you want to be saved?” unless that person knows how desperately he or she needs salvation. Without that deep sense of need, an appeal for a decision at the end of the gospel presentation is just a waste of time. Unless a person understands how truly guilty they are before God, they will never consider accepting what Jesus Christ did for them.

4) God’s righteousness is FREELY GIVEN—3:24

- Universal sin and its just condemnation by God require a God-given solution that is available to both Jew and Gentile.
- a) *Are justified* [dikaio,w] ... *as a gift* [dwrea,n]
 - i) Justified means to be declared righteous, acquitted of all charges against us. To the Jews, this was something one only hoped for at the Last Judgment. Paul says it is available to us NOW! We can have our legal relationship with God eternally changed, simply by faith (without charge or cause) in Christ’s finished work of infinite cost on the cross.
 - b) *By His* (God the Father’s) *grace* [ca,rij]
 - i) God is constrained by nothing except His own will.
 - ii) God’s grace is His infinite love operating by an infinite means (the sacrifice of Christ) in infinite freedom.
 - iii) Grace is not merely unmerited kindness. It is unwanted in our active hostility toward God.

5) **God's righteousness is EXPLAINED—3:25-26** (what free grace cost)

- a) How are they being justified? *through* [dia,] *the redemption* [avpolu,trwsij, deliverance from the slave market of sin] *that is in Christ Jesus*
 - i) *Whom* (God the Son) *God* (the Father) *put forward* [proti,qhmi]
 - (1) Not secretly, as the Day of Atonement was. The death of Christ was advertised (if you will) in plain view.
 - (2) This was the **Father's** doing. He set Christ on the cross for all to see.
 - ii) *As a propitiation* [i'lasth,rion] *by/in* [evn] *His blood*
 - (1) At the heart of the discussion is whether the term means "propitiation" (an appeasing of wrath) or "expiation" (a covering for sin). (Robert Mounce)
 - (2) "Propitiation" in Romans 3:25 involves 4 major elements. (B. Horner)
 - (a) **Satisfaction** of God's justice due to His violated holiness and penal requirements.
 - (b) **Pacification** of God's wrath due to His being moved within Himself to the hatred of sin.
 - (c) **Expiation** of the believer's guilt due to the Father's satisfaction with His Son's righteous, atoning payment.
 - (d) **Substitution** of the believer's punishment through Jesus Christ as the acceptable substitute.
 - (3) To satisfy God's holy demands and wrath so that the deserved punishment will not be executed on us, but on Him who died in our place. God is holy and cannot be approached by sinful creatures. God abhors sin! Sin outrages His holiness, insults His majesty, and defies His authority.
 - iii) *To be received by* [dia,] *faith*
 - (1) Each person must personally embrace the shed blood of Christ by faith.
- b) Why was Christ made our propitiation?
 - i) **Immediate** purpose # 1: *This* (redemption) *was to show* [eivj e;ndeixij, give evidence of] *God's righteousness* [dikaiousu,nh]
 - The attribute of God's righteousness, **not** the gift of righteousness
 - (1) *Because in his divine forbearance* [avnoch,] *he had passed over* [pa,resij, postponed the punishment] *former sins*
 - (a) Paul's meaning is rather that God "postponed" the full penalty due sins in the Old Covenant, allowing sinners to stand before him without their having provided an adequate "satisfaction" of the demands of his holy justice (cf. Heb. 10:4). (D. Moo)
 - ii) **Immediate** purpose # 2: *It was to show* [pro,j e;ndeixij] *his righteousness* [dikaiousu,nh] *at the present time*
 - (1) The sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross is the unmistakable exhibition of God's righteousness. There can be no mistake; God has dealt with sin, as sin deserved.
 - iii) **Ultimate** purpose: *So that* [eivj] *he might be just* [di,kaioj] *and the justifier* [dikaio,w] *of the one who has* [evk] *faith in Jesus*

- (1) God could not simply overlook our sin; He had to punish it if He was to remain just. If He is not just, then there are no absolutes in this universe. (F. Schaeffer)
- (2) God justifies all those who through faith accept what Jesus Christ has done for them. We are not saved on the basis of our faith; we are saved only on the basis of the finished work of Jesus Christ. Our faith is the instrument by which we share in this completed work. Faith is the empty hand of the heart that accepts the gift of salvation. Our faith has no saving value. (F. Schaeffer)

6) Things we need to remember:

- a) Why would God do such a thing? For us? NO! **For His name's sake**—Ps. 79:9; Ezek. 36:22, 23, 32; 1 John 2:12
- b) How can this be applied to my life and yours?
 - i) Although the details are different for every person, it generally happens like this. God sends his Spirit into your heart. The Spirit convinces you that you are a sinner in need of God's forgiveness. This is called "repentance." Next God's Spirit helps you believe that Jesus died for your sins. This is called "faith," and it leads to eternal life. When you repent for your sins and put your faith in Jesus Christ, you become a whole new person spiritually. (Philip Ryken)

Next time: Romans 3:27-31

Romans 3:27-31
True Faith Is Not Self-Focused

Introduction: From the opening verse of this paragraph until 4:25, Paul will expand on the concept of genuine faith. The principles contained in 3:27-31 are illustrated in the life of Abraham in chapter 4.

See this following chart from *Moody Bible Commentary*.

| The Principles | The Concrete Illustration of the Principles |
|--|--|
| 3:27 Boasting is excluded | 4:1–3 Abraham could not boast |
| 3:28 Justification is by faith, not works | 4:4–8 Abraham was justified by faith, not works |
| 3:29–30 God justifies all by faith | 4:9–12 Abraham indicates God justifies all by faith |
| 3:31 Faith “establishes” the law | 4:13–25 Abraham’s faith “established” the law |

1) God’s gift of salvation excludes [evkklai,w] self-focused boasting—3:27

- a) A legitimate question is asked: *By [dia,] what kind of law?*
- b) Answered **negatively**: *Not by a law of works* (cf. Gal. 2:16; 3:11)
 - i) Human accomplishment allows us to brag; but we are sinners against an infinitely holy God. We have all rebelled and are infinitely guilty. There is no room in salvation for self-congratulation.
(1) This does NOT mean that we should deliberately disobey the Law.
 - ii) Works people rely on include: Visible Morality; Intellectual Knowledge; Religious Involvement; Active Ministry for Christ; Assurance of Salvation; Making a Decision for Christ; etc.
- c) Answered **positively**: *But by [dia,] a law of faith*
 - i) Faith puts us all on the same level before God. Someone has wisely said: “We did all the sinning. Jesus does all the saving.”
 - ii) True faith rejects any possibility of self-help, self-improvement, or self-salvation. (Wm. MacDonald)
 - iii) The gift of justification is by grace alone through faith alone (3:24).
- d) Boasting looks inward to the man himself, while faith looks outward and upward to God. (SLJ) (cf. 1 Cor. 1:29-31; Eph. 2:9; 2 Tim. 1:9)
- e) Self-focused boasting is a slippery enemy. If you sweep it out the front door, it will run around the house and try to sneak in the back door. (MLJ)

2) Paul explains why God’s gift of salvation excludes self-focused

boasting—3:28 *For we hold [logi,zomai] that one is justified [dikaio,w] by faith apart from works of the law.*

- a) Paul was logically consistent in his teaching. Genuine salvation from sin is intellectually honest.
- b) Man cannot bring himself into this right relationship (be acquitted) with God (hence the passive voice).
- c) Faith stands in total contrast to any works of law.

3) God's gift of salvation is available to all people groups because of God's oneness (His unique unity and simplicity)—3:29-31

- a) Questions concerning our ethnic background—3:29-30 (cf. Acts 13:38-39)
 - i) *Is God the God of the Jews only?*
 - ii) *Is He not the God of Gentiles [e;qnoj, people groups] also?—3:29-30*
 - (1) Answer? *Yes, of Gentiles also* (Rom. 10:12; 15:9; Gal. 3:8, 28)
 - (2) God is not a tribal deity but the God of all people. God's covenant with Israel does not restrict God's activity to Israel. (Lexham Context Commentary)
 - iii) Why is this true? *since God is one* (emphatic; cf. Deut. 6:4)—*who will justify [dikaio,w] the circumcised by [evk] faith and uncircumcised through [dia,] (the) faith.*"
 - (1) In other words, because it is God's nature. He is one! He will act consistently with His character. To have a separate way of salvation for each people group would be inconsistent with Who God is.
 - (2) Remember the Old Testament story of Jonah?
- b) Hypothetical question concerning the law—3:31
 - i) *Do we then overthrow [katarge,w] the Law by [dia,] this faith?—3:31*
 - ii) Answer:
 - (1) An exclamation: *By no means!*
 - (2) A sharp contrast: *On the contrary [avlla,], we uphold [i[sthmi] the law.*
 - (a) The Law identifies sin and demands the penalty be paid, but it does not provide salvation.

4) Things for us to remember:

- a) God has one, and only one, way of salvation for all people groups (3:29-30).
 - i) If salvation was through keeping the Law, then the Gentiles would be excluded from salvation because they had been excluded from the Law!
- b) One of the greatest lies in the world is that by doing certain works, people are able to make themselves acceptable to God. The great error in this teaching is its sheer impossibility. The great evil in this teaching is that it robs God of His glory.
 - i) The problem is not how little or how much we have sinned, but against whom we have sinned. We have sinned against an infinitely holy God who really exists. And in sinning against an infinitely holy God who really exists, our sin is infinite. (F. Schaeffer)
- c) Your inability to obey God is not cause for discouragement. Rather, remember that God does not deal with you according to your own works, but the completed work of Christ alone. Thankfully my acceptance before God is not based on **my** performance but rather upon **His** accomplishment on the Cross. If it did depend on me, then I would ruin it.

Next time: Romans 4:1-8