

Romans 3

What question does Paul raise (v. 1)? What advantage is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? **Why would such a question be asked at this point?** Paul has explained in Romans 2 that neither the possession of the law nor circumcision will save a Jewish person. If this is the case, what good is it to be Jewish?

What answer did he give to the question (v. 2)? The Jews have been entrusted with the very words of God. They have God's written revelation prior to the time of Jesus, i.e. the entire Old Testament. He gave the Jewish people His Word, and that is an indescribable gift. This trust is both a privilege to cherish and a responsibility to guard.

Will God go back on His promises to Israel because of the unbelief of many (v. 3)? The fact that the Jewish people as a whole had rejected the gospel did not mean that God's faithfulness to them was in vain. That would be contrary to His nature. God will remain faithful even if everyone else is unfaithful.

If all men were liars, would that make God untrue (v. 4)? If God says one thing, and every man in the world says another, our default position is God is right and man is a liar. God speaks the truth, and cannot lie. We are to believe God's truth even if nobody else believes it. Arriving at consensus of opinion means nothing to a Christian. God's truth will be vindicated at the judgment (Psalm 51:4) .

What question does Paul ask next (v. 5)? If our unrighteousness will demonstrate God's righteousness, how can God condemn us? As if to imply – if my sin ultimately serves to bring Him more glory, that is good! In other words, the end justifies the means.

The most dramatic example of someone who might ask this question is Judas. Imagine him saying, "Lord, I know that I betrayed Jesus, but You used it for good. In fact, if I hadn't done what I did, Jesus wouldn't have gone to the cross at all. What I did even fulfilled the Scriptures. How can You judge me at all?" The answer to Judas might go like this: "Yes, God used your wickedness but it was still your wickedness. There was no good or pure motive in your heart at all. It is no credit to you that God brought good out of your evil. You stand guilty before God."

How does Paul respond to the question (v. 6)? If that were the case, then God could judge no one.

What did some accuse Paul of teaching (v. 8)? "Let's sin as much as we can so God can be glorified even more." This was a perversion of Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. Paul will not even answer such an absurd twisting of his gospel. He simply says their condemnation is well-deserved.

Having now proven all people, Jews and Gentiles, to be under God's wrath what is the answer to Paul's initial question (v. 9)? No, we are not any better. We are all under sin's dominion and cannot break free. Jews may have certain advantages over Gentiles but God does not give them preferential treatment.

What is the point of vv. 10-18? The Old Testament witnesses to the universal depravity and guilt of mankind. Warren Wiersbe calls this passage "An X-ray study of the lost sinner, from head to foot."

Who is righteous according to Paul (vv. 10-12)? No one. When God finds no one righteous, it is because there are none. It isn't as if there were some and they were hiding. There has never been a truly righteous man apart from Jesus Christ. Even Adam was not righteous: rather he was innocent – not knowing good and evil.

What does the statement that "there is no one who seeks God" mean (v. 11)? That no one, in and of himself, seeks God without God prompting him or her to do so (John 6:44, 65). If left to himself, fallen man would never seek God. People may have selfish needs they pray about but no one earnestly wants to find God. If man initiates the search, then he doesn't seek the true God, the God of the Bible. Instead he seeks an idol that he makes himself.

What is Paul saying about the law (v. 19)? Many Jewish people of Paul's day took every passage of the Old Testament describing evil and applied it only to the Gentiles – not to themselves. Paul makes it clear that God speaks to those who are under the law and therefore accountable to God.

What conclusion does Paul reach (v. 20)? The law cannot save us from our sin and the penalty it deserves. **Since the law could not justify, what purpose then did it serve?** Through the law we become conscious of sin and we realize we can't keep the law by ourselves. Which is intended to create a sense of desperation within us and drive

us to the Savior. The law is not a checklist we keep; it is a benchmark we fail. We need freedom from our sin. The Mosaic Law is not an instrument of justification but of condemnation.

But now (v. 21).....These words provide the most glorious transition from the judgment of Romans 3:20 to the justification of Romans 3:21. **In what sense was this new righteousness testified to by the Law and Prophets (v. 21)?** The Old Testament prophets said that this righteousness was coming. Paul didn't "invent" it. This righteousness is not a novelty. It was predicted long ago. Isaiah 51:5-8; 56:1; Daniel 9:24.

If the law cannot justify, then how can we become righteous (v. 22)? On the basis of faith alone. The law cannot save us unrighteous sinners, but God reveals a righteousness that will save us, and it is not by requiring us to keep the law. It is a salvation that is offered, apart from our own earning and deserving, apart from our own merits. It is through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

How do vv. 23-24 summarize Paul's main point in chapters 1-3? All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Every man, according to the world's law, is considered innocent until he is proven guilty. The Word of God takes the opposite approach. God says that man is guilty until he is proven innocent.¹

How would you define "redemption" (v. 24)? To redeem has the idea of *buying back* something, and involved a steep cost -- the life of the Son of God. The Lord Jesus bought us back from the slave market of sin. His precious blood was the ransom price which was paid to satisfy the wrath of a holy and righteous God. We belong to Him.

How would you define justification as used by Paul (v. 24)? To be justified is to be saved. Justification is an act, not a process. When God justifies the believing sinner, He not only acquits him from guilt but clothes him in His own righteousness and thus makes him absolutely fit for heaven. Justification is that act of God whereby He declares righteous all who believe in Jesus. He doesn't make them righteous. It is something which takes place in the mind of God, not in the nervous system or emotional nature of the believer.

How would you define "propitiation" (or "sacrifice of atonement") (v. 25)? Jesus, by His death, was a propitiation (a substitute sacrifice) for us. He was judged in our place. He took the punishment we deserved. The wrath of God was satisfied/averted, and our sins were forgiven because a substitute had been slain on our behalf.

What sins did God pass over that were previously committed (v. 25-26)? God passed over the sins of those Old Testament saints who trusted in the coming Messiah to demonstrate His justice. The idea is that through the animal sacrifice of the Old Testament, those who looked in faith to the coming Messiah had their sins "covered" by a sort of an "IOU" or promissory note. At the cross, those sins were no longer passed over, they were no longer covered, they were washed away and done away with completely.....they were *paid for*.....the IOU was cashed.

Where is boasting then (v. 27)? Because we are justified freely by His grace, there is no room for self-credit or congratulation. However, sinners are prideful. They desperately want to claim some role in their own redemption.²

What conclusion does Paul reach (v. 28)? Justification (acquittal in the court of God) is found, for both Jew and Gentile, apart from the deeds of the law. Someone has compared being saved to reaching out to accept a gift that another person offers, like a Christmas present. One must extend his or her arm to receive the gift, but that act does not constitute doing something that earns the gift.³

What question does Paul ask (v. 29)? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? **What answer does he give (vv. 29-30)?** Yes, of the Gentiles also. If justification is by the Law, God must be "the God of the Jews only," since God only gave the Law to the Jews. Paul's point was that there are not two ways of salvation, one for the Jews by works and the other for Gentiles by faith.

Do we then nullify the law through faith (v. 31)? Certainly not! As we have seen, the law *anticipated* the coming gospel of justification by faith, apart from the deeds of the law. Therefore, the gospel *upholds the law*, by insisting that its utmost demands have been fully met thus fulfilling its own predictions.

¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Romans, 2017 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 54

² Ibid. p. 59

³ Ibid. p. 60