

St. Paul's Letter to the Romans

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN

Romans 3:1-8

Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews are entrusted with the oracles of God. What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means! Let God be true though every man be false, as it is written, "That thou mayest be justified in thy words, and prevail when thou art judged." But if our wickedness serves to show the justice of God, what shall we say? That God is unjust to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) By no means! For then how could God judge the world? But if through my falsehood God's truthfulness abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? And why not do evil that good may come? -- as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

I. The dialogue with the Jewish Audience continues

A. God's Judgment will be based on Works not on having the Law

B. Do the Jews gain anything by being God's People

1. The privilege status has been lost by actions O.T. ideation
2. The Jews turned from God, but God is Faithful
3. God must be righteous even with Israel's sin to be God
4. God's Continued Faithfulness is further explained in Jesus Christ (3:21)

Romans 3:9-20

What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all; for I have already charged that all men, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin, as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong; no one does good, not even one." "Their throat is an open grave, they use their tongues to deceive." The venom of asps is under their lips." "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood, in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they do not know." "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the

whole world may be held accountable to God. For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

I. The Thesis of Universal Salvation

A. Paul heightens the issue of the Jewish Question so that he can move to the universal nature of God's Salvation for all that He created.

1. In the whole section the message is the same – No Advantage for the Jews

2. God is Impartial

B. Scriptures witness to the lack of Righteousness

1. Quotations from the O.T. mostly Psalms

2. This passage is probably from an earlier letter or work

This would be similar to the common phrases a preacher uses at Funeral, weddings etc.

3. There is a universal nature to this condemnation

a. Jew with the Law and fallen

b. Gentiles w/o the Law are fallen

This of note is where John Calvin Stops – the total depravity of Man vs. the image of God that is distorted but not destroyed

C. The Works of the Law – Faith Alone?

1. This is the classical Lutheran dilemma – Paul is not saying that following the law leads to a failure to find justification, since this would be in stark contrast to the principle that justification according to works is clearly stated in 2:13

2. What leads to the failure under the Law is not following the law but not following it with works and the universal denial of any law by the culture.

Faith = Good Works that reflect Faith and the Law (observant Jew)

Good Works = Faith that dwells within the person that may or may know the Law (Righteous Gentile)

Contemporary Issue – what about Atheist or Agnostic who performs Good Works are they signs of Faith for them?

Romans 3:21-26

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus.

I. A New Understanding Of Righteousness

- A. Paul uses Judgment to bring the audience face to face with the reality of God's Wrath
- B. Everyone Jew/Gentile is unrighteous
- C. At the moment of our despair, Paul proclaims the truth of Jesus Christ

II. God's Faithfulness is Revealed

- A. It is God who turns our failure into hope by the Jesus and the Cross
- B. The requirement of us – Faith in Jesus Christ
 - 1. There is no other route to Salvation – the Law was unable to save us
 - 2. It is only God's Free Gift of himself to us that saves us

Romans 3:27-31

Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On the principle of works? No, but on the principle of faith. For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of their faith and the uncircumcised through their faith. Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

I. Faith Alone!

A. Continuing to expound on his thesis

1. Law failed to Save
2. Human efforts fail to save

B. Faith in Jesus is the only route to Salvation

II. Faith Excludes Boasting

This issue is to remind us the Jewish teacher who uses words and not actions and boasts in the Law

III. Two different understandings of understanding the Law

A. The Law of Works – the people struggle (and fail) to obey the Law and follow all the actions which then would lead them to salvation – thus earning salvation

B. The Law of Faith – the people recognize that they will be unable to follow perfectly God's Law, but by Faith they trust in God and follow the precepts of the Law because in doing so their actions become acts of devotion

Summary:

Faith in God does not overthrow the Law, rather the Law is perfected when its precepts are followed by people with Faith who worship God in Jesus Christ and not the Law itself.