

## Romans 3

### **1. What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?**

#### **A. What advantage then hath the Jew?**

Note: It might be best, for our understanding, to think of verses 1, 3 and 5 as possible, or anticipated, questions raised by the Jewish Christian objectors.

1. The Jews might have thought that Paul sought to discredit them.
2. The advantage of the Jews was contained in the divine information of the old law.
  - a. Meyer says this word “advantage” means *superiority* in his NT commentary.
  - b. In Mark 6:51 the same word is translated as “beyond measure,” and in John 10:10 as “more abundantly.”
3. This passage is connected to verses 28 and 29 of the last chapter.
  - a. The Jews might be thinking, “If the case is such that one is a Jew *inwardly* and not of the flesh, then what advantage does the Jewish Christian have?”
  - b. Shall the heathen (uncircumcised) be treated the same as a Jew?
4. The Jews may have thought that just because they were Abraham’s seed, that made them spiritually special and accepted in the sight of God, Luke 3:8.

#### **B. Or what profit is there of circumcision?**

1. If circumcision did not count during the Christian age, then what profit was there in circumcision?
2. It was a commandment for another age and a different covenant, Gal 5:2, 6.
3. Under the new covenant the ‘outward sign’ had to become an inward change, Gal 6:15.

Note: The anticipated questions were answered by the Holy Ghost before the objectors could formulate their opposition. Given enough time to dwell on a matter an objector will find a way (or justification) to hold on to their pre-conceived ideas.

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

#### **A. Much every way (answer to first question)**

1. The Jews had no advantage in being a physical Jew under the new covenant, which does not mean they had no advantages.

- a. “Much” means *many, large, great*. Even though there was no advantage of being a Jew outwardly, there was a great advantage of being from the heritage of those under the covenant relationship of their forefathers.
  - b. To emphasis “much” the writer expands to “every way.”
  - c. This fact will be discussed more as the chapter unfolds.
2. The major advantage was that they had been taught the oracles of God, Deut 11:19-21.

**B. Chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.**

Note: Chiefly means the first or principle advantage. Interestingly, there is only one advantage listed here.

1. They had been entrusted with the oracles of God.
2. Being entrusted with something valuable is a mark of high honor.
3. The “oracles of God” were the very utterances of Jehovah.

Note: The word “oracles” only occurs in three other passages in the entire NT: Acts 7:38; Heb 5:12; 1 Pet 4:11.

Note: Think of how much was included in those “oracles.”

Creation, paradise, fall of mankind, flood, call of Abraham, Jacobs descendants, etc. Also, think how much is excluded; literally everything else. We have no authority to go one step beyond what is written.

- a. Technically, the Old Testament consisted of two laws. The patriarchs were governed by an unwritten law and then 2,500 years later the Hebrews were given a specific law unto them, alone.  
Note: We all know how easily spoken information can get altered, perverted or twisted.
  - b. We know some type of law was given by the information contained in Heb 11:4. “By faith...” Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Rom 4:15.
4. The law God gave Moses was the only written law up to this point.
  5. Jesus often spoke of “the law,” and “the prophets,” e.g., Matt 5:17, 18, 40.
  6. The Gentiles had to live by oral teachings transferred from generation to generation.
  7. The Jews received the law, but they were condemned for not keeping it, John 7:19; Acts 7.
    - a. Think of what a greater advantage we have by possessing the entire Bible!

- b. We might ask ourselves, ‘what advantage does a person have who is steeped in Bible knowledge and then taught the truth?’
  - c. No greater advantage could a people have than to be the custodians of the written law.
8. Even though the Jews had been entrusted with the law, this would not help them on judgement day.
9. This fact should impress upon the minds of every Christian the awesome responsibility we have as stewards of the New Testament since “We have also a more sure word of prophecy...” 2 Pet 1:19.  
Note: The Jewish scriptures were very different than our conception of ‘scriptures.’

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

**A. For what if some did not believe?**

Note: There may be ambiguity phrased in this verse. ‘Unfaithful’ in their lives, and ‘unfaithful’ in their stewardship of the written word.

- 1. This is the second anticipated objection.
- 2. What if some of the Jews did not believe that they were as equally sinful as the Gentiles?
- 3. Even in their unbelief would it not require God to save them simply because they were the children of Abraham and heirs according to God’s promise?
- 4. “Truth is truth, and it will remain truth, even though all the world is in unbelief.” (Winters)

**B. Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?**

- 1. Whether man believes in the plans of God or not he cannot stop what God has set into motion.
  - a. The NKJ and AVS have “faithfulness of God” where the KJV has **faith of God**. Faithfulness seems a better translation of the word, 2 Tim 2:13.
  - b. God always keeps His promises, Rom 9:4; Gal 3:21.
  - c. Keeping in mind that God’s promises are always conditional; Deut 7:12; 11:22, 23; John 14:15; 15:14; 2 Cor 5:17.
- 2. Even if some Jews chose to disbelieve they would not and could not stop a plan that was in the eternal purpose of God, Rom 11:29; Eph 3:10, 11.
- 3. The implication is that their unbelief forced Jehovah to be unfaithful in His promises to the nation of Israel. That is why the next verse begins with “**God forbid...**”

**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.**

**A. God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar;**

1. "God forbid" is strong language meaning "absolutely not!"  
Note: "God forbid" is a popular phrase in this book. We will see it used ten times in this letter.
2. Paul is not suggesting that every person lies continually.
3. "Let God be true" means in every circumstance and at all times God is always true and is never false.
  - a. When God promises He never fails.
  - b. When mankind suggests that God has failed to keep His promises mankind is the liar.
4. When one disagrees with God, or tries to change His plans, then that person becomes the liar, Prov 30:6; Heb 6:18.
  - a. Should all men prove to lie, that does not alter the fact that God is not a liar.
  - b. What a better world we would have if every religious person would simply "let God be true."
  - c. There would be no faith only doctrine, no premillennialism doctrines, no denominations, no liberalism, no legalism. No creed books, no manuals, no catechism, no conventions, no annual meetings, no synods, no conclaves and no councils.

**B. As it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightiest overcome when thou art judged.**

1. Paul appeals to the Old Testament to prove his point, Ps 51:4.
2. He is appealing to a section of scriptures that every Jew would honor and respect.
3. The image might be seen as God being put on trial. The evidence is presented and God is acquitted. He has stood the trial and is innocent of the charge.
4. If the Jews were to be punished it was not an indication of the lack of faithfulness on God's part. Simply a justified reaction to Israel's failure to obey.

Note: God is "judged" when mankind blames Him for some calamity in our lives.

- a. Have you ever uttered, "Why me?"
- b. "What did I do to deserve this?"
- c. Those are examples of calling God into judgement in the catastrophes of our lives.

**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)***

**A. *But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say?***

1. This appears to be the third anticipated question.
2. If man, through his sin and unrighteousness, makes God look good because it allows God to extend His grace to man, then why should God be upset with man, Rom 3:20, 21?
3. The objection seems to be; how could God punish someone for doing something that actually resulted in glory being given to God, Rom 5:8?
4. When Paul quotes David in Psalm 51 it is clear that David saw the righteousness of God in the consequences of his own sins.  
Note: The following is Ps 51:4 from the Septuagint Version (LXX) *“That thou mightiest be justified in thy words, and mightiest prevail when thou are judged.”* This reading makes it clear that David had sinned, not God.  
Note: The word ‘prevail’ in LXX means *winning a case in court*.
5. “What shall we say” is another common expression Paul uses. We will see it used four more times in this book.

**B. *Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)***

1. The inspired writer negates any attempt by the Jewish Christians to dismiss this section of the letter.
2. Disobedience renders vengeance from God, Rom 12:19; 2 Thess 1:6-9.
3. If they attempted to argue; why would God want to punish us for helping in the plan of redemption by becoming the sinner in need of salvation, Rom 5:8?
  - a. Why would God punish a person who has made Him look merciful?
  - b. Why would God be upset with the Jews if God knew they were going to do what they did?
4. “I speak as a man” refers to the way humans think. It was a common argument Paul used to get people to see their flawed thinking, Rom 6:19; 1 Cor 9:8; Gal 3:15.
5. Tom Wacaster wrote, “Men may think this way, but that is no reason to suggest that God thinks this way as well.”  
Note: Every reliable translation that I know of has this phrase as a parenthetical insert.

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

**A. God forbid:<sup>1</sup>**

1. Mankind did God no favors by becoming involved in sin.
2. God would rather have our obedience, 1 Sam 15:22, 23.
3. Why then did He give us the ability to sin?
  - a. We had to be given the choice, the ability to be tested and tried before we would be counted worthy of the blessings and glory of heaven.
  - b. Do you want to go to heaven? God says, show me, make your real desires known.
  - c. Can you live properly in a world of sin? Can you be light in the darkness?
  - d. Will you decide to be different than the Satan controlled mob?

**B. For then how shall God judge the world?**

1. How can God judge those who, according to some, helped make God look good by committing sin, Ps 9:8?
2. God's judgment is - and will be - fair, based upon His truth and the actions of men.
3. God wants mankind to listen to Him.
4. If God could not condemn the Jews for their disobedience, how could he punish the Gentiles who were also guilty of the same disobedience, Acts 17:31?
5. Mankind will be punished for their own sins, but God will ultimately be glorified and fulfill His purpose, Gal 2:17.

**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?**

**A. For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory;**

1. Paul argues from the position of the first person. If the truth of God abounded more through his lie to the glory of God, then why has the Jewish mind judged him a sinner?
2. Some of the Jews viewed him as a sinner because of what he was teaching, Acts 13:27-29; Rom 9:19, 20.

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<sup>1</sup> "God forbid" is exactly the same two words in the original language as in verse 4, see notes under #4, page 4, this outline.

3. "Through my lie" connects to the anticipated objection stated in verse 5.

#### **B. Why yet am I also judged as a sinner?**

1. Some Jews were judging Paul as a sinner and Paul is arguing that if he is a sinner would that not bring additional glory to God, by their misguided reasoning?
2. Sin never makes God look good.
3. God hates sin, Prov 6:16; 15:9.
4. Some have argued that Paul cannot be addressing Jewish Christians here because they were judging him a sinner.
  - a. Over the years some of my harshest criticism and condemnation has come from brethren.
  - b. I would go so far as to say that ALL of my serious condemnation in Christianity has come from within the brotherhood.

Note: The next verse will add to this fact. Some (unknown) people were reporting slanderously against him.
  - c. Paul seems to be arguing that if the Jewish Christians are opposed to, or looking down upon, the Gentile Christians why is he, a Jew, being judged by them?<sup>2</sup>

***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.***

#### **A. And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come**

1. Paul states some had slandered him by saying he was teaching that sin should be committed so that good may come, Rom 6:1, 2.
2. They had a misconception of grace.
3. Situation ethics teaches that a moral act should be judged by the ethics of the situation alone.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "You Jews cannot deny that you have been unjust; But this injustice, you say, has displayed the justice of God. You therefore cannot see how he can be just and punish you. Now, I will prove that your reasoning is false. In order to do this, I take my own case and show you how you view me. I am held by you to be false to the religion of my fathers. I am consequently condemned by you as a sinner. But in all this I am wronged, according to your own reasoning. For if the truthfulness of God has abounded the more to his honor by my being false, why do you still condemn me as a sinner? If, according to your reasoning, you should not be punished, neither should I." Moses E. Lard, Commentary of Romans, page 105.

<sup>3</sup> For example; 'It felt right to lie to save them the embarrassment.' 'I decided to kill myself so my family could get the insurance money.' During WWII a prisoner in a Russian prison (maybe many did so) voluntarily got pregnant because the Russians were releasing pregnant woman so as not to have the liability. She did this to be re-united with her husband.

4. The diabolical doctrine of, 'why not do more evil so more good will result' must have been a serious problem in Rome, Rom 5:20.
5. This nefarious notion was nothing new. Jesus warned of this evil near the beginning of His ministry, Matt 5:11.
6. Peter, writing from Babylon (1 Pet 5:13) had the same problem there, 1 Pet 3:16, 17.
7. The four words "we be slanderously reported" are from a single Greek word which means to *vilify*. They were doing more than 'just talking about Paul.'

Note: Paul used the same word in Rom 2:24 and will use it again in Rom 14:16.

**B. Whose damnation is just.**

1. Paul said that the damnation of those who told such a lie was just.
2. The very idea is absurd.
  - a. We must keep in sight the fact that some in Rome were saying that Paul was teaching that sin is good.
  - b. The careful student will notice him dealing with this false doctrine time and again throughout the book.
3. This is the only acceptable conclusion; God is just in His condemnation of Jew and Gentile alike.

Note: Some see Paul using the next section of this chapter (9-20) as he is reaching the conclusion that guilt is universal and every human stands in need of divine righteousness.

***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;***

**A. What then? are we better than they?**

1. The "we" in this verse refers to the Jewish Christians (of which Paul includes himself); the "they" refers to the Gentiles.
2. Again, referencing the Jews mentality of spiritual superiority over the Gentiles.

Note: "What then" is used many times by Paul, e.g., Rom 6:16; 11:7; 1 Cor 10:19; 14:15, etc.

- a. Even in the days of Jesus the Jews believed they were better than the Gentiles, John 8:33, 54.
- b. The Jews did have more privileges, more opportunities, but an obedient life was still required, Gal 3:22.

**B. No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;**

1. "The Jew had made such poor use of these advantages that Paul unhesitatingly answers: "No, in no wise"



2. The first birth (physical birth) of being Jewish was not good enough. They needed to be born again, John 3:3, 5, 7.
3. "Under" means to be in bondage, to be condemned by it.

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

A. Paul will use several passages from the Old Testament to prove his point. Verses 10-18 are passages, taken mostly from the Psalms, to prove his point.

Note: Barclay gave an interesting analysis of these next nine verses.<sup>4</sup>

B. It is logical that the Jews would have, or should have, been familiar with these verses.

C. Paul's first quote is from Psalm 14:3 or possibly Psalm 53:1, 3.<sup>5</sup>

1. Both of these Psalms are ascribed to David, but many feel he wrote them at different times in his life.
2. Psalm 14's message is that there is security in godliness, but no security in wickedness.
  - a. Possibly written early in his life.
  - b. There is depravity in the people because they have eliminated God from their thinking, therefore becoming fools.
3. Psalm 53's message is wickedness among people is the effect of rejecting God.
  - a. Possibly written much later in life.
  - b. If the Psalms were written years apart the condition of God's people was still unchanged or had possibly worsened.
  - c. The tragedy is that each generation should be getting better. We know the opposite is true.

D. When the Bible says "there is none that doeth good" (Ps 14:3), it has reference to the fact that no man has lived above sin. This is true of both Jew and Gentile, every soul that has lived, save One.

E. Only the righteousness can obtain this by admitting they are a sinner and living by God's scheme of redemption, i.e., by grace through faith.

1. This verse must be understood within the context, mankind can obtain righteousness.
2. Noah was considered righteous, Gen 7:1, (Patriarchal law).
3. Zacharias and Elisabeth were considered righteous, Luke 1:5, 6), (Mosaic Law).

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<sup>4</sup> "These Old Testament quotations describe three things. (1) A CHARACTER whose characteristics are ignorance, indifference, crookedness and unprofitableness. (2) A TONGUE whose notes are destructive, deceitful, malignant. (3) A CONDUCT whose marks are oppression, injuriousness, implacability." Barclay, page 55.

<sup>5</sup> It appears that all these OT quotes are taken from the LXX version.

4. The intent of the passage is that ungodliness was rampant. So much so that this sweeping generalization was fitting.

**11. *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.***

**A. There is none that understandeth**

1. Here Paul uses the same Psalm(s) as in verse 10.
2. The Jews should have understood, but they did not.
  - a. The “understandeth” means understand the relationship to what is good.
  - b. Possibly an abuse of the revelations which God had given.
3. Jesus called them blind guides, Matt 15:14; Luke 11:52.
4. In regards to the word “understandeth” it is the same word used in Eph 5:17 where it says God’s will can be understood.<sup>6</sup>  
Note: Human will, human desire comes into play here. We will be culpable when we ignore the teaching of God.

**B. There is none that seeketh after God.**

1. Right thinking people should approach God’s word with an objective, or an end game, i.e., what does God want from me?
  - a. Our desire should be to get to know God better than we have known Him before.
  - b. Searching the scriptures to gain insight, knowledge, wisdom.
  - c. But, we are remiss when part of the search does not include the honest yearning to get to know His character, to seek His mind.
2. We are required to seek God, Luke 16:15; John 5:44; 12:42. 43; Heb 11:6.
3. A person can have a mind full of Bible knowledge and still not seek after God.
  - a. Being able to quote a passage is different than being able to apply the meaning of that passage to your life.
  - b. Intellectual knowledge will not save a soul.
  - c. Notice Psalm 14:2 depicts God as looking down on us from heaven in an investigation of our understanding.

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

**A. They are all gone out of the way**

1. Paul is still drawing his proof from Psalm 14 and/or 53.
2. This opening phrase simply means *to deviate*.

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<sup>6</sup> Thayer says it means having the knowledge of those things which pertain to salvation, page 605.

Note: Paul will use the same word in Rom 16:17 where it is translated as “avoid.”

3. They had turned away from God’s guidelines, 1 Pet 2:25.
4. The Jews “turned aside” at the base of Mount Sinai, Ex 32:8.
5. If they had “all gone out of the way” they must have been ‘in the way’ at one point. This passage destroys the false doctrine of mankind being born a sinner. This will be further emphasized in the next phrase:

**B. They are together become unprofitable;**

1. “Together” includes all of mankind.
2. Both Robertson and Lightfoot say that the Hebrew word means to “go bad, become sour like milk.” Barnes added the word includes *to become putrid and offensive*.
3. We become “unprofitable” when we choose to turn aside from God’s directions, Matt 25:30.

**C. There is none that doeth good, no, not one.**

1. This phrase is closely connected to what is stated in verse 10, “There is none righteous, no, not one.”<sup>7</sup>
2. From this we should glean that there is none that can do good in a spiritual sense without the grace of God and strength of Christ.

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

**A. Their throat is an open sepulchre**

1. Paul now shifts his proof text to Psalm 5:9, which is another Psalm from David’s pen.
2. The writer seems to have enemies all around him, yet trusts the Lord for protection and victory.
3. “Open sepulchre” suggests “their mouth was like the odor of a newly opened grave.”<sup>8</sup>

**B. Their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:**

1. Deceit is as deadly as poison. This is the very thing Israel had invited into their religious council, Isa 30:10.
2. Every generation has been troubled with smooth talkers. Sometimes we invite them in among us, just like Israel of old.
  - a. Every denomination has them.
  - b. Every false teacher in the brotherhood has a tongue of deceit.

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<sup>7</sup> See page 9, this outline.

<sup>8</sup> Wacaster, page 115.

- c. Jesus warned the Jews of His day, Matt 12:34, 35.
  - d. James has warned Christians in every succeeding generation of this same danger, James 3:5-8.
3. The phrase “the poison of asps is under their lips” is not from Psalm 5, but rather taken from Psalm 140:3.  
 Note: This phrase is scientifically true, but that is probably not the intent of the writer. The asp’s teeth and venom are hidden until the mouth is opened. That is when the danger is exposed. The same holds true with false teachers.

**14. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:**

- A. This quote is taken from Psalm 10:7.
  - 1. “Full of” means fully loaded.
  - 2. The Psalmist is calling for the judgement of God upon the wicked in Psalm 10.
  - 3. When the heart is wrong, everything is wrong. Wrong attitude, wrong speech, wrong conduct, wrong thinking.
- B. It is difficult to see someone controlled by cursing and bitterness, Prov 15:28; Matt 12:34.
  - 1. “Cursing” here is different than what we might think of the word. We think of the vulgar and disrespectful words we often hear.
    - a. Most of us understand that these words are ugly and of no real use.
    - b. We also know that if a person has to be reduced to using common cuss words to express themselves it is a sure sign of low intelligence and/or lack of education.
    - c. This cursing would be the opposite of asking a blessing upon someone, Luke 6:28, Rom 12:14.
  - 2. “Bitterness” is used in scripture to denote harshness, cruelty and maliciousness in words, Heb 12:15.

**15. Their feet are swift to shed blood:**

Note: The next three verses in Romans are drawn from Isaiah 59:7, 8.

- A. Isaiah saw the corruption and disrespect for human life more than 700 years before Jesus was born.
  - 1. Paul takes this general disrespect for human life and applies it to every nation under heaven.
    - a. This is the general disrespect for life that leads to murder.
    - b. The sin we first saw in Genesis when Cain’s offering was not respected by God, which caused him to be “very wroth, and his countenance fell” (Gen 4:5).

- c. How swiftly the Jews in Jerusalem were to take Paul's life, Acts 21:30, 31.
- d. Then they plotted time and again to finish Paul's life, Acts 22:22; 23:12, 13.
- 2. This universal corruption of morals is the reason we are facing millions of murders in this nation.
- 3. Our abortion laws are an indictment on us as a nation, and maybe more importantly, an indictment on us as a Christian, if we voted for those who promote such actions.
- 4. We will be held accountable for whom we vote.
- B. Solomon reigned about 200 years before Isaiah, Paul wrote about 800 years after Isaiah, yet nothing had changed, Prov 1:16; 6:18.
- C. Take a moment and do a search for the current murder rates in America.
  - 1. For several years we were trending downward in murders.
  - 2. Sharply increased in 2020 and at the time of this writing it is still trending upwards.

**16. Destruction and misery are in their ways:**

- A. "Destruction" means to crush, or utterly fracture. Strong adds the idea of *completely ruin*.
  - 1. As previously noted, Paul is using Isaiah 59:7 to show the sinful state of the Jews and mankind in general.
  - 2. This exact word is not used anywhere else in the NT.
  - 3. It comes from a root word which means 'to wear away,' hence the idea of tribulation or trouble.
- B. "Misery" suggests afflictions and calamity.
  - 1. The only other time this word is used is in James 5:1, where it is used in the plural.
  - 2. From this we can surmise that Paul is stating that since they, as a nation, have acted harshly, they can be expected to be treated harshly, Isa 52:21.

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

- A. Isaiah's quotation is concluded with this verse.
  - 1. People with this mentality leave a wake of death and destruction.
  - 2. Sin separates us from God, Isa 59:1, 2.
  - 3. The peaceless soul often tries to destroy those around them who have peace, Isa 57:21.
- B. Sin destroys peace.
  - 1. Not knowing peace is the evil work behind terrorism, bombings, hostage grabs, child/spouse abuse.
  - 2. People at peace do not do these things, Luke 1:79.

**18. *There is no fear of God before their eyes.***

A. Paul here returns to quoting from the Psalms. Specifically, Ps 36:1.

B. One commentator said, “There are several restraints we are given to keep from committing sin:

1. One is the fear of punishment from parents, school officials, employer or the legal system.
2. Another restraint is the dread of facing the censure of our conscience.
3. Another barrier to sin is the desire to retain the favor of our peers who applaud good moral conduct and righteousness.
4. Still another impediment to sin is a desire for some reward or benefit which we can receive only if we keep free from entanglements with immorality, etc. (e.g., continuation of one’s marriage and home).
5. But the greatest deterrent to sin is the fear of God. If we fear God, we do not want to die lost; we know the awful penalty of hell awaits. If we have reverence for the Almighty, we dread doing anything that might offend Him or invite His displeasure. When one loses his fear of God, there is hardly anything else left that is strong enough to keep one from entering sin wholeheartedly. And without fearing God, the appeal to the gospel will not be strong enough to lead us to obey.”<sup>9</sup>

C. The fear of wrong, or the fear penalty for being wrong, is disregarded, Deut 6:2; Prov 16:6; Ecc 8:12, 13.

**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.***

Note: Before we move on to the next two verses a terse summary of this last section is in order: Paul has drawn inspired information from the pens of David and Isaiah, two highly honored men of the Jews.

These are the undeniable facts:

1. That all are sinners (verses 10-12).
2. The kinds of sins that mankind is involved in, i.e., tongue and deeds (verses 13-17).
3. The absence for the reverence of God (verse 18); not all Jews nor all Gentiles were guilty of all the sins enumerated, but all were guilty of some.

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<sup>9</sup> Winton, pages 29, 30.

4. As Reese has said, “This is an application specifically to the Jews of the universal indictment of men, finally and unequivocally driving the Jew from any ideas of preferential treatment in the judgment.”<sup>10</sup>

**A. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law**

1. Their own scriptures had proven their sinful condition, (See pages 9-14, this outline).
  - a. It should be noted that inspiration uses “saith” twice in succession in this verse.
  - b. The first “saith” emphasizes the act of speaking, as opposed to silence. The second “saith” puts emphasis on the content or the substance of what was said.<sup>11</sup>
  - c. The Jewish Christain desperately wanted to be found not guilty, but could not be so judged. Their highly honored forefathers (David and Isaiah) made it so that no amount of subterfuge on their part could twist the scriptures.
  - d. To properly understand the “law” part of this verse we must stay within the context.
    1. Paul had just used the book of Psalms and the book of Isaiah as proof.
    2. To limit “the law” in this verse to mean the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) we go beyond Paul’s limits, John 15:25.
    3. From this we can glean that the entire Old Testament is referenced as “law” on occasion.
2. The Jews wanted the Gentiles to be found guilty of violating the laws of God (oral and moral), but they did not want to be accused of being guilty of violating the law of Moses.
3. However, Paul had declared them guilty in the sight of God.

**B. That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.**

1. The “stopped” in this verse means that every defense the Jews could muster had been taken from them. Not a leg to stand on.
2. Some see this as a proverbial expression, e.g., Job 5:15 or Ps 107:42.
3. Others see it as the very design or intent of the old law.

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<sup>10</sup> New testament Commentary, page 123.

<sup>11</sup> Wacaster, page 119.

- a. “The very design of the Scriptures, in pronouncing certain things to be sin, and in declaring the Jews to be guilty thereof, is to silence them on the question of justification by law, to destroy every vestige of hope therein, and thus to shut them up to the justification which is in Christ.”<sup>12</sup>
  - b. The only other times the word “stopped” is used in NT are in 2 Cor 11:10 and Heb 11:33.
4. The verse ends with “and all the world may become guilty before God.” Maybe better translated ‘brought under the judgment of God.’
- a. The whole of humanity stands condemned because of our own sins.
  - b. Albert Barnes noted in his NT commentary that the term “guilty before God” is never used to simply denote an obligation to punishment, but with reference to the fact that the punishment is personally deserved.

***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.***

**A. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight**

- 1. There is no definite article ‘the’ before ‘law’ in either place in this verse. Paul seems to be referencing something bigger, broader than the law of Moses, alone.
- 2. A law, any law, by itself, will not have the innate ability to justify anyone in God’s sight.
  - a. This understanding adds to the universal scope of the message.
  - b. Hence the phrase, “there shall no flesh be justified.”
  - c. To be justified means to be regarded or to be treated as righteous.
- 3. The law of Moses was designed for a specific people (the Hebrews) and even then justified only if one kept it perfectly. Only one person, who lived under the law, kept the law without sin, Immanuel, 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15.
  - a. “Deeds of the law” probably refers to works done in obedience to the law.

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<sup>12</sup> Moses E. Lard, page 111.



- b. As previously stated, this goes beyond the law of Moses, both ceremonial and moral.
- c. No person can stand justified before God without being washed in the sinless blood of Christ, 1 Pet 2:22; 1 John 3:5.
- d. Since this is referencing more than the Law of Moses, is it possible to make religious laws that go beyond what God has revealed?
  - 1) Jesus' disciples eating the grain, Matt 12:1.
  - 2) Eating with unwashed hands, Matt 15:2.
  - 3) Traditions of the elders are not God-given laws.

**B. For by the law is the knowledge of sin.**

- 1. The law, any law, cannot make a person righteous, but it can reveal what is wrong.
- 2. Law can never forgive sin. Law has the power to enlighten us. The ability to hold a mirror up to reveal our guilt, but it cannot remove that guilt, Rom 7:7.
- 3. Some unknown person (to me) illustrated in this fashion, "The Law may be compared to a scale which tells us how much we weigh; it will not add to or subtract from our weight. The Law discovers the fact of sin, exposing its presence and revealing its nature in order that God might prescribe the remedy."
- 4. The law says if you violate it you are guilty. Therefore, we all have the need of a Savior.
- 5. This is no small matter. It is only when we come to the knowledge of our own desperate need for salvation can we be the properly prepared soil to receive the seed of the gospel.

Note: Beginning with the next verse we will see God's remedy for mankind's situation, the gospel is for all.

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

**A. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested**

Note: Beginning with this verse (21), and continuing through the rest of this chapter, Paul has much to say about the system God has in place to save mankind:

- 1. The hope of salvation because of the revealed scheme of redemption (the gospel) and God's righteousness are encapsulated in the two words "But now.

Note: Salvation is apart from any law that promotes man's works.

- It has been “manifested” (vs 21).
- It is “apart from the law” (21).
- It was “witnessed by the prophets” (vs21).
- It comes through “faith in Christ” (vs 22).
- It is available for all men, i.e., “there is no distinction” (vs 22).
- It is needed by all men, for “all have sinned” (vs 23).
- It is located “in Christ Jesus” (vs 24).
- It is connected with Christ our “propitiation” (vs 25).
- It shows God’s just nature in “passing over” the sins of humanity (vs 25).
- It is NOT based upon a “law of works” (vs 27).
- It IS based upon a “law of faith” (vs 27).
- It is available to all men (vv 30, 31).<sup>13 14</sup>
  2. “But now” is the contrast. Even though all are sinners and accountable to God for our sins, there is universal glimmer of hope.
    - a. In these latter days, in the new dispensation, in the Christian age, God’s plan is made known, Heb 1:1, 2.
    - b. This is the very hinge on which the door swings between the old and new covenants, Rom 5:19, 21.
  3. “The righteousness of God” here is how God makes men right with Him, or God’s plan to justify sinful man. Maybe better said, a righteousness that comes from God.
  4. Paul gives the wonderful news. He reveals the way we can be declared ‘not guilty,’ or ‘justified’ before God, Rom 10:3, 4.
  5. This righteousness is without “law,” speaking of any law. Again, the definite article is not in the first part of this verse.
  6. The NKJ renders this “apart from the law.” It is impossible for mankind to find justification through some law, any law.
  7. Jesus was separated from the old law and cannot be tied with that system, in any sense, other than fulfilling it perfectly.

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<sup>13</sup> Studies in Romans, page 121, Tom Wacaster.

<sup>14</sup> Another source (origin unknown to me) deals with righteousness given thru faith as follows:

- This rightfulness foretold by the law and prophets (21, 22).
- This righteousness needed by all (23).
- This righteousness [redemption] comes thru Christ (24, 25a).
- This righteousness proves God’s righteousness (25b, 26).
- The righteousness excludes glorying by men (27, 28).
- This righteousness is compatible with God’s name (29, 30).
- This righteousness fulfills the law (31).

8. "Is manifested" means to make visible or to make obvious, John 14:22.

**B. Being witnessed by the law and the prophets;**

1. The witness is the 'law and the prophets.' Probably a non-specific term to mean the entire Old Testament.
2. Every part of the Old Testament points to the scheme of redemption God had planned for us.
  - a. Before the Law of Moses we have Gen 3:15.
  - b. After the law was given we have Deut 18:15-19; John 3:14, 15.
  - c. The prophets gave us Isaiah 7:14; Jer 31: 31-33.
  - d. Everything which came before is but a shadow of things that were to follow, Heb 8:5; 10:1.
3. The message of the OT was redemption is coming; the message of the NT is redemption has come.
  - a. The message is the means by which our righteousness is manifested.
  - b. It is the one and only way we can have a right relationship with God.

***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:***

- A. The righteousness, which is being revealed by Paul, says that the only way one can be right with God is through Jesus Christ.
- B. It is for all who believe. There is no difference. It is for both Jew and Gentile, John 10:16; Acts 10:34, 35.
- C. How can a just and righteous God save sinful man?
  1. "There is no problem in the world so difficult as that of forgiveness. How to remit punishment without cheapening sin! How to pardon a wrong and yet to vindicate the right! It has been called a problem "fit for a God."<sup>15</sup>
  2. The answer to these questions is what a serious study of the book of Romans can give us.
  3. It is correctly stated that the righteousness of God is Jesus Christ.
    - a. Obedient faith in Jesus Christ is the only way people become right in God's eyes, Phil 3:9.
    - b. Staying with Paul's theme of this chapter there is no difference, no distinction, in anyone who is in THE faith of Jesus Christ, Acts 15:9.

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<sup>15</sup> Reese, page 129.

4. This is vitally important in our study, the faith spoken of here is the faith OF Christ. Just like “the faith of Abraham, Romans 4:16.
  - a. Faith “IN” Christ is very different than faith “OF” Christ.
  - b. The devils believed and trembled, James 2:19.
  - c. Belief, alone, is useless. The NKJ changes belief “of” Christ to belief “in” Christ in the following passages, Gal 2:16, 20, 22; Eph 3:12; Phil 3:9, etc.
  - d. They had no right (textually) to do so, and they open the door for false doctrine of ‘faith only’ by their sloppy translating.
  - e. Salvation is NOT a personal belief, it is the gospel that saves by our obedience.
  - f. The false notion that a person can have a personal faith or a person can follow their own truth is false to the very core. Post-modernism gone to seed.

**23. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;**

Note: This verse reveals why there is no distinction. All have sinned.

- A. All responsible people, at one time or another, violate God’s law either by commission and/or omission, Ecc 7:20; Gal 3:22.
  1. No exceptions, no exemptions, 1 John 1:8-10.
  2. To come up short, or to fall short. But, falling short of what? The text says “come short of the glory of God.”
  3. Mankind fails to meet God’s glory when we fail to do as He wishes.
  4. Our actions (sins) dishonor God. We fail in our purpose, which is to give glory to God, 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 2:14.
  5. We were made in His image, Gen 1:26. If we fail to reflect that image in our lives we have failed Him, 2 Cor 3:18; 8:23.
  6. It is worthy to note that “have sinned” is past tense, and “come short” is present tense. We all have sinned in the past and we all continue to sin.
- B. The only perfect being who ever lived was Jesus.

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

**A. Being justified freely by his grace**

1. This justification comes through grace and not perfect law-keeping.
2. The redemption (buying back) is done by Christ and in Christ.
3. Outside of Christ, there is no justification for responsible people today, Eph 1:7; Heb 8:12.
- 4, “Freely” is the opposite of what is purchased or what is earned. According to Strong’s it means *gratuitously*, Matt 10:8.

## **B. Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**

1. The entire redemptive plan of God rests on these words, Rom 4:16; 5:16-19.
2. In the word “redemption” we should see the word ‘ransom.’ Money paid for the release of one held captive, Matt 20:28; Col 1:14.<sup>16</sup>
3. Moses E. Lard said, “The thing which man forfeited by sinning is life...and the penalty which he incurred is future punishment. Now Christ has taken his own life, as it were, and with it, as a ransom, buys us off from sin and its penalty. In other words he pays his life for us, and so releases us from sin and its consequences.”<sup>17</sup>
4. “Redemption” is a word taken from slavery. A slave could be purchased and have their ownership transferred to another master, Titus 2:14; 1 Pet 1:18, 19.
5. The sacrificial death of the “Lamb of God” was the payment price for our sins. He paid the debt and made justification possible between sinful mankind and a righteous God, Rev 5:9; 7:14.

***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;***

### **A. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,**

1. “Set forth” (sometimes translated as *purposed*) means made available for public viewing. The NASV translates this phrase as “whom God displayed publicly,” Acts 2:23; 26:26.
2. “To be a propitiation” means to appease, or to remove anger.
3. The only other place the word “propitiation is used in the NT is in Heb 9:5. There it is used in reference to the lid, or mercy seat, of the Ark of the Covenant.
  - a. The blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on the mercy seat, Lev 16:13-16.
  - b. The context of this text requires the reader to see the meaning of ‘through faith in the efficacy of Christ’s blood.’
4. Propitiation is different than redemption. Redemption means to be released from bondage, while propitiation means to be removed from the liability of God’s wrath.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> “The notion of ransom contains in itself the triple idea of a bondage, a deliverance, and the payment of an equivalent as a means of that deliverance.” Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers

<sup>17</sup> A Commentary on Romans, Moses, Lard, page 116.

<sup>18</sup> The mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant was the place that sins were atoned for, or wiped out. God, the Father, allowed Christ the Son, to be the appeasement for all mankind.

5. Unless there is shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, Heb 9:22. Here in is the connection to all those OT sacrifices, Rom 5:1, 9, 11.
6. Notice some of the passages which detail efficacy of His sacrificial blood:
  - a. Lord's supper, Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20.
  - b. The purchase price of the church of Christ, Acts 20:28.
  - c. The saints are justified by the blood, 1Cor 10:16.
  - d. Made to draw nigh through His blood, Eph 2:13.
  - e. We have redemption through His blood, Col 1:14.
  - f. We have peace through His blood, Col 1:20.
  - g. His blood is said to purge our conscience, Heb 9:14.
  - h. We enter into the holiest by His blood, Heb 10:19.
  - i. His people are sanctified by His blood, Heb 13:12.
  - j. His blood calls us into an ever-lasting covenant, Heb 13:20.<sup>19</sup>

**B. To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.**

1. This reveals that without the shedding of Christ's blood there would be no possibility of being saved from past, present or even future sins repented of, Acts 13:38, 39.
2. God's righteousness is declared, or demonstrated, in that He "passed over the sins that were previously committed" (NKJ), Acts 17:30; Romans 4:8.
3. It is possible to understand this phrase as meaning that God did not fully punish sin under the old law. Judgement was suspended on sins done in the "past" until Jesus could fulfill His mission on Golgotha's cross.
4. We often say that the redemptive blood of Jesus flowed both ways from the cross. This would be divine proof of that statement, Heb 10:4; Rev 5:9.
5. This notion would tie nicely in with the teaching here on "forbearance."

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

**A. To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness:**

1. "To declare" is translated as 'for the showing' ASV, and 'to demonstrate at the present time' NKJ.
  - a. It literally means to point out or give as evidence.

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<sup>19</sup> There are many additional references to His blood, e.g., 1 Jn 1:7; Rev 1:5; 5:9; 7:14; 12:11, etc.

- b. What is being pointed out? God's righteousness.
  - c. For God to be just He had to have atonement for the sins of mankind.
2. "At this time" means in the days of the last dispensation. The days wherein mankind can be saved via the gospel.
  3. "His righteousness" has reference to the way God makes men right with Himself.
    - a. What God did on Calvary is a demonstration of His righteousness, 1 John 2:2; 4:10.
    - b. God cannot violate His own nature and still be righteous. God must be perfectly consistent with Himself, Rev 15:3.

**B. That he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.**

1. This part of the verse is used to define the righteousness of God.
2. For God to be just, Jesus had to be offered because this was the promise He had made (Isa 53).
3. He will justify anyone who will believe and obey, Rom 6:17; Heb 13:17.
4. Should God forgive sinners with impunity? Mankind would say, yes, please. God says, I must maintain my integrity, my moral character, therefore, I can only pardon sin through atonement.
5. This forces the student to grasp the simple fact that when Christ became the propitiation for our sins (both those before and after the cross) He became the 'wrath satisfier,' Rom 5:9.
6. By doing so, He is a just justifier, Rom 8:33; Gal 3:8-11.
7. It should be obvious that "believeth" in this verse is a synecdoche. A part standing for the whole., John 14:15; 15:14.

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

**A. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law?**

1. Since it is a fact that God justifies mankind on the basis of Christ's redemptive work, what right would any human have to boast, Eph 2:8-10?
2. All boasting is excluded because once a person commits one sin they need the grace of God to be saved.
3. Boasting is the result of having done something, or supposedly done something, worthy of self-praise.

4. There is something hidden here in our English translations. There is a definite article before boasting. It properly should read ‘the boasting.’ This verse may well tie into the information in chapter 2, i.e., Rom 2:17, 23.
  - a. Of course, all human boasting should be eliminated from our minds and mouths. But, in the context, this might be another indication of the Jews warped minds, Eze 36:31, 32.
  - b. As J.W. McGarvey wrote, “If a man is saved not as a righteous person, but as a pardoned criminal, where is there room for boasting?”<sup>20</sup>
5. When God supplied the plan of salvation, the sacrifice for salvation and the scheme for us to know of that salvation, where could we possibly boast? It has been “excluded.”

**B. Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.**

1. The context requires this to be studied under ‘the works of the law.’ God’s system for the saving of mankind is based on faithfulness to His law, Rom 8:2.
  2. “The law of faith” may refer to the gospel system for our salvation.
  3. Lard says that it was this very passage that Martin Luther made his famous (infamous) translation of “we are justified by faith only.”
- Note: There are three different words which are translated “law” in the book of Romans. The context has to determine the meaning. In this verse the same word is used twice.<sup>21</sup>

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

- A. “Therefore” is used as a summary of all that has been taught beginning from verse 21. It is the conclusion the apostles has been moving toward.
  1. What is the summary, or conclusion of this inspired message? All men, both Jew and Gentile are justified by faith coupled with obedience, John 5:24; 1 Cor 6:1.
  2. One then is justified by faith without perfect law keeping.
- B. This would eliminate being justified by the law of Moses, Gal 2:16.
  1. “Without the deeds of the law,” again, the definite article “the” is not in the original; thus, ‘apart from law.’
  2. All of mankind is justified by faith through Christ, Phil 3:9.
  3. Meritorious works cannot justify any human a place in heaven, Phil 3:9; Titus 3:7.

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<sup>20</sup> J. W. McGarvey, page 122.

<sup>21</sup> Vine’s says the word in verse 27 means a law, in general, page 313, Vol 2.



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

- A. Is Jehovah God to the Jews, alone? Is He not God to the Gentiles, as well?
1. If justification came from the old law, or any other law, where did the Gentiles stand?
  2. The NKJ inserts the word “or” at the beginning of this sentence. The word “or” (NKJ) and the word “is” (KJ) are supplied words by the translator with the intent of better understanding.
  3. Verse 29 has to be considered within the context of verses 27 and 28.
  4. The Jewish Christians struggled with the concept of Jehovah being a universal God rather than a Hebrew only God.
    - a. The gospel was to be taken to “all nations (Matt 28:19; Luke 24:47), “all the world” (Mark 16:15), “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16).
    - b. The early Jewish Christians had to be convinced of this fact, Acts 10:9ff.
- B. Paul asks a rhetorical question which demands a negative reply. God is not just a national or tribal God. All peoples are His offspring, Gal 3:14, Eph 3:6.
1. Paul had dealt with this question earlier in the chapter.
  2. Whether nations recognize Him as God or not, God has been and will always be the God of the whole world, Matt 13:36-38.

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

- A. Since there is but one Maker of all, He will justify all alike, by faith, Rom 10:12, 13.
- B. “By faith” and “through faith” are obviously different in meaning.
1. “By” faith (*ek*, Greek) means an origin, a source or primary cause.
  2. “Through” faith (*dia*, Greek) means the intervening cause or the instrument.
  3. Since “ek” is used in reference to the Jews (circumcision) and “dia” with reference to the Gentile, there must be something Paul is trying to get across.
  4. Paul is pressing the point that the source of salvation was faith, not the law of Moses, or any other law.
- C. In the Christian age circumcised or uncircumcised makes no difference, faith is what it takes to please Him, 1 Cor 7:19.

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

**A. Do we then make void the law through faith?**

1. The answer to this final question in chapter 3 is no, Matt 5:17.
2. It does not make void the purpose of the Old Testament law or any law which God has ever given.
3. The law was the “schoolmaster” (the office of one who was to get the children to school, Gal 3:24, 25) to bring us to an understanding of the gospel.

**B. God forbid: yea, we establish the law.**

1. We saw this expression used in verse 4.<sup>22</sup>
2. The law bore witness to the righteousness which was to come, Jer 31:33, 34.
3. When Christ came the law had served its purpose and was therefore fulfilled.
4. The righteousness which was made possible by Christ is the purpose of the law.

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<sup>22</sup> For further information on “God forbid” see page 4, this outline.