
ROMANS: THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN TEACHING

WEEK 3 – EVERYONE EQUALLY NEEDS THE GOSPEL

QUESTION 1) If you had a minute in an elevator to explain to someone how we can be right with God, what would you say?

QUESTION 2) Do you personally tend to struggle with forgetting God's *justice* or forgetting God's *justification* more? How does forgetting one or the other affect your feelings, your outlook, and your actions?

BACKGROUND: By this point in the letter, Paul has made the case that salvation comes apart from obedience to the Law (Rom. 1:17). Nonetheless, those who want nothing to do with God or his laws find themselves swept up in idolatry and immoral living (rest of Chapter 1). They're lost. But the religious who think they can earn their salvation through their performance (obedience to the Law, i.e. what they do) or pedigree (ancestry through Abraham, i.e. who they are) are just as lost (Chapter 2). EVERYONE needs good news that comes outside of themselves.

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS (ROM. 3:1-8)

What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? ² Much in every way! First of all, the Jews have been entrusted with the very words of God.

³ What if some were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God's faithfulness? ⁴ Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar. As it is written:

"So that you may be proved right when you speak
and prevail when you judge."

⁵ But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.) ⁶ Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world? ⁷ Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?" ⁸ Why not say—as some slanderously claim that we say—"Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is just!

QUESTION 3) In chapter 2, Paul proved that the Jews were not superior to the pagans, and in fact, struggled with the same basic impulses of pride and selfishness. The conclusion, for some, might be that Paul is suggesting the Jewish faith and its rituals/customs served no value. If salvation, still today, is ultimately about relational trust in Christ, not performance of religious rituals, do these rituals, customs, and ceremonies retain any value?

QUESTION 4) Some argued to Paul, *"If our sinfulness demonstrates God's grace, why should we attempt to restrain sin? Why not just sin that much more?"*

The following are direct quotes I (Pastor Hein) have received from people in my ministry. I've heard many similar variations as well. How would you respond to each of them?

1. *"I know sexual activity outside of marriage is wrong, but I also trust that Jesus died to forgive my sins, so I don't see why it has to be a big deal."*
2. *"If you tell people good works don't contribute to salvation, how can you ever possibly motivate them to be good?"*

NO ONE IS RIGHTEOUS (ROM. 3:9-20)

9 What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. 10 As it is written:

"There is no one righteous, not even one;

11 there is no one who understands;

there is no one who seeks God.

12 All have turned away,

they have together become worthless;

there is no one who does good,

not even one."

13 "Their throats are open graves;

their tongues practice deceit."

"The poison of vipers is on their lips."

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

15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood;
16 ruin and misery mark their ways,
17 and the way of peace they do not know."
18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. 20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

QUESTION 5) Since Christians believe in right and wrong as well as just punishment for sin, they can sometimes be labeled as "judgmental." How do verses 9-12 disprove that accusation?

QUESTION 6) If we have some conception of right/wrong printed on our hearts (cf. Rom. 2:14-15), and if the law cannot be used to earn salvation (vs. 20a), we might be inclined to think the law has no value. According to vs. 20b, what is a value of the law? What would be the consequence if someone failed to understand or regularly meditate on the law?

RIGHTEOUS THROUGH FAITH (ROM. 3:21-31)

21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

27 Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. 28 For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, 30 since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. 31 Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

- **QUESTION 7) Romans 3:21-24 is the heart of Christianity. It's SO important, and yet hard to understand fully at first glance. Walk through each clause and put them into your own words:**
- 21 "But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known," –
- "to which the Law and the Prophets testify." –
- 22 "This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe." –
- "There is no difference between Jew and Gentile," –
- 23 "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," –
- 24 "and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." –

QUESTION 8) In verse 27, Paul now brings up the issue of spiritual boasting. What is a boast? And what does the boast of a Christian sound like? More personally, why do you have cause for boasting?

SUMMARY: *Romans 3 offers us some of the best summaries of the gospel in all of Scripture (particularly Rom. 3:23-24). Paul has said that the Jews benefitted from the religious customs, not to mention the inspired Word, that God had shared with their people. But these blessings didn't make them less sinful. The Jews required just as much gracious saving as the rest of the world. All humanity is united in our inherent flaw and capacity for wickedness. But we're also all united in the fact that God's grace and the hope of eternal life is extended to us through Jesus. We're fundamentally more alike than we are different, and the gospel is the ultimate unifying force between God and man, and mankind with one another.*

CLOSING PRAYER (GATHER PRAYER REQUESTS)
