

Rom. 3:1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?

This would be a natural question after the hard-hitting summation of the last chapter. He had just effectively made the case that the Jew and Gentile were on equal footing regarding God's judgment. So what advantage is there to being a circumcised Jew?

Rom. 3:2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

Apparently, Paul is going to make the case that there is great benefit to being a Jew. The most important benefit is that they were chosen to receive the words of God, the revelation of God's thoughts, motives and reasoning (from the Greek for oracle) through holy men as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

2Peter 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Rom. 3:3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

So what if some of God's people did not believe Him and rejected Him. That in no way changes the fact that God is faithful to His word. God is never changing; He is always the same.

Malachi 3:6 For I am the LORD, I change not....

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

Rom. 3:4 God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

In answering his questions of the previous verse, Paul gives an emphatic "No way!" God is truth and men are liars.

Deuteronomy 32:4 He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.

Psalms 31:5 Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.

"it is written" – Where? *Psalms 51:4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.*

Paul is referencing the acknowledgement of David that God's judgments are true and righteous. We, too, have to recognize that God is truth and that His decrees and judgments are correct and without bias; He is never in error.

Rom. 3:5 But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)

"I speak as a man" – Paul is going to use faulty human logic and reasoning with his audience. He poses a question to make an argument. The unrighteousness of man makes the righteousness of God obvious in comparison. Since our sin reveals His righteousness, isn't that a good thing? Doesn't that make God unjust when He punishes us?

Rom. 3:6 God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?

Rom. 3:7 For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?

Again Paul is emphatic, "No way!" If that were true, there would be no righteous basis for judgment of the world. It wouldn't be righteous of God to go easy on the Jews and then judge the sin of the rest of the world. All sin reveals God's righteousness in contrast. As Peter declared, God is no respecter of persons.

Acts 10:34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

I found a quote from Jonathan Edwards that helped me better understand verse 7: "...seeing the great end of righteousness is answered by my sin, in God being glorified, why is my sin condemned and punished? And why is not my vice equivalent to virtue?"

Rom. 3:8 And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.

Paul knows that there are actually some people going around saying that he is teaching this lie; that he is saying that it is good to do evil since it reveals God's goodness and that is a good thing. Man loves to use reasoning that makes the ends justify the means. Paul says this teaching is blasphemous, speaking evil against God. Those who spread such lies deserve everlasting damnation/condemnation.

I like this comment by Guzik: "Twisting the free gift of God in Jesus into a supposed license to sin is perhaps the summit of man's depravity. It takes the most beautiful gift of God and perverts it and mocks it."

Rom. 3:9 What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

Rom. 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

Rom. 3:11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

Rom. 3:12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Paul started this chapter by presenting the benefit to the Jew of having received the oracles of God. It seems odd that he didn't go on and reason that the possession of the oracles resulted in a greater responsibility for the Jew and no basis for justification of sin; they knew what God expected from them. You would think that would incur greater judgment.

Instead, Paul emphasizes that sin is sin and all men are sinners; both Jew and Gentile are on level ground before God the judge.

“As it is written” – Where?

Psalm 14:2-3 The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Ecclesiastes 7:20 For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

Nothing has changed since sin entered the world. All men are sinners. God is the one that seeks and draws men to Himself through the Spirit—not the other way around. John expresses this truth as follows:

*John 6:44-45 No man can come to me, **except the Father which hath sent me draw him:** and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, **And they shall be all taught of God.** Every man therefore that hath **heard, and hath learned** of the Father, cometh unto me.*

The word *learned* in the verse above means to learn with understanding. John tells us that ALL are taught of God, and those that hear and learn will come to Him. It stands to reason that anyone who truly understands the truth about the Father will come to Him in belief that results in salvation.

Again, the Spirit tells us through Paul that there is no one that does good; no, not one.

Rom. 3:13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:

Rom. 3:14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

Paul now basically states that men are no good from head to toe. As an astute student of scripture, he relies on it heavily as he makes his case.

*Psalm 5:9 For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; **their throat is an open sepulchre;** they flatter with their tongue.*

The word *throat* in the Greek refers to the larynx, the voicebox. An open sepulchre (grave) makes you think of a place from which rot and decay are evident. I like Webster's definition for *deceit*: "An attempt or disposition to deceive or lead into error; any declaration, artifice, or practice, which misleads another, or causes him to believe what is false; a contrivance to entrap; deception; a wily device; fraud."

Psalm 140:3 They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips. Selah.

Psalm 10:7 His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity.

Poison / venom speaks of that which injures or is deadly, like malicious or spiteful words. *Cursing* involves evil speaking with the intent to cause great injury. *Bitterness* involves speaking sharply with resentment and / or sarcasm; Webster even adds that it is with the intent to draw someone into apostasy (rejecting their faith).

The Spirit has gone to great pains to emphasize the evil that can come from the words we speak and the way we speak them. He also emphasizes these same truths through the writings of James:

James 3:6 & 8 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell....But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

Good insight from John Trapp: "It is easy to observe that St. Paul here, making the anatomy of a natural man, stands more on the organs of speaking than all other members and showeth how his tongue is tipped with fraud, his lips tainted with venom, his mouth full of gall, his throat a gaping grave, his tongue as a rapier to run men through with, and his throat as a sepulcher to bury them in."

Rom. 3:15 Their feet are swift to shed blood:

From evil speaking Paul jumps directly to evil action, the most evil of actions—murder, taking another person's life. This represents a total rejection of God as the authority regarding life and death.

Proverbs 1:16 For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.

Isaiah 59:7 Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood...

Usually we associate the shedding of blood with criminals and the most despicable characters; but in this day and age, as well as in the past, the life of the unborn and newborn have been subject to the choice of the parent(s). Today, I think abortion is probably one of the most, if not the most, widely practiced kinds of murder. In times past, I think worship of idols involving the sacrifice of

babies ranked high in this category. It seems that we are the first culture to show disrespect and dishonor regarding the lives of the elderly—of course in the name of what we think is best for them—never considering that we should leave that decision in the hands of God. I am also reminded that one can be guilty of this sin without actually performing the physical act. Jesus taught that it is the attitude and intent of the heart that makes you guilty.

Matthew 5:21-22 *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*

“raca” = a term of vilification, To make vile; to debase; to degrade; to disgrace.

Rom. 3:16 Destruction and misery are in their ways:

“destruction” = brokenness, ruin, broken hearts

“misery” = wretchedness, great unhappiness, extreme pain of body or mind

As I look at these definitions, it’s obvious to make the application as to how their actions affect others, but I think it is also true that their actions produce the same results in their own lives.

Rom. 3:17 And the way of peace have they not known:

Note the parallel with verses 15 & 17 to the verses in Isaiah 59.

Isaiah 59:8 *The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.*

Sinful man does not know or understand how to bring about peace/rest in his life apart from God. This truth is also affirmed by the prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 57:21 *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

“wicked” = morally wrong, **condemned**, guilty

John 3:16-18 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but **he that believeth not is condemned already**, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

Rom. 3:18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

In other words, they reject God as the truth and their authority, and they fear no consequences from Him because of their sin. Why does he reason this way?

Because of pride, he thinks he knows better than God. The Psalmist words it as follows.

Psalm 36:1-2 The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. For he flattereth himself in his own eyes....

Rom. 3:19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Rom. 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

The law (of God) speaks to those who follow the law. Who are the ones particularly being referenced as those that “are under the law?” the Jews. The law proves that every person is guilty when measured against the standard of God’s law. There are no acceptable excuses. No person will ever be given a verdict of “innocent” when judged according to the standards of God’s law. The law will reveal and define their sin.

Rom. 3:21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

Rom. 3:22 Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

“manifested” = rendered apparent, openly declared, made visible, put beyond question or doubt

The law was given to us to reveal our sin. The righteousness of God is revealed to us through the person of Jesus Christ. The law and the prophets (the Old Testament scripture) testified, gave record of this same Jesus. Jesus declared His righteousness by demonstrating His faith in His Father. If Jesus had not had faith in His Father and been obedient to death, we would never have had the opportunity for salvation. The faith of every believer declares God’s righteousness in the same way. The faith Jesus demonstrated is the same faith that we must demonstrate. The focus of Jesus’ faith was His father; the focus of our faith must be Jesus Christ and in turn His faith in His Father.

Galatians 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even **we have believed in Jesus Christ**, that we might be justified **by the faith of Christ**, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Verse 22 makes it clear that this faith is “unto all”—available to, offered to and sufficient for all. This is in addition to “upon all them that believe.” There are two different Greek words for “unto” and “upon.” The word for *upon* states “superimposition, over, upon, on behalf of.” Righteousness through faith in Christ is open to all, but is only imputed to those who believe.

Rom. 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

For the third time this chapter, Paul emphasizes that ALL have sinned and fallen short of God's righteousness. The wording in the original language implies that we are constantly coming short. There is not one that does good. I think this is probably the biggest hurdle that many have to jump before they come to God through faith in His Son. We have a tendency to look around and compare ourselves to others and feel pretty good about ourselves. We make assessments based on our expectations instead of God's expectations. It's hard to admit that you're a sinner and that there is nothing YOU can DO to make yourself acceptable to God.

Rom. 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

"justified" = declared innocent, free, righteous – just as if I had never sinned

"freely" = without cost or cause, undeservedly

"grace" = the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life, acceptable, benefit, favour, gift...

"redemption" = ransom in full, deliverance, release effected through payment

Being declared innocent and righteous is wonderful in and of itself, but realizing that we are in a position of favor before God is even more wonderful.

My paraphrase—Being declared innocent and righteous without any cost to self by His divine influence on my heart, His gift—I am delivered through His payment in full for my sin—the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Rom. 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

Rom. 3:26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

"Whom" = Jesus, the Son

"propitiation" = the lid of the ark, the mercy seat, an atoning sacrifice; "atone" = to cause to be at one, to make satisfaction for.

"forbearance" = self-restraint, tolerance, put up with

"just" = equitable in character; righteous

How is God satisfied? Through our faith in the blood sacrifice of His Son Jesus. In the Old Testament times, God was *satisfied* when the priest sprinkled the blood of a sacrifice on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement. This act of obedience "covered" the sins of the people.

In doing some study on a Messianic Jewish website, I noticed that they took great offense at the terminology of sins just being “covered” through the Old Testament sacrificial system. In checking the Hebrew I found that the word *atonement* was defined as to “cover, appease, pardon, purge.” In reference to the Day of Atonement Leviticus 16:30 states:

For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.

The Hebrew for *clean* indicates to be “pure, innocent.” So, I would conclude that the people of Israel were “forgiven” on a yearly basis as they evidenced their faith in God through obedience to His instructions. Other sacrifices were established for the individual to maintain a right relationship with God throughout the year. It is significant to note, however, that until the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, a person could not be imputed the righteousness of God that comes with permanent redemption through salvation by faith.

Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross didn’t just cover sin; it allowed for the righteousness of Jesus to be imputed to the sinner—not just those who have believed after the cross, but for those who exhibited their faith in God before the cross. The people of faith temporarily satisfied God through obedience in following the sacrificial system until the time that Jesus came as the only acceptable sacrifice for accomplishing permanent propitiation or redemption.

Hebrews 9:14-15 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, **for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament**, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

I think it is very interesting that the word atonement (at-one-ment) means to be as one. It’s a declaration that the believer has been restored to complete fellowship with the Creator as was intended from the very beginning.

“at this time” – referencing the time since the resurrection of Jesus God is *just*; He has shown no difference in the treatment of sinners whether before or after the cross. All who had/have faith in God and His provision for them have been declared righteous.

Rom. 3:27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

“boast” = whereof I may glory, glorying, rejoicing.

I like the translation from the Complete Jewish Bible: *So what room is left for boasting? None at all! What kind of Torah excludes it? One that has to do with legalistic observance of rules? No, rather, a Torah that has to do with trusting.*

The only basis we have for boasting is in our relationship with our Creator.

Jeremiah 9:24 But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

Rom. 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Faith and works do not produce salvation. Faith saves; works evidence sincere faith.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

James 2:26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

The works that prove our faith are done as an outpouring of our love and submission to Jesus as Lord. They are a natural result of our following in His example as a servant. They are not a result of following the law in order to earn our salvation. Salvation is a gift. It just needs to be accepted.

Rom. 3:29 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:

Rom. 3:30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

God is not the sole possession of the Jews. He is God over all men on earth. This one God will only provide justification for man/woman in one way—through faith. He doesn't have one way for some people and another way for others, as so many would like us to believe.

Rom. 3:31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Paul is anticipating the next question, "Does our faith do away with the need for the law?" The law is still needed to establish a standard and reveal sin. Faith is recognition that the demands of the law are right and true and just.

One comes to saving faith by first recognizing that a need he/she has to be saved—recognizing that you are a sinner. You can't recognize that you are a sinner without the law.