

Romans 2:17-3:20

Verses 17-29:

7) Paul will show that the Jews do not escape God's judgment through their religion.

--Now, Paul knew this Jewish elitist mentality better than anyone because it was his life story!

--Here he is pointing out their sinful duplicity with accusations that are likely historical (as a people group) and personal (individual).

--The applications to the Jewish, God-ordained, yet empty religious profession and that of modern Christianity are similar enough that we should be challenged to make our calling and election sure. *Are we just religious—just going through the motions?*

--In **17-24** we see the Jewish religion as intellectual and in **25-29** we see the Jewish religion as ceremonial. Both are void without the spiritual!

Verses 17-24:

--There is a very interesting structure in this first section. Paul gives five Jewish privileges (**17-18**), followed by five subsequent duties they felt necessary based off those privileges (**19-20**), which he follows with five challenging questions (**21-23**), and the final summation of it all (**24**).

--(**17-24**) The typical Jew boasted of knowing the True God, His will, of being able to approve the *best* things over simply *good* things, and having that instruction was able to teach the blind, darkened, foolish, babies ignorant of God's truth.

--This prideful idea of guiding the blind was part of Jesus' indictment of the religious leaders of His day.

Matthew 23:16-17+19: Woe to you, blind guides. . . Fools and blind!. . . Fools and blind!

***John 9:39-41: And Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind."**

Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, "Are we blind also?"

Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains."

--The problem with their boasting was that their truth was not seen clearly and it was only intellectual and not actual. Their knowledge of God's law did not mean they had personal possession of those truths the law revealed. *Because we have a verse memorized doesn't meant we *know* that truth.*

--Paul then points out their hypocrisy. They liked the "idea" of God's law but not the actuality of God's law. *As Americans like "work" + "humility" + "prayer" as ideals but not as much as realities.*

--Paul quotes from **Isaiah 52:5** and points out that the Gentiles would see their wickedness and suppose that they must be like that because that is what their God is like (as in context to defeat a people in battle is to defeat their god). In so doing they were a bad testimony.

--Of course, this hypocritical reality was ultimately proven in their treatment of Jesus Christ. How their highest religious leaders hounded, hated, and eventually murdered He who was the fulfillment of the law!

--So, far from justifying them before God's judgment, their relation to the law only caused God's name to be blasphemed among the Gentiles because of their general pride, selfishness, covetousness, and hypocrisy. *There will always be this element in the church—yet you can still follow Jesus.*

Verses 25-29:

--(25) Here Paul makes it clear that they cannot rest in the ceremonial action of circumcision either. To carry the sign of obedience in their flesh while living in the reality of disobedience was a grave sin! The mark of separation is only good if one was actually separated to God in heart and life.

--Circumcision without obedience was of no value then or now. *Similar to how some today rest in the ceremonial actions of church attendance, communion, giving, baptism, etc.*

--(26-27) This was of course most clearly seen in the life of Abraham who was given the promises before he was given the sign of circumcision. But Jesus also brings up uncircumcised examples of the same principle saying:

****Matthew 12:41-42: The men of Ninevah will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.****

--Even in the OT the spiritual significance of circumcision was made clear:

****Deuteronomy 10:16: Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.****

****Jeremiah 9:25-26: "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that I will punish all who are circumcised with the uncircumcised—Egypt, Judah, Edom, the people of Ammon, Moab, and all who are in the farthest corners, who dwell in the wilderness. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart."****

--To have a form of obedience but an inner reality of disobedience took away all the glory and boasting and privilege of the Jew. Sadly, are told that this will also be the resounding rebuke from God in the last days for the church as well! ***2 Timothy 3:1-5***

--(28-29) The true Jew that God was always looking for was not the person who simply had a physical heritage and cultural appropriation of God's commands (Korah, Ahab, Judas, etc...) but the man or woman who actually pleased God.

Romans 3: 1-20

Verses 1-8:

--Paul now anticipates a few questions from the religious Jew.

--First is someone saying: "If one is to please God by being a Jew inwardly (spiritually), and be circumcised of heart, is there any advantage to being a Jew outwardly (physically)?"

--(1-4) You would think Paul would say *No* but he says: *Yes!* (As do many Scriptures: **Ps. 147:20; Isa. 5:5-6; Amos 3:2-3; Mt. 22:1-8; Lk. 13:6; 14:16-17+24**).

--First and foremost, they had God's truth and purpose in His **oracles** (See also **9:4-5**). They had many blessings but the apostle lists the Word of God as their true advantage.

Ephesians 2:11-12: *Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*

--Unfortunately, Paul admits that **some did not believe** the oracles of God in history or in relation to the Messiah! They proved unfaithful and prideful. Therefore they established God's judgments—as declared in His Word—as just.

--Did the unbelief of some Jews ever prove the unfaithfulness of God?

--Paul says **Certainly not!** Or your Bible may say, *God forbid!* The idea of the language is really *Let it never be thought so!* or *Banish the thought!*

--This was not a simple truth for those it seemed to strip of divine privilege. God made certain promises to Israel as a people group, and continued the nation as such, but not to every individual who made up the nation. Each had to enter through faith.

--Even though the Jews as a whole had rejected the truths given to them, their rejection was not universal. Individual Jews did believe and receive the blessings promised and when Jews did not believe the truth of the Word of God was not shaken—His purpose was not altered. Even their unbelief was foretold—just as our falling away is predicted in our day and age!

--(4) This quote is from **Psalms 51:4** and David is admitting that God's character does not change. He judges sin and also forgives the repentant sinner.

--(5-6) If God turns human sin to His own purposes is it wrong for Him to judge that sin? ***I speak as a man*** means Paul is just saying what people say in their hearts.

--His answer: *Banish the thought!* How could He then be the Judge of the world if He didn't fairly judge His own people according to His own Word?

--God simply promises to counteract the purposed sin of man in His ultimate plan.

Lewis (The problem of Pain): "For you will certainly carry out God's purpose, however you act, but it makes a difference to you whether you serve like Judas or like John."

--People cannot rest their unbelief or unrighteousness on the Word of God. Only on their own wickedness.

--(7-8) This is something Paul no doubt heard—we can assume all his ‘reasonings’ with people were intellectual and rational but that is not true—often in his ministry. Even so, Paul doesn’t even really give an answer to this ridiculous objection but just condemns it!

--Doing evil that good may possibly come does not change the character of the evil. If that were true, the worst sinner would be the same as the best saint.

Verses 9-18:

--Having now brought all Jews and Gentiles under sin Paul finishes up with a fourteen point indictment of all men. Newell in his commentary on Romans has this heading on the section: *Fourteen horrible things about all men.*

--Paul lays out this grouping of OT Scriptures to sum up the case already established: Jews and Gentiles are all under sin and inexcusable before God.

--**As it is written** tells us that what the prophets declared of human nature then was—and is—still true of human nature now. We have not ‘progressed’ morally.

*Scroogie (Salvation and Behavior): *“The pride of man rebels against the truth about himself, but in so doing he is despising the grace of God, and is incurring the wrath of God.”**

--I see this little section as broken down into three small segments: Sinful motives (10-12); Sinful speech (13-14); Sinful actions (15-18). All of these prove Paul’s point of **all under sin**.

--(10-12) Man is broken at the very core. He isn’t born good and then corrupted. He is born corrupted and separated from God. This is evidenced in his deepest motives.

*Psalm 51:5: ***I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.****

*Isaiah 53:6: ***Al we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way.****

--The word **unprofitable** was used for rotting fruit.

--(13-14) Notice that men often think very little of sins of speech, but God apparently thinks very seriously about our: **throat, tongue, lips, mouth**, etc. and Paul goes right to the tongue in his case to prove the sinful nature of man.

--The opening up of the mouth is like opening up the place of a rotting corpse.

--The tongue has a heart source and a hell source. *Just look at Social media, Politics, or the sidelines at Youth sporting events!*

*Psalm 10:7 (Said of the wicked): ***His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and oppression; under his tongue is trouble and iniquity.****

--(15-18) Here we have a description of bad outward fruit. Actions prove the life of the tree.

--Shedding blood; Destruction of purpose and joy; Lack of God ordained experience; No supernatural reverence.

*Isaiah 59:8: ***The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their ways; they have made themselves crooked paths; whoever takes that way shall not know peace.****

--Doesn’t the world promise this path of peace? Don’t be deceived.

Verses 19-20:

--(19) The law—God’s oracles—was given to the Jews for *all the world* and has placed all before God as guilty. The law demands a person love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and body. Therefore, all stand condemned before the law and before God.

--People like to talk about the sins of others, and point out that others are guilty before them, but mouths stop once we are faced with our own sins. The law proves that no one is guiltless before God.

--All judgment will take place *before God*. Sinners are very “Smart” and “Prideful” and “Confident” now, but they won’t be one day as they kneel before God. We ought to find our proper standing before God now.

1 Peter 3:18: *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.*

--(20) The law proves sin but does not give life. It reveals sin but does not cure it. Even then, the recognition of our sin is not salvation. Think of how hard it is to convince men of idolatry and paganism to repent; let alone men tied to a divinely established system.

Galatians 2:16 & 5:18: *Knowing that a man is not justified by works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified...But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

--Paul has now brought his argument to completion. He has all men under sin. God’s plan never changed. It was always the path of faith. The law was meant to augment that path of faith.

Galatians 3:22: *But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.*

--God gives us all of these truths to awaken men out of false hopes in themselves. At the judgment day (**Revelation 20**) there will be no such preaching or pleading or reasoning!