

The Christian Manual: Study 4, Romans 3

Romans Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA



Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible ask the questions and let the students answer. Where they cannot, you supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

Introduction: Who Can Stand In God's Judgment?

Chapter 3 Is Anyone Right With God?

Section 1: Romans 3: 1-8 The Jewish Advantage

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

³What if some were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God's faithfulness? ⁴Not 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."

⁵But 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.)⁶Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world? ⁷Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?" ⁸Why not say—as some slanderously claim that we say—"Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is just!

After Paul makes a point, he will often go back and answer the arguments that people might bring up against him. These were probably the most often arguments that Jews brought up in synagogues as he reasoned with them about the gospel.

The first argument is—what advantage is there to being a Jew if they are also condemned?

Paul explains that the Jews are a blessed people. They have been entrusted with the very words of God. Consider what this really means. The Creator Who spoke all things into existence decided to reach out to mankind through the Jews. He entrusted them with His words and used them to teach His character and to explain His salvation.

Paul often used the writings of the Old Testament to explain God's wonderful plan of salvation. From Genesis 3 to Malachi we have the unfolding plan of God to reconcile man to Himself through the Christ.

The second question is—does the Jew's unfaithfulness nullify God's faithfulness? Since no Jew can live up to the Law, is God unjust? Absolutely not. God is a holy God. His Law is a holy Law. Just because it is not livable by fallen man does not make it any less perfect. The fault is not in the Law or in God, it is in sinful man.

The third question is similar to the second. If our sinfulness is a contrast to God's holiness, and we are illustrating His righteousness, then is God right to bring His wrath on us? After all, we're doing Him a favor. This kind of argument shows a complete misunderstanding of God. We must never forget that God is going to judge the world. This is not just words. All will stand before God in judgment and all will be found wanting.

The last question is, if we're making Him look better and bring Him glory, then He should cut us some slack. As Paul says, this argument is so ridiculous, those who say this are justly condemned. They put God in their debt and expect Him to pay up. How silly.

Section 2: Romans 3:9-20 The Bad News: None are Righteous

⁹What 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.¹⁰As 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.

¹²All 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,

¹⁷and the way of peace they do not know."

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

¹⁹Now 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.

In his book, *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoyevsky has two men talking about whether someone they know is a good man. One of them declares, "If one look at men in all ways—are there many good ones left?"¹ Paul would respond that when you look at men from all sides, you will see that no one is good. All men—Jews and Gentiles—are under sin. The Jews by the Law of God, which they cannot live and the Gentile by the law written on their own hearts.

In order to finally show the Jews that this is true, Paul quotes the Scripture. He begins by quoting Psalm 14:1-3, 53:1-3, and Ecclesiastes 7:20

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¹¹ there is no one who understands;
there is no one who seeks God.
¹² All have turned away,
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He then quotes Psalm 5:9 and Psalm 140:3

¹ *Crime and Punishment*, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, pg. 121

¹³ "Their throats are open graves;
their tongues practice deceit."
"The poison of vipers is on their lips."
He goes on to quote Psalm 10:7

¹⁴ "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."
¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood;
¹⁶ ruin and misery mark their ways,

And continues with Isaiah 59:7-8

¹⁷ and the way of peace they do not know."

He finishes with Psalm 36:1

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

Notice some things about this section. These stitched together verses demonstrate that this is not one idea from one place in the Old Testament pulled out of context. This is a theme found throughout the Old Testament. Some try to build a theology based on one Scripture. This is called Proof Texting and it is to be avoided. The great themes of God—the theology of the Bible—is well

attested in many places. The theme of the Old Testament is that no one is righteous.

Paul brings his argument to a close explaining that the Law is for those under the Law—the Jews. And according to the Law there is no one who is righteous for by the Law we know our sin. The Law exposes sin.

Section 3: Romans 3:21-31 We Have Seen the Bad News, Now for the Good News

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.

The words, “But now . . .” are two of the most wonderful words ever spoken to man. Up until the time of Jesus, there was no hope that Jews or Gentiles could possibly become righteous in themselves. The inward law convicted the Gentile and the Law of God convicted the Jew. All men were justly condemned.

But now, this is all changed.

God has revealed another way. It is not a new way, something that God put together at the last minute. This was the plan all along. Christ was crucified before the creation (1 Peter 1:20). Although this way was not in plain sight, there were many signposts pointing to it in the Old Testament. Some have counted over three hundred prophecies that directly point to Jesus and the salvation to come through Him. We also have the Law—the sacrificial system, the Tabernacle and Temple, and the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King which all point to Jesus. Jesus is the culmination of the Old Testament (Matthew 5:17). C. S. Lewis ends his novel, *Till We Have Faces*, with the main character finally understanding that she was created to be face to face with God. As she dies, she writes: “I

ended my first book with the words, ‘no answer.’ I know now, Lord, why you utter no answer. You are Yourself the answer.”²

God knew all of history before it began. He knew that sinful mankind could never live up to righteousness. He knew that there would have to be another way, apart from personal righteousness for man to be in relationship with Him.

One might ask, if God knew man would sin, why did He create the universe this way in the first place? Why did He put the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil in the garden? We need to understand that God has one goal—to reveal Himself (we call this, to glorify Himself). God created a universe that most fully reveals all aspects of His character. God is righteous and holy, but He is also patient and loving and forgiving. This universe, where man sins and God Himself lays down His life to save them, most completely demonstrates God’s amazing character.

Righteousness—being right with God—has only one source. This is faith in Jesus. Believing in Jesus’ death for our sins is the only way a person can stand before God.

The Jew and the Gentile are on equal footing. All have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God. They both are condemned on the basis of their own merits. They both need a way to God that is not predicated upon their perfect performance to law. Jesus is the answer to both.

Salvation is not magic. It is not God saying He is no longer concerned with the seriousness of sin. God has met the gravity of

sin in sending His Son to die as a supreme sacrifice for the sins of mankind. Why did God do this? He did it to show His righteousness. Before Christ, people were declared righteous by the faith they had in the revelation they had (like Abraham). But now that Jesus has come and taught and died for sin, God expects all to come through faith in Him. This makes Him just (able to keep the standard of the Law) and the justifier (the one who provides the way for people to stand before God). Both roles are essential to God.

This would have been very hard on Jewish ears. They had prided themselves on what they had received from God. Because of this, they had viewed themselves as a special people, better than all others. They saw Gentiles as unclean. Paul is declaring the unthinkable. Jews and Gentiles are on the same footing. There is only one God. He is the God of all men. He will save all who have faith in Christ.

The last objection of the Jew would be—then the Law, which they thought would guide them to being righteous before God, is now worthless. Paul completely disagrees. Christ is the purpose for the Law. The Law was never meant to bring righteousness. It was meant to bring people to see the grip that sin had on their life and how desperately they need a Savior.

Digging Deeper: Look at verse 25

In verse 25, Paul says that Jesus’ death was for atonement. The word atonement can be understood by pulling it apart, forming three words: at-one-ment. Atonement is the act of unifying God and man.

² *Till We Have Faces*, by C. S. Lewis, pg. 308



WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

All humanity is in the same boat. People from all races; from all cultures; from all language groups; from all religious persuasions all stand condemned before God. All are under His wrath.

All attempts to ignore this guilt are futile. We cannot erase sin/guilt by good performance. It doesn't work that way, and we know it. A convicted child molester doesn't get to take that off his/her record because they do good things afterwards. They must register as a sex offender for the rest of their lives. Sin is not wiped out by good works or by a reformed life. Manmade religions and human philosophies always fail. Everyone lives with a real sense that they are indelibly stained with sin.

The most compassionate thing we can do is tell people the truth—explain that their guilt is real. We need to share with them that they feel guilty because they are guilty before the holy God Who is really there. We need to tell them that there is nothing they have to offer to God that will overcome this sin and guilt.

But God Himself has created a way through His Son. Christ paid the price for our sin. He, the perfect One, sacrificed Himself, taking our place on the altar. Through faith in Him, His sacrifice is applied to our sin, and His righteousness becomes ours. When a Jewish person brought a sacrifice, they brought a lamb without blemish, perfect. They placed it on the altar. The worshipper placed his hands on the lamb's head and pressed down. There was a switch. The sin of the worshipper when on the lamb and the perfection went on the worshipper. Then the lamb was killed—the sin received its just punishment. This is what happens in Christ.



CONNECT: Icebreaker

There is a common belief in our culture that salvation is not something that comes from outside ourselves (i.e. from God or from the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross).

Richard Bach wrote:

“I want to say, for the love of God, if you want freedom and joy so much, can't you see it's not anywhere outside of you? Say you have it, and you have it! Act as if it's yours, and it is!”

Illusions, pg. 51-52

For your activity tonight you will all roll-play a debate between two people who believe this and two Christians who believe the Bible when it comes to salvation. Divide up into groups of four, boys with boys and girls with girls.

Spend ten minutes debating and then switch roles. What did you learn? Share out in the larger group.



WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Section 1 Read Romans 3:1-8

Paul answers questions that he probably heard often in the synagogues he taught in when sharing the gospel. What advantage is there to being a Jew if we are all condemned? The Jews were entrusted with God's very Word. He then deals with questions of the Jew's faithfulness and unfaithfulness and how this relates to God.

Section 2 Read Romans 3:9-20

Paul finishes his argument about the position of the Jews before God by showing that this is the declaration throughout the Scriptures. No Jews are righteous.

The final purpose of the Law is revealed. It was not given to the Jews to show them how to please God with perfect obedience, rather it was to show the Jews (and everyone else) that perfect obedience to God's Law was impossible for sinful man.

Section 3 Read Romans 3:21-31

We now see the two most wonderful words in the human language—"But now." Paul shows that God had another plan all along. While sinful man could not live up to the Law of God, God Himself could. Whereas man's sin infinitely separated him from God, an infinite sacrifice could pay the price and secure redemption. Whereas Jews and Gentiles were both condemned by their sin, God is the god of all and now has paved a way back to Him through His Son. This is the good news of the gospel.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Section 1 Read Romans 3:1-8

1. What questions would the Jews have asked Paul and how did he answer them?
2. How would the world be different if God had not spoken to and worked with the Jewish people?

Section 2 Read Romans 3:9-20

1. Why does Paul quote so many different Old Testament books to prove his point? What does this tell us about our use of Scripture?
2. How are the Jews and Gentiles similar? Why would God want this to be so? What does this mean for us? What does it mean for our friends and families who do not know Christ? What does this do for our self-reliance?
3. What was the real purpose of the Law? How can we use this when we are sharing the gospel with others?

Section 3 Read Romans 3:21-31

1. What is meant by the statement, "All have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God"? What does this do to pride?
2. What is the way of salvation for all men? When did this way start? How is this related to the Old Testament?
3. How can God now be both Just and the Justifier of all who come to Him through Christ? What do we learn about God?
4. We hear a lot about "faith" in Christian circles. What does this mean? How is faith related to salvation?



HOW DOES IT APPLY?

We live in a world that believes there are many ways to God and that no one way is better. Marilyn Ferguson wrote that all that mankind needed was a shift in consciousness. This could be triggered in many ways, including sensory isolation, biofeedback, autogenic training, music, improvisational theater, self-help, hypnosis, meditation, seminars (like EST), psychotherapy, yoga, sports, etc. She explained, "Anything can work."³

The world does not believe that man's problem is that sin has separated them from a holy God, keeping them from the relationship for which they were created. The world believes the trick is for man to rise above guilt, to alter his consciousness so that he is free from guilt. They teach the need is enlightenment, not atonement. We now face multiple ways. So what do we do?

The best approach is to know what we have in Christ. A minister once had a couple visiting his church who were also attending EST (Erhard Seminar Training) meetings. The couple didn't know which one was really right, so they invited the minister to attend an EST meeting and they would watch what happened. The meeting when for about two hours, the EST people extolling the benefits of clearing the mind and being liberated to live in freedom. The minister asked, "What about when you die? I get everything you are boasting about for this life in Christ, but I also get eternal life with God and the riches of heaven. In your dying breaths, you will reach out to EST, but it will not help you." The meeting ended right there and the EST people quickly exited. The couple decided for Christ.

³ *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, by Marilyn Ferguson, pgs. 86-87



