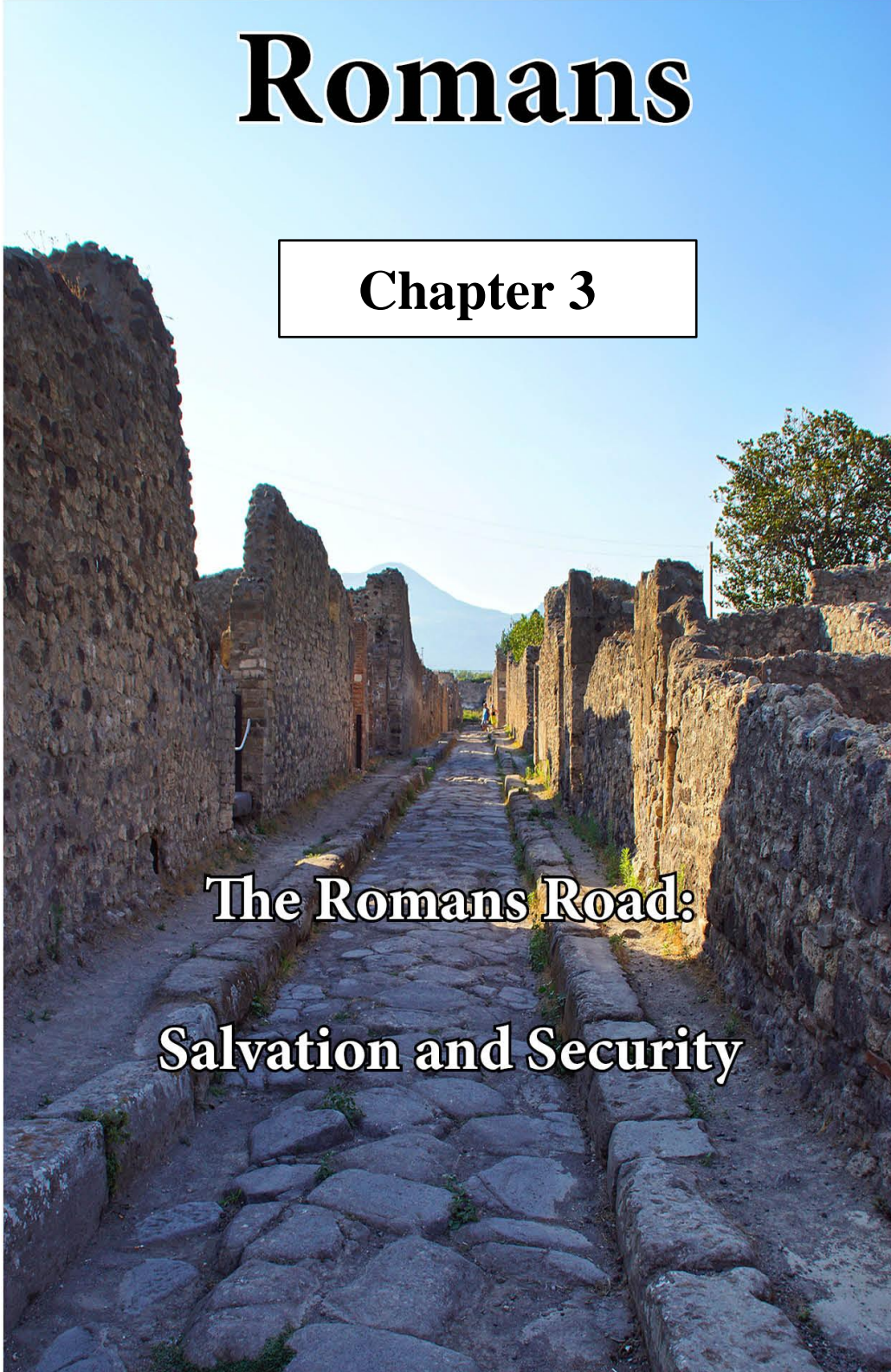


Journeys With God

Romans

Chapter 3

**The Romans Road:
Salvation and Security**



Romans

Chapter 3 Summary

Romans 3:1 - The Profit Statement

What superiority then has the Jew, or what *is* the advantage of circumcision?

Truth to Learn

Though we are special in God's eyes, we need to be humble.

Behind the Words

The word translated "superiority" is *perisos* which is based on *peri*, meaning "around" or "above." *Perisos* refers to "that which is beyond, above, over, or superior." Hence, we have translated this "superiority."

"Advantage" is from the Greek word *ōpheleia*, referring to "a profit, an increase, or an advantage." So Paul is really asking, "What is the advantage of being circumcised?"

Meaning Explained

Paul has just finished telling the Jewish Christians in Rome that the real test of Judaism is the internal attitude, not outward physical or ancestral indicators. He will now carry on his discourse of justification by faith. First, however, he needs to answer some objections that might be made against what he has just said about Jews.

Jews have historically considered themselves superior because they were the keepers of God's word in the Tanakh (our Old Testament), consisting of the Torah (five books of Moses), the Neviym (the prophets), and the Ketuvim (writings). They also believed themselves special because, through Abraham, their circumcision is a sign of the covenant that God has made with them. In the next verse Paul will, in fact, even affirm these facts. The Jewish people could even refer to the Scriptures to show that God also considered them special and different from all others:

Blessed are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD, the shield of your help and He who is the sword of your excellency! Your enemies are subdued for you, and you shall walk on their high places. (**Deuteronomy 33:29**)

And you shall become to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. (**Exodus 19:6**)

As a result, the early Christians, who were predominantly converted Jews, believed themselves to be better than even their unsaved fellow countrymen. Paul is not trying to tell these Jewish Christians that their heritage and faith in God are wrong. Instead, he is telling them that their justification before God is not wrapped up in obeying a set of laws or ceremonial practices.

Based on what Paul has just said, a Jewish Christian might well reply, "But, if the Gentiles can attain righteousness apart from being a Jew and apart from circumcision, then what benefit is there in being a Jew or of being circumcised?" In anticipation of these questions, Paul here rhetorically states these very objections. In the next few verses he will answer these questions.

Application

Once again, we need to apply what Paul was saying to these Jewish Christians of the first century church to our own lives. We are no better than any unsaved person living around us today. We are sinners just like they are. We are guilty and deserve the same eternal torment as they will

receive. The only difference between us and them is that the blood of Christ has been applied to our account. Our debt has been paid! Praise be to God for His mercy and grace!

Romans 3:2 - The Entrusted Word

Much in every way! Primarily, because the oracles of God were entrusted to them.

Truth to Learn

God entrusts His message to those He loves.

Behind the Words

“Primarily” is translated from *prōton*, which means “first in time, place, order, or importance.” Since Paul does not enumerate further, this could be translated as “primarily” or “chiefly.”

The Greek word translated “oracles” is *logian*. The root of this word is *logos*, which refers to “a word” or “something said.” Hence, *logian* refers to “an utterance or something declared by God.”

The word “entrusted” is translated from the Greek word *pisteuō*, which means “to have faith” or “to believe.” The word is expressed here in the passive voice, however, indicating action done to them. Therefore, this word implies that God had faith in them, or “entrusted” them.

Meaning Explained

Paul now answers his own rhetorical question regarding whether there is any superiority in being a Jew or in being circumcised. He says, “Yes, there most certainly is!” Then he goes on to explain why he believes that. He says that the primary advantage of being a Jew is the fact that the Jews have been entrusted with the oracles of God.

In other words, the primary advantage of being a Jew is the fact that they have been given the very words of God for safe keeping. By this he is referring to the Hebrew Tanakh, that is, what we call the Old Testament.

Notice Paul does not say that the Jews were the only people that God talked to. After all, there are quite a number of non-Jews (like Job, for instance) to whom God communicated directly. But the only written utterances of God (at the time that Paul was writing this epistle) were contained in the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, as we discussed yesterday. This made them (the Jews) the keepers of God’s revelation to mankind, an honor not to be taken too lightly.

One unmistakable advantage of this is something that we have alluded to in previous verses. Most of the converts to Christianity in the early church were Jews. Because they had the sacred writings, the Holy Scriptures, at their disposal, they knew more about God and His dealings with mankind. They also knew about the Messiah who was to come and save the Jews (and Gentiles). As a result, when Paul and others preached the gospel to them, it was easier for them to understand the significance of His death on the cross.

Today we Christians have been entrusted with the sacred writings of God more completely than the Jews of Paul’s day were. Let us not lose sight of the fact that these “oracles of God” have been entrusted to our care!

Application

The next time you pick up your Bible, consider how precious a book it is. In it is the message of God's love for you, a love so great that He sacrificed His Son so that we can know Him and have intimate fellowship with Him. Hallelujah!

Romans 3:3 - Ya Gotta Believe

For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?

Truth to Learn

Salvation and our relationship with God are all about faith.

Behind the Words

The word translated “not believe” is *apisteō*, a compound verb made up of the privative *a*, meaning “not” and *pisteō*, meaning “to believe” or “to have faith.”

The noun “unbelief” is from *apistia*, a noun made up of the privative *a*, meaning “not” or “un” and a form of *pistos*, meaning “faith” or “belief.”

“Faithfulness” is translated from *pistis*, which comes from the verb *peithō* meaning “to win over” or “to persuade.” In other words, it means “to be persuaded,” that is, “to believe.”

Paul is very fond of using words playfully (meaningfully, but playfully). Here he is playing on the word *pistis* (faith) and its verb forms *pisteuō* (to believe) and *apisteō* (to not believe). In the previous verse the passive form of *pisteuō* was used to indicate that God “entrusted” the Holy Writings to the Jews. And here he asks if the “unbelief” (*apistia*) of the Jews would cancel out the “faithfulness” (*pistis*) of God.

Meaning Explained

In the first chapter of this letter to the Christians in Rome, Paul clearly articulated the fact that the Gentiles are sinners and that they are guilty before God and without excuse. In the second chapter he made a very clear case against the Jews, showing that they also were guilty before God without excuse. And, even though many of the early Christians were converted Jews, Paul makes it very clear that when it comes to being righteous before God, the Jews had no advantage over the Gentiles.

In the first verse of this third chapter, Paul posed a rhetorical question and he proceeded to answer it in verse two. He now poses another rhetorical question that a Jewish Christian might ask him. Since there were so many Jews who did not believe in Jesus, the Messiah, when He came, what good did it do for the Jews to be keepers of the oracles?

Paul says, in effect, “So what if some (many) did not believe in Jesus? Does that mean that God is not faithful in saving His special people (the Jews)?” As he showed in general during the first two chapters, Paul will point out several verses from now very specifically that both Jews and Gentiles are guilty of sin. Because there is none righteous, Jew or Gentile, neither group is deserving of salvation.

Do you notice that? None of us **deserves** salvation. Paul will make this abundantly clear. God doesn’t judge any of us to be righteous based on our actions or our deeds, but on a single act of obedience by Jesus Christ.

Application

Sooner or later each one of us has to face the question: Are you good enough for God to let you into heaven? There are many people who, when asked this question, will say, “Of course, I’ve

done the best I can. What more can God expect of anyone?” But “the best I can” isn’t good enough since God expects perfection. Since none of us is perfect, none of us deserves heaven. God has entrusted us with the Holy Bible. If we ignore it, we’re lost. If we read it and believe that Jesus died to pay for our sins, then God judges us to be perfect.

It’s all about believing (*pisteuō*).

Romans 3:4 - God is True

Certainly not! But let God be true and every man a liar. As it is written: "That you should be justified in your words, and *you* may prevail when you are judged."

Truth to Learn

God is true and always does what is right.

Behind the Words

"**Certainly not!**" is translated from the two Greek words *mē genoito*, which literally mean "may it not have come to pass." I suppose in today's vernacular we would say, "No way!" This is an expression used often by Paul when he wants to emphatically say "no!"

The words "**let ... be**" are from the Greek verb *ginomai*, which is a verb of being, roughly meaning "to come into existence" or simply "to be." It is expressed here in the imperative mood, indicating the force of a command. The way we express this in English is to use the word "let." The phrase "let God be true" does not mean "allow God to be true" but "God is true!" or even "God is truth!"

Meaning Explained

Paul now answers the second rhetorical question that he posed, "So what if some (many) did not believe in Jesus? Does that mean that God is not faithful in saving His special people (the Jews)?" His answer is, "No way!"

He then enforces what he just said by declaring, "God is true, and every man is a liar;" Paul follows with a quote from Psalms.

This Psalm was written in response to God's judgment David received through Nathan the prophet. David had lusted after Bathsheba, the wife of a man in his army and had committed adultery with her. When David discovered that she was pregnant, he had her husband placed in the most dangerous part of the battle where he was killed. Afterward, David took Bathsheba as his wife.

In his own heart David did not see anything wrong with this. But God did not allow David's sin to go unnoticed. He sent the prophet Nathan to confront David. In response, David humbled himself before God. He recognized that God is righteous and truthful and he (David) is a liar and a sinner.

Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done evil in Your eyes; that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge. (Psalms 51:4)

Just like Paul in the current passage, David did not dare call into question God's truthfulness or His righteousness. Paul's point is that God is righteous and He always does what is right and true. Therefore, if some of the Jews who had been entrusted with the Holy Writings did not believe and were ultimately judged and condemned by God, then that was the true and righteous thing to do. No one can blame God if He condemns those who do not believe because He is righteous!

There are some who ask, “How can God extend His grace to some and send others to Hell? That’s just not right.” According to Paul, it is right because God always does what is right.

Application

Oh, that we all would recognize the righteousness of our Holy God and the utter wretchedness of our own sins.

Romans 3:5 - Righteous Wrath

But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.)

Truth to Learn

God is righteous and must judge unrighteousness.

Behind the Words

The word translated “demonstrates” is *sunistēmi*, a compound word made up of *sun*, meaning “together” and *histēmi*, meaning “to stand.” Hence, it literally means “to stand together.” Usually, when this word is used with inanimate things it means “to prove, or establish.” When used of a person, however, this word means “to introduce or to present to one's acquaintance for favorable notice.” Therefore, in this context it means “to establish or to demonstrate.”

“Inflicts” is from the Greek word *epipherō*, which is made up of *epi*, meaning “upon” or “over” and *pherō*, which means “to bring” or “to carry.” Therefore, *epipherō* literally means “to bring against.”

The word “wrath” is translated from *orgē*, which is based on a word that means “excitement of the mind” or “violent passion.” *Orgē* is nearly always translated as “wrath.” It is a word that shows the action which results from anger. In God's case it is always righteous anger and, therefore, righteous wrath.

Meaning Explained

This can be very confusing so follow me carefully. Paul has just stated two rhetorical questions that would be objections by Jews to his current discourse. The Jewish Christians in Rome would be following his logic to this point. They might well concede that some (even many) Jews had not believed. They would also concede that God was true to his promises and His character, thereby judging sin. As a result of this, the character of God, as a just being, would shine out illustriously.

A careful follower of this reasoning might then argue that Paul was saying that God is glorified by man's sin. In anticipation of this argument, Paul asks another rhetorical question which we could paraphrase as:

But if our unrighteousness shows the worthiness of God's righteousness, what can we say against Him? Is God unrighteous who brings forth His wrath against unrighteousness?

Obviously, we can't condemn God for displaying His righteous wrath against sin. That is the very character of God. He is holy and just. He abhors sin and must judge it because He is a righteous God (He always does what is right).

But Paul is not through with his reasoning against the pride of the Jewish Christians in Rome. In the following verses he will continue his stern discourse.

These past few verses and the ones to follow comprise a difficult passage of scripture to understand. However, if we hang in there I'm sure we will all get a much better understanding of what Paul is teaching us.

Application

When we realize that we are sinners and that God is a righteous God who must judge sin, we recognize that we are deserving of God's judgment and wrath. But because of the shed blood of Christ, when we confess our sin God cleanses us of all unrighteousness (see **1John 1:9**). Praise God!

Romans 3:6 - Righteous Judge

Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world?

Truth to Learn

Our righteous God will one day judge everyone.

Behind the Words

“**Certainly not!**” is from the Greek words *mē genoito*, which we explained in verse four. However, what we didn’t mention there is that this is expressed in the rare “optative mood,” which is a use that expresses a separation from reality as much as any mood in Greek. In other words, Paul is saying that there is no possible way that this could be reality. It is an expression that is a particular favorite of the Apostle Paul. Of the 15 times this expression is found in the Bible, 14 of them are in his writings.

The verb translated “**judge**” is the Greek word *krinō*. The basic meaning of this word is “to separate or to distinguish between good and evil.” It is a judicial word that implies a trial and frequently is used to denote condemnation and punishment.

Meaning Explained

Keep in mind that Paul is posing and answering rhetorical questions that the Jewish Christians in Rome would likely have expressed against his treatise on the advantages and disadvantages of being a Jew. His rhetorical question in the previous verse was,

But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.)

His response to this question is, “**Certainly not!**” What Paul is saying is that God is in no way unrighteous in his judgment of sin, even though such judgment glorifies Him. It is not wrong for God to receive glory as a result of our sinfulness; otherwise, how could He judge the world? To the Jewish mind it is an unarguable fact that God will someday judge the world.

And we Christians also know from the New Testament writings that the Creator will one day judge all sin and will condemn all sinners to the lake of fire. But we also know that those who have humbled themselves at the foot of the cross, having accepted the sacrifice of Jesus as payment for their sins, will not receive this judgment. Instead, because of our faith, we have already been declared as righteous.

Paul will talk more about this righteousness which has been credited to us later in this chapter. He will even show that such righteousness is ours through faith:

even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, toward all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; (Romans 3:22)

Remember that God is holy, meaning that He is set apart from sin and sinfulness. It is part of what He is. God cannot do wrong because of His holiness. That’s why Jesus, as completely man and completely God at the same time, could not commit a sin, which is also why He was able to sacrifice His life for us – the sinless One for the sinners.

Application

Every man, woman, and child will stand before the Judge one day. Only those who are as righteous as Jesus Christ will be spared from the Lake of Fire. In just a few verses Paul will declare that none of us is righteous except through faith in Christ. Do you have that righteousness?

Romans 3:7 - The Truth Judge

For if in my lie the truth of God has abounded to His glory, why am I still being judged as a sinner?

Truth to Learn

We are sinners and God will judge sinners.

Behind the Words

The word “lie” is translated from the Greek word *pseusma*, which is based on the verb *pseudomai*, meaning “to speak an untruth” or “to attempt to deceive by falsehood.” Therefore, *pseusma* refers to “a lie” or “a falsehood.”

“Abounded” is from the Greek word *perisseuō*, which is based on the preposition *peri*, meaning “around, through, or over.” *Perisseuō*, means “to be in excess,” “to be overly abundant,” or “to have more than enough.”

Meaning Explained

Paul now states another rhetorical question that could be asked by those who argue against his line of reasoning. The argument could be stated like this: “Hey, Paul, if God is shown to be true by judging my sin and He receives glory for it, then my sin really isn’t bad, is it? If it glorifies God, it must be OK!”

The fallacy of that argument is that the act of sin does not glorify God any more than someone committing murder glorifies the court system. It is the fact that God judges the act of sin just as He said He would (God is shown to be true to His word) that glorifies Him. In the same manner, punishing a murderer glorifies the court system because the court has fulfilled its stated purpose and responsibility.

Some might claim that in the current verse Paul is confessing to be a liar, but that is not the case. You will recall back in verse five he said:

God is true but every man a liar.

That is to say, there is no one who tells the truth all the time, except God. Therefore, every man is a liar. And, if every man is a liar, then that includes Paul.

In effect, what Paul was saying back in verse 4 is, “God is true! And every man is a liar. Therefore man cannot nullify the faithfulness of God.” It is the fact that God is true, i.e. He always does just what He said He would do which brings glory to Him, not our sinfulness.

Also, God’s truth is what separates Christians from the rest of mankind. In John’s gospel he related the prayer that Jesus prayed for his disciples after the Last Supper. In that prayer Jesus said:

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. (John 17:17)

We have been set apart ... from sin and to God (that’s what “sanctify” means). Believing the gospel message is what sets us apart because that message is truth.

Application

Once again, we are brought face to face with how holy our God is and how sinful we are. And, it is absolutely amazing that a Holy God who judges sin manages to find a way for sinners like us to avoid His judgment. He sent His Son to sacrifice His perfect life so that my sins and yours could be forgiven. How great is His love and how marvelous is His grace!

I am as grateful as I am unworthy! And that's the truth!

Romans 3:8 - Misrepresented Truth

And not *say*, "Let us do evil that good may result"—as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.

Truth to Learn

All sin will be judged, no matter what our excuse may be.

Behind the Words

The phrase “Let us do” is translated from the verb *poieō*, meaning “to make” or “to do.” If you have followed our teaching on the use of the word “let,” you might assume that this verb is written in the imperative mood (a command), but it isn’t. It is expressed in the subjunctive mood, which indicates possibility or probability. So the quote might be translated as “We should do evil that good may come.”

“Slanderously reported” is from the Greek verb *blasphēmeō*, meaning “to speak evil of” or “to intentionally damage someone else’s reputation.” When used against God, this verb is often translated “blaspheme.”

The word translated “affirm” is the Greek verb *phēmi*. It is based on the obsolete verb *phaō*, meaning “to shine.” *Phēmi* means “to bring to light by speech” or “to make known one’s thoughts.”

Meaning Explained

In the previous verses Paul has taught that God is not glorified when someone commits sin; God is glorified when He judges sin. It is His act of judgment, in keeping with who He is, that brings Him glory. But the Jesuits of the first century, among others, had perverted Paul’s teaching on this subject claiming that Paul and the other Apostles were teaching that we all ought to sin greatly so that God would be greatly glorified. After all, as Paul surely had stated before and will later proclaim in this epistle:

But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more. (**Romans 5:20**)

Paul taught that God, in the salvation of people, would be glorified in proportion to the depth and pollution of the guilt which was forgiven. This is true, but how easy it is to misrepresent this as teaching that people ought to sin in order to promote God’s glory! You see, instead of stating it as an inference, which they drew from the doctrine, those who attacked Paul’s teaching declared that Paul taught we ought to sin to bring glory to God. He counters that argument right here by openly exposing the falsehood of what others say about his doctrine. At the same time, he openly declares that those who attack him will receive condemnation. He is also convinced that the condemnation that these false accusers will receive is appropriate because they perverted the truth of God for their own purposes.

Application

We are all sinners, so when our lives are compared to the perfect life that Christ lived we will all be found guilty as sinners and it will be shown that our righteousness is like filthy rags. For the past few verses Paul’s teaching has been “God will judge every sin of every man.” Those sins will either have been judged at the cross and declared as fully paid for (everyone who believes

and accepts this sacrificial gift) or the sins will be judged and the sinners declared guilty at the coming Great White Throne, where the payment for sins will be eternity in the lake of fire.

Where will your sins be judged?

Romans 3:9 - Sinners All

What then? Are we better *than they*? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks are all under sin.

Truth to Learn

None of us is better than any other sinner.

Behind the Words

“Are we better” is translated from a single Greek word, *proechomai*. This is a compound word made up of *pro*, meaning “before, or in front of” and a form of *echo*, meaning “to have, or to be.” Figuratively, this word means “to have preference or preeminence,” that is, “to be superior.” The difficulty with this word is that the way Paul wrote it, it could be interpreted as either in the passive voice or in the middle voice. So it could mean “are we excelled (by the Gentiles)” or “are we excelling ourselves (above the Gentiles).” Based on what Paul has said in the previous verses and what he will say in the following verses, the middle voice makes more sense. Hence, we could paraphrase this as “Do we (Jews) think that we are better than everyone else?”

The words “Not at all” are translated from *ou pantōs*. *Ou* means “no” or “not” and *pantōs* means “all the parts” or “entirely.” So we could translate this as “Entirely not.”

Meaning Explained

Paul now poses the final rhetorical question in this line of reasoning. You will recall that he is talking about the advantage of being a Jew, yet he is trying to point out to the Jewish Christians in Rome that not only is it **not** necessary to be a Jew to become a Christian, but being a direct descendent of Abraham has no bearing at all in whether a person is a Christian or not. Nonetheless, Paul demonstrated that the Jews were special because God entrusted them with the writings of the Old Testament.

Having argued that God will judge sin and will glorify Himself in doing so, and having shown that Christian doctrine does not teach that we should all sin greatly so that God will be greatly glorified when He either judges or pardons such sin, Paul now addresses the final objection: “Are Jews better than everyone else then?”

This is the root question that Paul has been trying to get to for this entire section of his argument. However, he could not have done so without guiding his readers along step by step. He then immediately answers this question, “Not at all.”

Now he says, “we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks are all under sin.” In fact, almost the entire first chapter of this epistle was dedicated to proving we’re all sinners and we have no excuse before God.

All of this groundwork has been laid so that Paul can make one of the most profound and revealing declarations in the entire Bible. He will do so by quoting the very “writings” that the Jews have been entrusted with, beginning in the next verse.

Application

Today, some Christians have the same attitude that the Jews of the first century had. Since Christians are saved, and we have the Holy Bible as our guide, we feel like we are just a little bit

better than everyone else. However, we need to keep in mind that we are just sinners saved by the grace of God. And, without God's grace we would be destined for the same lake of fire as every other sinner. That should not make us proud, it should make us humble!

Romans 3:10 - No Not One!

As it is written: There is none righteous, not even one;

Truth to Learn

None of us meets God's standard of righteousness.

Behind the Words

The words "it is written" are translated from a single Greek verb, *graphō*. This word literally means "to engrave," that is, "to write." It is expressed here in the perfect tense. This tense in Greek indicates past completed action with an ongoing effect, but the emphasis is on the effect. Hence, we could express this as "It has been written and, therefore, is now in writing."

"Righteous" is from the Greek word *dikaios*. It is based on the word *dikē*, which originally referred to a tendency. Gradually, this word came to mean "an established standard or custom." So, *dikaios* refers to someone who has met an expected standard. The standard referred to here is God's standard of behavior, always doing what is right.

Meaning Explained

Don't you just hate it when someone starts quoting Scripture at you, especially when you know they're right? Well, that's just what Paul is doing here. He is talking to Jewish Christians in Rome who very likely know the Law and the Prophets (what we call The Old Testament). He has been skillfully showing them that whether they are Jews or not, they are no better in God's eyes than anyone else. He now drops the other shoe!

He is quoting from both **Psalms 14** and **Psalms 53**, which are nearly identical. His quotation, which comprises verse ten through eighteen, is really a chain of quotations and paraphrases. Here's what Psalms 53 says:

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, and have done abominable wickedness; there is no one doing good. God looked down from heaven upon the sons of mankind, to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. Every one has turned aside; they have together become corrupt; there is no one doing good, not even one. (**Psalms 53:1-3**)

Up to this point in Paul's discourse it still would have been possible, though improbable, that some of his Jewish Christian readers might have thought themselves better than others and acceptable to God because of their lineage and their possession of the Scriptures. Now they have no leg to stand on, so to speak. Their own Scriptures clearly condemn everyone as having turned from God and having become wicked. Paul will use this and other scripture verses from the Old Testament to show these Jewish Christians that the Scriptures which had been entrusted to them by God declare even Jews to be without righteousness.

Application

Let us now stop here and consider that before accepting Christ as Savior, none of us could have stood before God innocent in any way because we haven't measured up to His standard. When we believed His gospel message and accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we were credited

with the righteousness of Christ. Without this righteousness credited to our account we are all destined for hell!

In other words, without the blood of Christ, none of us deserves heaven, not a single one of us!

Romans 3:11 - I Don't Understand!

there is no one who understands; there is no one seeking God.

Truth to Learn

We do not seek out God; He draws us to Him.

Behind the Words

The word translated “understands” is the Greek word *sunīēmi*, which is made up of *sun*, meaning “together” and *hīēmi*, meaning “to send” or “to put.” So literally this means “to send together” or “to put together.” It refers to someone mentally “putting it all together” or “understanding.”

“Seeking” is from the verb *exzēteō*. This is made up of *ek*, meaning “out” and *zēteō*, which means “to seek” or “to pursue.” Hence, *exzēteō* means “to seek out” or “to search diligently.”

Meaning Explained

In the previous verse Paul declared the first of his great doctrinal statements of the book of Romans. This is the first statement of what some have come to call “The Romans Road.” The first step in the Romans Road is, “There is none righteous, no not one.” You will recall that this is a quote from the book of Psalms.

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, and have done abominable wickedness; there is no one doing good. God looked down from heaven upon the sons of mankind, to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. Everyone has turned aside; they have together become corrupt; there is no one doing good, not even one. (**Psalms 53:1-3**)

What Paul declared in the previous verse is that there is no one who is righteous in and of himself, or herself. There is no one in the human race (save for Christ Himself) who can stand in the presence of God Almighty and claim that he or she is righteous enough to deserve heaven.

In today's verse Paul continues with his quotation, selecting a portion of **Psalms 53:2**. Not only is no one righteous, none of us understands what God wants from us. And today's verse also tells us that none of us, left to ourselves, seeks after God. In fact, were it not for the drawing forth influence of the Spirit of God, none of us would be able to come to God. We don't seek Him; He draws us to Himself.

The bottom line is that none of us deserves heaven or salvation. Not even one! In order for us to be saved, we must first realize that we are not worthy of salvation. We don't deserve it, and there is no reason why God should grant it to us apart from His grace and His grace alone!

If you have never recognized your unworthiness for God's free gift of salvation, now is the time to humble yourself before the mighty hand of God, confess your utter sinfulness, beg for His mercy, and accept His blessed gift of salvation through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Application

If you have already accepted the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the payment for your sins, then you are righteous in His eyes. But you need to realize that without the illumination of the Holy Spirit

you wouldn't even understand what God wants from you. And, you need to recognize that you were drawn to Him; you didn't come by your own effort.

Thank you Lord, for drawing me to Yourself, for allowing me to understand Your message, and for saving my soul!

Romans 3:12 - Wayward and Useless

They all turned away; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, not even one."

Truth to Learn

Doing religious things our own way is useless.

Behind the Words

The word translated, "turned away" is *ekklinō*, which is made up of *ek*, meaning "out of" and *klinō*, meaning "to bend, or to turn aside." Hence, *ekklinō* means "to turn aside out of the way." The image is of someone who is walking down a path and turns off the path. So, when we take our own path instead of the one that God desires for us, we have "turned away."

"Have become unprofitable" is the Greek word *achreioō*, which literally means, "to become useless." It is a word that is used of food which has spoiled and is no longer useful as food.

Meaning Explained

In today's verse the Apostle Paul continues his quotation from Psalms 53. He says we have all turned a way and have become useless. As a result, none of us does anything truly good; not even one of us!

Paul, like other writers of Holy Scripture, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, depicts life as a journey, walking down the pathways of life. We have God as our guide on the path as long as we are willing to listen to Him. He knows the pathway for us to take which will glorify Him. But we often ignore His leading and travel the pathways that we want to take. Inevitably, however, the path we choose leads us into trouble and we have to call out to our Guide for help. The wonderful part of this is that whenever we call out to Him and admit our selfish sinfulness, He is right there to rescue us and to lead us back to the right path.

In today's verse Paul tells us that when we sin, we have turned away from the path God intended for us, going our own way. Not only will this likely result in us getting into trouble, Paul tells us that we are no longer useful to God in accomplishing His desire for us. His desire is to use us for His glory, but our sins prevent that from happening. As a result, we become useless to Him like spoiled food.

It doesn't matter whether we are Jews or Gentiles. It doesn't matter whether we attend church every Sunday. It doesn't matter if we read our Bibles every day. It doesn't matter if we pray without ceasing. It doesn't matter if we serve on the worship team, as an usher, as a Sunday school teacher, work in the nursery, serve on a committee, or give of our time to work on the church building. It doesn't matter if we witness faithfully or do any other good deed. When we fail to listen to the still, small voice of God, we fail to follow His leading and we turn aside to do these things for ourselves, instead of doing them for His glory. And Paul tells us that we become useless to God and the things we do are not good things.

Application

God expects us to give of our time, talents, and treasure for the furtherance of His kingdom. If we serve Him with the wrong attitude, if we serve Him for the wrong reason, if we serve Him simply because we want to do it or because we feel pressured into doing it, we're walking down the wrong path and we don't glorify God. But if we do anything because the Holy Spirit has lead us to do it, this is good and it pleases God.

Romans 3:13 - Painful Words

"Their throat is an open grave; with their tongues they were deceitful"; "the poison of asps is under their lips";

Truth to Learn

Our words can be powerful weapons of pain if not controlled.

Behind the Words

The word translated "throat" is the Greek word *larugx*, from which we get the medical term larynx. This is the part of the throat that produces the sound necessary for speech.

"They were deceitful" is translated from the word *dolioō*, meaning "to lure as with bait" or "to use carefully crafted words to deceive." As pointed out below, this verse is a quotation of the Old Testament. The Hebrew equivalent of this word means "smooth." In **Psalms 5:9**, therefore, it literally says "they have smooth tongues."

Meaning Explained

This verse is made up of two direct quotations from the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament.):

Their throat is an open grave; with their tongues they speak deceit (Psalms 5:9b)

the poison of asps is under their lips (Psalms 140:3b)

Paul's use of the Septuagint to quote from rather than the Masoretic Text (the predominant Hebrew version of the Old Testament at that time) is interesting. In fact in all of his writings Paul, like all the other writers of the New Testament, quotes predominantly from the Septuagint rather than the Masoretic Text. For the other writers of the New Testament this may not seem too strange since they were predominantly not from the "learned" class of Jews. Paul, on the other hand, was brought up under Gamaliel, one of the leading Jewish teachers of the time. Paul's use of the Septuagint probably reflects the fact that most Jews and Christians of the first and second centuries used, and were familiar with, the Septuagint. Thus, he was quoting from a version that they would recognize readily.

Regarding his message, Paul is continuing to demonstrate what the Scriptures have to say about the condition of all people (Jew or Gentile), that we are unrighteous sinners, not deserving of God's blessing. In this passage Scripture says our throat is an open grave. As pointed out in Behind the Words, the word throat refers to the larynx which is the source of speech. Paul tells us that it is like an open grave which, according to **Proverbs 30:15, 16** is never satisfied. In other words, natural man continually utters harmful speech.

This passage then tells us that natural man practices deceit with his tongue. Without God's regeneration, man uses smooth words to deceive others into satisfying his own desire. That sounds like "spin," or good ol' everyday advertising to me. Back in the 1940s they would have called it propaganda! Finally, this passage tells us that the words of unregenerate man can bite like a deadly snake.

Application

We have all felt the pain of deceitful, dishonest words used against us to intentionally harm us. And, we have just learned that it's a part of our fallen human nature to do that to others. As Christians we can overcome our natural tendency to use our words in such a hurtful way. We can only do so, however, by submitting ourselves to our God and asking the Holy Spirit to control our speech so that it glorifies Him.

Romans 3:14 - Words of Bitterness

"Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."

Truth to Learn

Other people's words can be hurtful, but ours shouldn't be so.

Behind the Words

The word translated "cursing" is *ara*, which originally meant "a prayer," but it has come to mean an imprecatory prayer or "a curse." This word implies a plea made to a deity requesting vengeance or evil upon someone else.

The word "bitterness" is from the Greek word *pikria*. This word was originally used to indicate the fruits of the wild vine or bitter gourd which are so excessively bitter and acrid as to be a kind of poison. Words can be like that!

Meaning Explained

In this verse (quoting **Psalms 10:7**) and the previous verse, the Apostle Paul is quoting from Old Testament scriptures (the Greek translation, called the Septuagint). These verses identify some of the characteristics of people's words when left to themselves without the influence of a Holy God.

Do you notice the commonality between this verse and the previous one? Both of these verses talk about parts of the body associated with harmful speech. In the previous verse Paul talked about their throat as being an open grave. According to Albert Barnes in his *Notes on the Bible*,

... as the grave is ever open to receive all into it, that is, into destruction, so the mouth or the throat of the slanderer is ever open to swallow up the peace and happiness of all."

The second quotation (from yesterday's verse) says that the poison of asps is under their lips. The particular snake referred to could also be the adder, which is one of the most deadly snakes known to man. This snake is small and commonly lies concealed in the sand or loose dirt beside a road, striking the traveler before he sees it. This, again, is a metaphorical reference to the words of man and how quickly they can cause harm when used in a deceitful and intentionally harmful way.

In today's verse we see that Paul is still talking about intentionally harmful words. These words are full of bitterness, used to express evil toward others. Here's what James says:

And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of unrighteousness. So the tongue is set among our members defiling the whole body, and inflaming the course of nature; and it is inflamed by hell. For all kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things and creatures of the sea, is subdued and has been subdued by mankind. But no man is able to tame the tongue. *It is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in *the* similitude of God. Out of the same mouth comes forth blessing and cursing. My brothers, it is not fitting *for* these things to be so. (**James 3:6-10**)

And Paul is not yet finished with his description of mankind apart from the Spirit of God. There are still four more verses describing us all.

Application

It is easy to recall when others have used words to harm us. It is not so easy to remember when we have used words to harm others. As God's children we should never intentionally attack others with vicious words. Let us all humble ourselves before God right now, asking for His Spirit to change our words of cursing and bitterness into words of encouragement and love.

Romans 3:15 - Eager Violence

"Their feet are swift to shed blood;

Truth to Learn

Bloodshed and violence are part of human nature.

Behind the Words

"Swift" is translated from the Greek word *oxus*. The basic meaning of this word is "to have a sharp, piercing point or a very sharp edge." But this word also implies eagerness toward violence.

The word translated "shed" is *ekcheō*, which is a compound word made up of *ek*, meaning "out" or "out of" and *cheō*, which means "to pour." Therefore, we can see that this word literally means "to pour out."

Meaning Explained

In today's verse the Apostle Paul quotes from **Isaiah 59:7** which says,

Their feet run to evil, and they hurry to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and ruin are in their ways.

This passage in Isaiah occurs in the midst of a description of the character of the nation of Israel in the time of Isaiah. The expression, "their feet r," implies the eagerness of the Jewish people to commit crime, particularly deeds of bodily injury and cruelty. They pursued the innocent ones and were not afraid to shed others' blood to gratify their wicked desires, or to satisfy their vengeance on those who opposed them.

Notice also, in the Isaiah passage, that it is not just their actions that indicate the wickedness of their hearts. Isaiah says that their thoughts were thoughts of iniquity. Even when they were not performing deeds of wickedness and injury to others, they were thinking about doing evil.

In quoting this passage, however, Paul is showing us that this is the nature of all of mankind, not just Jews. It is clear from Paul's description of the depravity of mankind in this passage that without the grace of a merciful God, none of us would ever be able to stand before the Judge of the universe without fear of condemnation.

If we hearken back to the metaphor of life being depicted as walking along a pathway, we begin to see the magnitude of this sinful characteristic of man. Instead of a leisurely stroll down the path of life, or even hastening one's step to pursue closeness to our Travel Guide, this verse portrays man dashing off the path of righteousness in order to attack others. It is indicative of the overwhelming influence of our sin nature when it is not being held in check by the Holy Spirit of God.

Application

It's easy to see this type of attitude and action being played out all around us. It might be some person going on a killing rampage because they're angry, or it might be crooked government officials causing pain and suffering for innocent people because of their own selfish greed. It's part of human nature. We Christians need to do two things. First, we need to ensure that we are

humbled before God and filled with His Spirit so we don't think or do any such things. Then, we need to pray for those who do these things. Be a witness of Christ's love and pray for the salvation of others. Remember that it is only by the grace of God that we will appear some day before the Judge having the righteousness of Christ. Thank you, Lord for saving my soul!

Romans 3:16 - Pathway Choices

Destruction and misery are in their ways;

Truth to Learn

The path we take is up to us. The end result is up to God.

Behind the Words

The word translated “**destruction**” comes from the Greek word *suntrimma*, which is made up of *sun*, meaning “together” and a form of *tribo*, which means “to strike or to rub.” Hence, this word literally means “to strike together” as two large rocks might be brought together against something to crush it completely.

The word translated “**misery**” is the Greek word *talaipōria*, which means “affliction, distress, or misery.”

“**Ways**” is translated from *hodos*, which refers to “a road” or “a pathway.” As we have mentioned before, in the Bible we are depicted as travelers walking down a road or pathway. This verse is an excellent example of that.

Meaning Explained

The Apostle Paul’s current condemnation of all mankind started back in verse 10 with, “**there is none righteous, not even one,**” which is taken from the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament.) Since that verse, he has quoted a number of other verses from the Septuagint as he is demonstrating to all those in Rome who were familiar with this Greek version of the Old Testament that the Scripture clearly declares neither Jew nor Gentile is righteous before God.

He now identifies some of the results of their having “turned out of the way,” that is, they have left the path of righteousness, and having used their words to eviscerate others, they have demonstrated their wickedness through their words. And those results include that fact that destruction and misery are in their pathways. Notice that when we leave the pathway that God wants us to travel and go our own way, our new path will have things that God’s way wouldn’t have had. In this case it is destruction and misery.

Also notice that “ways” is plural. Those who follow the urgings of their human nature (our sin nature) will encounter destruction and misery no matter what road they take. At this point it is easy for us to look at crooked political leaders or selfish businessmen who have amassed great power and wealth. It doesn’t appear to us that they are encountering destruction and misery. However, they never have rest from worrying about who might attack them or wondering when their house of cards might crumble beneath them. Ultimately we know some day they will have to stand before the Judge and the result will be destruction and misery.

Here are two quotes from the book of Proverbs that summarize what we have been talking about:

There is a way *that seems* right to a man, but its end is the way of death. (**Proverbs 14:12**)

Better *is* a little with the fear of the LORD, than great treasure with turmoil. (**Proverbs 15:16**)

Application

God's way is not always the easy way, but it will always end in peace for us and praise to God. Lord, give us the discernment to see your path and the courage to take it rather than our own!

Romans 3:17 - The Peace Path

And a way of peace they have not known."

Truth to Learn

Real peace is only experienced on God's path.

Behind the Words

The word translated "peace" is *eirēnē*, which refers to "the absence of warfare and dissention." It is also used metaphorically, as in this verse, to mean "peace of mind" or "tranquility."

"They have not known" is translated from the two words *ouk egnōsan*. *Ouk* is the absolute negative in Greek and *egnōsan* is a form of *ginōskō*, meaning "to know." There are several Greek words that refer to knowledge. This particular one refers to acquired or experiential knowledge as opposed to intuitive knowledge. In today's verse it implies that the people being talked about have never experienced peace.

Meaning Explained

Paul now states another result of having turned out of God's way and having gone down the path of one's own choosing. We explained in yesterday's verse that *hodos* refers to "a way" or "a road." Today we think of a road like a highway where cars and trucks travel at high speed. In the first century when this epistle (letter) was written, a road was often no more than a pathway just wide enough for an animal drawn cart to pass. So when we see the word "way" in these verses, it is usually referring to a road or pathway for foot traffic.

Another thing to be aware of is the fact that the definite article is not present before *hodos* in the Greek text, which leads us to translate this as "a way of peace" not "the way of peace." In other words, there is not a single way of peace. Any path that God leads us down is potentially "a way of peace," but the road we select for ourselves apart from God is never "a way of peace."

Are you lacking peace in your life today? Jesus offers us a very special peace. In his gospel account, the Apostle John recorded these words of Jesus:

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)

And, in his letter to the Christians at Philippi, the Apostle Paul explained how a Christian can experience this peace:

Be anxious about nothing, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

In today's verse, however, we see that the natural man does not know the way of real peace because he doesn't know the Prince of Peace. As we learned in the previous verse, the unsaved person will ultimately only know the way of destruction and misery.

Application

Even in the midst of trials and tribulation on this earth, we can experience this peace “that passes all understanding” because Jesus offered it to us. In order to have such peace, however, we need to be walking down God’s road, not our own.

Are you on a path of peace today?

Romans 3:18 - Fear God

There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Truth to Learn

It is good to fear God.

Behind the Words

The word translated “fear” is the Greek word “*phobos*” from which we get the English term “phobia.” It means, as it has been translated, “fear” plain and simple.

“Before” is from *apenanti*, which is a double compound word made up of *apo*, meaning “from,” *en*, which refers to a fixed position (in, at, on, over, etc.), and *anti*, meaning “against” or “opposite.” A literal translation might be “from over against,” it is an idiomatic expression meaning “directly in front of.”

Meaning Explained

This verse is the last in a series of quotes that Paul makes from the Septuagint. This one comes from **Psalms 36:1**. Paul uses this to show a third result of rejecting God. He has already mentioned two of the results to expect when one has turned out of God’s way and has gone his(or her) own way; destruction and misery are in their pathway, and they have not known a pathway of peace. He now states the third: they don’t fear God. That is, they are not afraid of meeting up with God on the pathway they have chosen.

“But,” you may say, “I thought that God was a God of love and compassion. Why should anyone fear Him?”

Yes, He is a loving and compassionate God, but He is also a God of justice, which means that He will judge sin because He must. Jesus also taught that we should fear God. Here’s what he said according to Matthew’s gospel account:

And do not fear those killing the body but not being able to kill the soul. But rather fear Him being able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28)

Throughout the Old Testament we see the expression “the fear of the Lord” used to describe those who recognize His exalted position and their own lowly position. To a Christian, the fear of God is an expression of awe and reverence for who He is and what He has done. According to Scripture both knowledge and wisdom begin with the fear of the Lord:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7a)

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom (Psalms 111:10)

Those who have no fear of our almighty, righteous God are not restrained from committing sin. It also means that they won’t submit themselves to Him and they won’t receive His free gift of salvation offered at the cross. As a result, at the Great White Throne judgment (the judgment of unbelievers) they will be judged for their sins and they will be cast into the lake of fire; no ifs, ands, or buts! Throughout this entire passage Paul is saying that this is the destiny of all men who reject God’s grace. There is none righteous, not even one (not even you).

Application

If we fear God and we have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior then we know that His wrath against our sins has been satisfied at the cross. That doesn't mean that we should fear Him any less. Rather, out of reverential fear we should humbly submit to Him, seeking His will rather than our own. Or, as Solomon said,

Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. (**Ecclesiastes 12:13**)

Romans 3:19 - Guilty!

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 all the world may be guilty before God.

Truth to Learn

None of us can live without breaking the rules, not even one.

Behind the Words

The word translated “guilty” is *hupodikos*, a compound word made up of *hupo* (hypo), meaning “under” and a form of *dike*, which means “judgment.” Hence, it means “under judgment, guilty, or condemned.”

Meaning Explained

Paul is talking to the Jewish Christians in Rome who were proud of the fact that they were descendants of Abraham and proud of the fact that the Law and the Prophets (the Old Testament) had been entrusted to the Jews. They were believers in Christ, but they still believed they needed to obey the Law.

Paul has just completed a number of quotations from their Scriptures which clearly show that all men are sinners; no one is righteous in God’s sight. The logical argument from a devout Jew would be that they are righteous because they obey the Law. Paul understood that attitude; he felt the same way before his conversion. Here’s what he said about himself:

I am indeed a Jew, having been born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, having been taught according to the exactness of the law of our fathers, being a zealous one of God as all you are today. (**Acts 22:3**)

Gamaliel was a Pharisee, one of the ruling Sanhedrin, a Doctor of the Law, and honored by all the people as one of the greatest teachers of his time. So you can see that Paul was well aware of the attitude that would pervade those devout Jews even after they became Christians.

Therefore, he now shows them why their reliance on obedience to the Law is pointless. Those things that are delineated by the Law are spoken to those who try to obey the Law for one reason,

that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be guilty before God.

In other words, Paul is saying that the purpose of the Law is to condemn all those who try to keep the Law. “But that doesn’t make sense,” you may say. “Why would God give the Law to mankind knowing that no one could keep the Law?” Paul will answer that question in the next few verses.

For now I want us all to recognize that none of us is righteous by keeping all the regulations and requirements of whatever church we belong to. Churches today have become very much like the Pharisees of Christ’s time. They imply that you have to obey all the rules and requirements of The Church, become a member, get baptized a certain way, say the right kind of prayers, or worship the proper way, and God will usher you into heaven because you’ve done the right things.

Paul says that’s baloney!

Application

Are you relying on following all the rules of your church or keeping the Ten Commandments in order to get to Heaven? If so, Paul says you're in for a big shock when you stand before God on the Day of Judgment.

Romans 3:20 - Good Deeds

Therefore by the works of law no flesh will be justified in His presence, for through the law is the knowledge of sin.

Truth to Learn

No one can do enough good deeds to be saved.

Behind the Words

“Therefore” is translated from the Greek word *dioti*, which is a compound word made up of *dia*, meaning “through” or “by” and *hoti*, which means “that.” Hence, *dioti* basically means “through that, because of that, or for this reason.”

The word “works” is from *ergon* which means “a product of labor, a work, or a deed.”

The word translated “flesh” is *sarx*, which literally means “flesh of a living creature.” It is used here to denote all of mankind, both Jew and Gentile.

“Justified” is from *dikaioō*, which means “to declare someone righteous” or “to make someone righteous.”

The phrase “in His presence” is translated from *enōpion*. This is another compound word. It is made up of *en*, indicating a static position (in, on, over, etc.) and *ops* (a derivation of *optomai* – to see) which refers to “sight” or “eyes.” So, literally this word means “in His sight,” though it is often translated “before Him” or “in His presence.”

The word translated “knowledge” is the Greek word *epignosis*, which means more than simply knowing something. It means “to recognize and understand something” or “to have full knowledge of something.”

Meaning Explained

Remember that whenever we see a “wherefore” or a “therefore” we need to see what it’s **there for**. In the previous verse we learned that the Law was given so that all those who tried to obey the Law would be found guilty before God without excuse. Therefore, that is, in light of this fact, because of this... “**by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His presence.**”

What Paul is saying is that justification before God cannot be obtained by obeying any set of rules no matter who made the rules. Why? Because it is through rules (Law) that we recognize sin and sinfulness.

If you recall the account of the temptation of Adam and Eve, up until God gave them the command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they were without sin. If they had eaten of the tree before they were told not to, they would not have been sinning; but due to the fact that they had been commanded not to, it suddenly became sinful to do so.

What Paul is telling us in these verses is that we cannot become righteous by following any set of rules, whether God-made or man-made. How then can one become righteous before God? Is it impossible? Paul is going to begin telling us in the next two verses.

Application

Just because we can't be declared righteous through doing good deeds doesn't mean that we shouldn't do them. We ought to do them out of obedience and gratitude. In other words, we can't be saved by doing good deeds, but once we are saved, we should do them because we want to, not because we have to.

Romans 3:21 - Righteousness Without Works

But now a righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

Truth to Learn

There is a righteousness, which the Old Testament declared, that does not result from obeying all the rules.

Behind the Words

“Righteousness” is from the Greek word *dikaioṣunē*, a form of *dikaioṣ*, which we looked at back in verse ten. *Dikaioṣ* refers to “meeting God’s standard of behavior.” The *sunē* ending means that this is the characteristic of someone who has met that standard. That is, someone who has obtained “righteousness.”

The word translated “revealed” is *phaneroō*, which is derived from the verb *phainō*, meaning “to shine the light on” or “to cause to appear.” Therefore, *phaneroō* means “to make something apparent” or, as it is translated here, “to reveal.” It is expressed here in the perfect tense, indicating an action that occurred in the past, but with an ongoing effect, the emphasis being on the ongoing effect.

“Being witnessed” is translated from a form of *martureō*, from which we get our English word “martyr.” This word means “to be a witness.” Throughout the history of the church, during times of persecution many people have forfeited their lives because of their faith in Christ. We refer to these people as martyrs because their death was the witness of their faith.

Meaning Explained

In the last verse we said that no one is righteous before God by obeying a set of rules, period. This would have come as a major affront to any devout Jew whether they had become a Christian or not. To them, obeying the Law was how anyone became acceptable to God.

Now Paul is about to introduce the doctrine of justification by faith, but he had to show first that justification couldn’t come any other way. He says that the only true righteousness, the righteousness of God (or from God), a righteousness not resulting from obeying the Law, has already been revealed. Not only has it already been revealed but it has been witnessed to by the Law and the Prophets.

Paul is telling these Jewish Christians that their own Scriptures have testified against them and declared them all to be sinners. Also, he is telling them that the Scriptures have testified about a true type of righteousness which only comes from God.

In the next verse Paul is going to tell us that righteousness can only come by faith. He will also show that it’s not just any kind of faith and not faith in just anything.

And in the coming chapters of this letter, Paul will illustrate how the Old Testament declared and witnessed to this saving faith apart from the Law. He will use Abraham as his primary example and will show how Abraham was not justified (declared righteous) by God because he was obedient, rather he was declared righteous because he believed the message that God gave to him. Here’s one verse that Paul will quote from:

And he believed in the LORD, and He credited it to him for righteousness. (**Genesis 15:6**)

Abraham was not righteous because of any works he did. He was righteous because God declared him to be so.

Application

Do you want to stand before God as a righteous person? If so, then God must declare you to be righteous. He will only do that if you believe the truth about Jesus Christ; He is the Son of God and He died on the cross to pay for your sins.

Romans 3:22 - Through Faith

and the righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ, toward all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;

Truth to Learn

You can't earn righteousness, but you can receive it.

Behind the Words

The word translated "faith" is the Greek word *pistis*. This is derived from the verb *peithō*, which means "to persuade" or "to win over." Therefore, *pistis* describes the result of having been won over or persuaded. In other words, it means "faith, conviction, or belief in a truth."

The expression "of God" is a translation of the word *Theou*, which can mean either "of God" or "from God." Hence, we can say that the righteousness that comes by faith belongs to God and He gives it to those who believe.

"Difference" is from the Greek word *diastolē*, which is derived from the verb *diastellō*, meaning "to separate" or "to set apart." *Diastolē* represents the state after the action, in other words, "a distinct difference." In **1Corinthians 14:7** this word is used to describe distinctly different sounds of a musical instrument.

Meaning Explained

The righteousness needed to stand guiltless before the Judge of the entire world cannot be obtained by obeying a set of rules, no matter how perfect those rules are and no matter how sincere we are or how hard we try. The Old Testament has declared that all of us are sinners. None of us is righteous, no not even one of us; not me, not you, not your pastor, not even the Apostle Paul. I like the way the prophet Isaiah said it:

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like a filthy rag; we all fade like a leaf, and like the wind our sins take us away. (**Isaiah 64:6**)

In yesterday's verse Paul introduced a new concept, one that isn't really new, for it was written about in the Old Testament. Namely, it is possible to obtain the righteousness of God, but it is obtained totally apart from the Law. We can't become righteous by obeying all the rules or by doing good deeds.

This new doctrine of "justification by faith" is now plainly declared by Paul. There is righteousness apart from the Law, "the righteousness of God," but this righteousness comes "through faith in Jesus Christ." That is to say, we can't earn the righteousness necessary to meet God's standard of behavior, but we can receive it from God by believing in Jesus Christ.

Paul also tells us that this righteousness by faith is granted to everyone who believes. You don't have to be born into the right family. You don't have to be a member of a church. You don't have to take religion classes. You don't have to be wealthy. All you have to do is believe.

We will talk about the last phrase of this verse when we talk about the next verse, with which it rightly belongs.

Application

Do you want to stand before the Judge of the earth with the same righteousness as Jesus Christ? You can! And, you don't have to earn it. You certainly don't deserve it. Nonetheless, you can have that righteousness, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:23 - Sinners All

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Truth to Learn

Every one of us has committed sin. As a result, we don't meet God's reputation.

Behind the Words

“All” is translated from a form of the Greek word *pas*, which means “all, the totality, the whole.” It does not mean generically all (all peoples) but specifically all (all people, every one).

The word translated “fall short of” is *hustereō*, which means “to be behind or under either in place or time.” What Paul is saying is, because of our sins we don't have the same glory as God and, therefore, are not worthy to be in His presence.

“Glory” is translated from *doxa*, which primarily means “thought or opinion, especially favorable human opinion, and thus in a secondary sense it refers to reputation.”

Meaning Explained

We left the previous verse having declared that God's righteousness is only given through faith in Jesus Christ and it is given to all who believe. It is this faith, believing whole heartedly in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross as a substitutionary payment for our sins, which causes God to declare us righteous.

But what does the phrase, “For there is no difference,” mean? In our study of the previous verse we showed that the Greek word that this is translated from is *diastolē*, meaning “a distinct difference.” Paul has been talking to the Jewish Christians in Rome who were still putting their hope in their righteousness obtained from obeying the Law. But Paul has shown them that there is no righteousness obtained by obeying the Law. The Law only produces sinfulness. He has shown that this sinfulness applies to all, both Jew and Gentile. All have gone out of God's way and have become sinful by following their own path. Paul's closing phrase in the previous verse coupled with this verse shows that he is talking about the fact that there is no difference, no distinction, between the righteousness of Jews and Gentiles.

The reason that there is no distinction between the righteousness of Jews and Gentiles is, “for all have sinned.” In other words, Paul is saying that every person on the earth (except for Jesus Christ) has committed sin and, therefore, is unrighteous. And, because each and every one of us has sinned, we fall short of God's glory. That is, we don't measure up to God's reputation. You may recall that in verse ten we learned that we are all unrighteous. That is, we don't measure up to God's standard.

Recognizing this fact about ourselves is the first step in what has come to be called the Romans Road to Salvation. In order to be saved a person must first recognize their need for salvation and they need it because they are a sinner.

Application

According to the Apostle Paul you are a sinner, not “were a sinner” but “are a sinner.” Because of this fact you don't measure up to God's standard or God's reputation; you are unrighteous.

But, you can be declared righteous and measure up, through faith in Jesus Christ. You may be a sinner, but you can be saved through faith in Christ.

Romans 3:24 - Free Righteousness

being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Truth to Learn

Through faith in Jesus Christ we are declared to be righteous.

Behind the Words

“Being justified” is translated from *dikaioō*. This is based on *dikaios*, which as we saw in verse ten means “meeting God’s standard of always doing what is right.” The *oō* ending of a verb generally indicates “bringing out something about a person.” The verb is expressed here in the passive voice indicating action done to someone. So, this word means that someone is being declared righteous.

The word translated “freely” is *dorean*, an adverb based on the noun *dorea*, which refers to “a gift.” Hence, *dorean* means “gratuitously” or “as a free gift.”

“Grace” is translated from *charis*, which refers to “a favor done without expectation of anything in return.”

The word “redemption” is translated from *apolutrōsis*, which is a compound word made up of *apo*, meaning “from or away from” and a form of *lutron*, which means “a ransom that is paid for someone.” It denotes the rescuing of captives (sinners) from captivity (sin) through the payment of a ransom (Christ’s blood) for them.

Meaning Explained

Paul now continues on his statement of justification by faith, declaring to us that even though we are all sinners and have come short of God’s glory, we can be declared righteous (justified). Since we are all sinners, we need to be redeemed. So what does this mean? The fact that Paul used *apolutrōsis* instead of simply *lutron* implies that not only was a ransom paid for us (the blood of Jesus Christ) but, having paid that ransom, He also took us away from the captor (sin).

Here’s a deeper explanation of what this verse says.

Because of the faith spoken of in verse 22, because we believed in the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary, even though we are sinners, we are justified (declared righteous by God) freely (without payment on our part, simply as a gift) by God’s grace (a favor done without expectation of return; the absolutely free expression of the loving kindness of God) through the ransom that was paid for us by Jesus Christ (His blood), and we have been taken out of our captivity to sin.

Wow! Read that again!

In his letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul said almost the same thing in a slightly different way:

For by grace you are saved through faith, and this not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, that no one can boast. (**Ephesians 2:8-9**)

Application

Paul has shown us that there is no way we could earn the righteousness that we need to stand before Almighty God. He has also shown us that we can obtain that righteousness for free, simply by believing in the blood of Christ.

If that doesn't drive us to our knees in praise and adoration, nothing will!

Romans 3:25 - Covered by The Blood

whom God set forth *as* a propitiation through faith in His blood as a demonstration of His righteousness, because in His forbearance God passed by the sins that were previously committed,

Truth to Learn

God will pass by our sins covered by the blood of Christ.

Behind the Words

The words “set forth” are from the Greek word *proetheto*, meaning “to place in public view” or “to exhibit conspicuously.”

“Propitiation” is translated from *hilastērion*, meaning “to make favorably inclined, to conciliate, or to appease.” The only other use of this word in the New Testament is in **Hebrews 9:5**, where it is rendered “mercy seat.” The use of this word in the Septuagint most often refers to the mercy seat as well. Since the mercy seat is a covering of the Ark, where the blood was sprinkled, it refers to a covering of our sins.

The word “forbearance” is translated from *anochē*, which refers to “self restraint.”

“Passed by” is from *pareisin*. This word is made up of *para*, meaning “beside” and a form of *hiēmi*, meaning “to send.” The most basic meaning of this word, therefore, is “to pass by.” This word is not used anywhere else in the entire Bible.

Meaning Explained

This is one of the most power-packed verses in the New Testament. The verse starts off with “whom,” a reference to Jesus Christ. Paul says that He was “set forth” or put on public display as “a propitiation.” As we noted above, this is the word that is used of the mercy seat, which is the covering of the Ark of the Covenant in the Jewish temple. The mercy seat is where the sacrificial blood was sprinkled once a year by the high priest to atone for (that is, to cover) the sins of the people. And this is where God was reconciled to His people on the Day of Atonement every year. Jesus Christ has become our mercy seat and His blood has atoned for (covered) our sins.

Paul is now telling us that it is through our faith in the blood of Christ that this covering of our sins occurs. And, he is telling us that the purpose of the atonement, the covering of our sins, is to declare the righteousness of God because He passes by our sins. Because He passes by these sins, He does not take them into account because they are covered by the blood of Christ.

Paul says the sins that He passes by are the sins that were previously committed. That doesn’t mean that only the sins of the people who had lived up until the Cross were covered. The point where He will “pass by” sins is at the Day of Judgment (for us, the Bema Seat Judgment). At that point in time all of our sins will have been committed in the past, and through the atoning work of the blood of Christ, He will pass by them.

So this verse is telling us that it is our faith in the blood of Christ exhibited on the cross that will allow God to pass by our sins, thus declaring His righteousness in us, which He credits to our account.

Application

The whole purpose of the plan of salvation is to glorify God. So let us do just that. Let us give Him the praise and the glory for it all, with thanksgiving! He is worthy.

Romans 3:26 - His Righteousness

to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Truth to Learn

God's plan of salvation draws attention to His righteousness.

Behind the Words

The word, “**demonstrate**” if translated from *endeixis*, which refers to “the act of pointing something out, especially with the finger.” Thus, it implies drawing attention to something.

“**Righteousness**” is from *dikaioṣunē*, meaning “the characteristic of always doing what is right (see Romans 3:21).”

The phrase “**at the present time**” is from *en tō nun kairō*, which literally means “at the now time.” In other words, “right now.”

The word “**just**” is from *dikaioṣ*, meaning “someone who does what is right.” This word could be translated “righteous.”

“**Justifier**” is from *dikaioō*, meaning “to make someone righteous.”

Meaning Explained

At the end of the previous verse we said that the purpose of the entire plan of salvation is to glorify God. Today's verse tells us how God will be glorified in the plan of salvation. You will recall that we said God can “pass-by” our sins because they will be “covered” by the blood of Christ.

The result of His passing-by our sins is that His righteousness is on display right now. The translation “**that He might be just**” is unfortunate in that it makes it appear that God might be just, but he might not. That's not what the Greek text says. A better translation would be “resulting in His being righteous.”

You see, God cannot ignore sin, he must judge it and exact payment for it. The blood of Christ is the payment for our sins and is sprinkled as a covering over our sins. Because this payment is made, God can pass-by our sins and still be doing what is right. It means He is righteous in forgiving our sins.

Now, here's the best part of this verse, “and the **justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.**” Do you see what that says? Not only is God proven to be righteous by his plan of salvation and the “passing-by” of our sins covered by the blood of Christ, but in doing so He actually is “justifying” us. That is, at the time of our salvation God declares that we are righteous (just like He is). This means that in His record book we are credited with having kept the law and never having committed a single sin. We are declared righteous!

Remember what Paul said back in verse 20? “**Therefore by the works of law no flesh will be justified in His presence, for through the law is the knowledge of sin.**” We cannot become righteous by keeping the law, but we can be declared righteous by believing in the blood of Jesus

Christ. God's plan of salvation for us is a perfect plan because it provides a way for Him to judge sin and forgive the sinner. Wow! Praise be to God!

Application

These last couple of verses are very complex, but they demonstrate how perfect God's plan of salvation really is. He has found a way to judge sin but forgive the sinner. You are a sinner. Do you believe in the blood of Jesus Christ as payment for your sins? If not, then you are a sinner who will be judged!

Romans 3:27 - No Bragging Rights

Then where *is* the boasting? It is excluded. Through what kind of law? Of works? No, but through a law of faith.

Truth to Learn

Salvation through faith in the blood of Christ is nothing to brag about.

Behind the Words

“Boasting” is from *kauchēsis*, which refers to the act of bragging or boasting.

The Greek word translated “excluded” is *ekkleiō*, which is made up of *ek*, meaning “out” or “out of” and *kleiō*, meaning “to shut.” Therefore, this word literally means “to shut out.” In other words, something has no chance of coming in whatsoever. In sports, we refer to a team as having been “shut-out” if they have been beaten without having scored a single point.

The words “what kind of” are translated from the Greek word *poios*, which means “of what sort” or “what kind.”

“Law” is translated from *nomos*, which refers to “a law” or “a principle.” Paul is using it here, as he does in many places, in reference to a principle rather than a specific law.

The word “no” is from the Greek word *ouchi*, which is a stronger form of the word *ou*, meaning “no” or “not.” We might translate this as “No way!”

Meaning Explained

The apostle now goes on to cement in the minds of the Roman Christians that their salvation is not of themselves through acts of righteousness, but completely through the actions of God. He starts off this verse by asking where any of us can find room for boasting. There is nothing to boast about in having been granted righteousness. Since all have sinned and have failed at being able to justify themselves by obeying the Law, and since all are alike, dependent on the mercy of God, any reason for bragging is, of course, taken away. It is shut out.

That’s what Paul is telling us about boasting or bragging with regard to our salvation. There is no way we can brag about our salvation because bragging has been shut-out!

This boasting is not shut-out by the law of works, but by the law of faith. By this Paul means that we cannot be justified by performing any works no matter how unselfish or self-sacrificing they are. We cannot be justified by keeping the 10 commandments, and we cannot be justified by obeying all the rules or ordinances set-down for us by our church. We simply cannot be justified by this kind of law. In other words, there is nothing we can do to earn righteousness, nothing! It can only come through faith.

Back in verse twenty-two we learned that faith (Greek *pistis*) means “belief in a truth.” But what does Paul mean by “the law of faith?” This is not a written law or set of commandments, but a principle. The principle here is, “believing in a truth.” That is, the truth that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of God who, while completely God, is completely man. The truth that He lived a perfect life, then offered His life as a sacrifice in payments for your sins and mine.

Application

It's easy to boast about all the things we have done to earn something, but salvation can't be earned. It requires humility to accept salvation and become a Christian. It can't be bragged about. A humble person doesn't brag about his humility.

Romans 3:28 - Faith Alone

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law.

Truth to Learn

Righteousness comes by faith and faith alone, not by works.

Behind the Words

“Therefore” is from the Greek word *oun*, which marks a connection between the current phrase and that which preceded.

The verb translated “we conclude” is *logidzomai*, which means “to put together with one’s mind, to count, or to make calculations or reckonings in the mind.” When used with *oun*, as it is here, it indicates “a proof” or “a conclusion.”

The words “apart from” are translated from *chōris*, which indicates separation of two things in space or time. Therefore, it could be translated here as “separate from” or “without.”

“Works,” as we have seen before, is from the Greek word *ergon*, meaning “a deed, a work, something involving labor.”

There is no definite article before the word “law” in the Greek text. The word “the” has been added by some translators.

Meaning Explained

Paul has just gone through a very complete rationalization of why the Jews were falsely confident in the Law, having stated that whether Jew or Gentile we all have sinned and have come short of God’s glory. He further went on to show that the blood of Christ is represented by the mercy seat in that it “covers” our sins, allowing God to pass them by. And, in doing so, He draws attention to His own righteousness as he credits righteousness to anyone who has faith in the covering blood.

He now states the conclusion of this part of his dissertation. That is, that we are justified by faith apart from works of law. In other words, the works have absolutely no bearing on our justification (our being declared righteous).

The Jewish Christians in Rome had always considered their righteousness to be the result of keeping the requirements of the Law. Because of the teachings of the Law and the Prophets, they waited for their Messiah to come. These converts from Judaism considered themselves Christians because they kept the Law AND believed in their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Paul now tells them that keeping the Law has no effect on salvation, further demonstrating that there can be no boasting in salvation because we didn’t do anything to deserve it.

We can only be justified by the principle (law) of faith. In order to satisfy this principle of faith we must humble ourselves before the mighty hand of our sinless God, agree with Him that we are sinners who are undeserving of justification (salvation), and agree with God (confess) that Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins.

Our justification does not come about because we perform some work or deed. We are justified in His sight because He reveals His son to us and He draws us to Himself so that we believe. It's all His work and none of ours.

Application

Paul makes it very clear that we can't do anything to earn salvation; we can only receive it humbly, as a free gift. Are you still trying to earn "favor" with God? Why? It can't be done!

Romans 3:29 - Non-Exclusive God

Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also,

Truth to Learn

No group of people has exclusive rights to God and His truth.

Behind the Words

“Only” is translated from the Greek word *monon*. This is probably derived from the verb *menō*, meaning “to remain” or “to stay.” Hence, *monon* means “that which remains, alone, or only.”

The word “not” is translated from *ouchi*, which is derived from *ou*, the absolute “not” in Greek. However, *ouchi* is a stronger form meaning “not at all” or “no way!”

“Yes” is from the Greek word *nai*, which implies strong affirmation. We could reasonably translated this as “yes, certainly.”

The word “Gentiles” is from *ethnos*, meaning “a group of people belonging together and living together, a race, or a nation.” It has been used historically by Jewish writers (as it is here) as a reference to those people, or nations, who are not Jewish.

Meaning Explained

Paul has just stated in conclusion that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the Law. To a Jew this would imply that the Law is void, otherwise why have they been working so hard for all these centuries to satisfy the Law through works.

Paul is saying that if justification could come from the Law (and only from the Law, as the Jews thought) then He must only be the God of the Jews since they are the only ones who had the Law. That’s why Paul asks the question, “Or is He the God of the Jews only, and not also of the gentiles?” He then immediately answers the question, “Yes, He is the God of the Gentiles also.”

The apostle is not making a casual statement here. The use of *ouchi* and *nai* indicate that he is making a couple of very strong statements: “Is He *not at all* also the God of the Gentiles? He *most certainly is* also the God of the Gentiles!”

The Jews knew that Jehovah is the God of all mankind, but they also knew that only the Jews had the Law. This made them selfish about the Scriptures and their relationship with God. They began to believe that Jehovah was their God exclusively, but Paul is bursting that bubble. Not only is He the God of both the Jews and the Gentiles but, as he will state in the next verse, He justifies (declares as righteous) both the Jews and the Gentiles. That would have come as a shock to many Jewish Christians who believed that God only justifies those who keep the law. It also may come as a shock to Christians today who believe we have to keep a lot of “rules” to be saved or to stay saved.

Application

Once again, we can see a strong parallel between the attitude of the Jewish people at the time of Christ and the attitude of Christians today. The Jews believed they had exclusive rights to God and were unwilling to share Him with Gentiles, building a wall between Jews and Gentiles. Since Christians have been given the Great Commission, we are commanded to share the Gospel

with the whole world. But many denominations believe only they have “the correct” truth, thus building walls between Christians.

Romans 3:30 - Faith for All

since *it is* one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

Truth to Learn

God will justify anyone who comes by faith.

Behind the Words

The Greek word starting off this verse is different depending on which Greek text is used. Some have it as *epeiper*, meaning “since indeed” whereas others have it as *eiper*, meaning “if on the whole.” Although the *epeiper* is a stronger assertion, they both imply that what follows is a true statement.

The word “by” is from the Greek word *ek*, meaning “out of, from, or by means of.” In other words, it implies origin.

“Through” is translated from *dia*, meaning “through,” or “through which.” In other words, it implies instrumentality.

Meaning Explained

Since Paul has just demonstrated that Jehovah is the God of both the Jews and the Gentiles and that man is justified by faith apart from the works of the Law, he now takes the next step in his explanation. He says that it is one God who will justify both the Jews and the Gentiles and that justification comes not from keeping the Law but through faith.

The construction of this verse is a little confusing and has been argued back and forth for centuries (in my opinion it is an example of senseless quibbling). Some say that even though the prepositions are different, they are used to express the same thing. They would interpret this phrase as, “... who will justify circumcision by faith and uncircumcision by the same faith.”

Others would argue that the Jews are justified by (out of) the faith which Abraham had and which they now also have, whereas the Gentiles must acquire such faith independently in order to receive justification through such faith. If you think that this is an unnecessary splitting of hairs, I agree with you. The point is that God will declare a person righteous based on faith, whether a Jew or a Gentile.

The two points that Paul has been making all along in this chapter are: 1 - There is no difference between Jews and Gentiles when it comes to justification, and 2 - The only way to obtain justification is by faith.

If you look back through the Old Testament you will see a number of examples where men were justified by faith. For instance, Noah believed God was going to send a flood and demonstrated that faith by building an Ark. Abraham believed that he was going to have a son even when he and Sarah were too old to have children. Moses believed God was going to release the Israelites from bondage when he went in and challenged Pharaoh to “let my people go.”

Throughout the ages, men (and women) have been saved by faith, not by works. That is precisely what Paul is teaching these Jewish Christians in Rome.

Application

The message of salvation is very simple: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. It's not, believe and keep the Ten Commandments. It's not, believe and join the church. It's not, believe and be baptized. It's simply "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." That's all there is to it – just believe.

Romans 3:31 – Not Useless, Set Firm

Do we then make the law void through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

Truth to Learn

Living by faith upholds the law, it doesn't destroy it.

Behind the Words

The Greek word translated “we make ... void” is a form of the verb *katargeō*. This is a compound word made up of *kata*, used as an intensifier and *argeō*, meaning “to be idle.” Hence, this verb means “to render completely idle, useless, or ineffective.”

“Certainly not!” is from the Greek words *mē genoito*, which we have looked at before. The word *mē* represents a qualified negation (*ou* represents absolute negation) and *genoito* means “to cause to be.” Therefore, a literal translation of these two words is “May it not be!”

The verb translated “we establish” is a form of *histēmi*, meaning “to cause to stand” or “to establish.”

Meaning Explained

This rhetorical question is one of transition for the Apostle Paul. He knows that any devout Jew would be spiritually put off balance by his previous arguments because the Jews have been taught from childhood that obeying the Law is the only way to be justified. They would very likely be asking themselves, “But what about the Law? Does it mean nothing?” There are even those people today who say that justification by faith only leads to licentiousness because it does away with the Law (both the Law of Moses and the moral law).

Paul does not agree. In fact, he declares, “May it not be!” He realizes that justification by faith alone not only does not negate the Law, in fact it establishes it as true and right. You see, by the Law God demonstrated that there is a penalty to be paid for sin and that the Law had to be satisfied in order for anyone to be justified. Jesus Christ came to show that only He could perfectly satisfy the law and that He is the fulfillment of the Law. He is the Passover lamb. He is the lamb without spot or blemish that was demanded by the Law to be the offering in payment for sins. He, the One who satisfied the Law, is the only offering that could be made to pay for our sins. And His payment is made possible to us only if we believe that He is the sinless Lamb of God who has given Himself in payment for our sins. We can't satisfy the Law by obedience to it but by faith in the one who did satisfy it.

This is precisely what Paul is showing to the Jewish Christians in Rome and to all Christians throughout the ages. When we believe Jesus Christ died on the cross as our Lord and Savior, we are justified by faith, and we actually establish the Law as good and right and holy.

Having now satisfied the assertion that the Law is good and right, in the coming chapter Paul will proceed to use the patriarch Abraham as the example of righteousness by faith apart from the Law. After all, Abraham was declared righteous by God some three hundred years before Moses received the law on Mt. Sinai. Abraham was even declared righteous by God years before the sign of circumcision.

Application

When we get saved by faith, we aren't required to keep the law or rules of a church in order to stay saved. Instead, we are to walk by faith, doing the good works that God has ordained for us to do as His children and ambassadors. Do your actions and good works reflect the glory of your