

ROMANS CHAPTER 3

Introduction

In chapter 2 Paul has skillfully demonstrated that the Jew is without excuse and under the condemnation and judgment of God. Now in chapter 3 the Jew is down to his last resort -- HE IS GOING TO TRY TO ARGUE HIS WAY OUT OF JUDGMENT! We find the very same thing today. When we present the gospel to others and clearly show them their own sinfulness and their need of Christ, they often begin raising objections and throwing out arguments to try to get themselves out from under the judgment of God (for example, "What about the heathen?" "How can a loving God send anyone to hell?" etc.)

Romans 3:1

"Then" = therefore. This word points us back to chapter 2 where we saw that the Jews rested comfortably in three things:

1. They had the law.
2. They were circumcised.
3. They were children of Abraham.

Paul made it very clear in chapter 2 that . . .

1. Having the law doesn't do a person any good (see 2:13).
2. Being circumcised doesn't do a person any good (see 2:25).
3. Being a child of Abraham doesn't do you any good (see 2:28-29).

With these things in mind, it is natural that the Jew would then ask the questions found in Romans 3:1 -- "What advantage then hath the Jew?" etc. What good is it? If we are condemned with the rest of the world, then what profit is there in being a Jew? If we are under God's judgment just like the Gentiles, what advantage is there in being a Jew? What's the benefit? What good is it? If having the law and being circumcised and being a child of Abraham does me no good, then what advantage is there in being a Jew?

Roman 3:2

"**Much every way, chiefly**" -- The Jews do have many advantages. The Jews have benefits and privileges that none of the other nations had. Paul listed many of these advantages in **Romans 9:4-5**, but here he simply lists the chief advantage (the first and primary advantage that they had): *UNTO THEM (THE JEWS) WERE COMMITTED THE ORACLES (SAYINGS) OF GOD!*

The Jews were entrusted with the Word of God. They were to be the custodians of God's Word (see Deut. 4:7-8 and Psalm 147:19-20).

"**Committed**" = from the same verb as the word "believe" in verse 3. Literally, "they were trusted with the oracles of God" or as we would say it, "they were **entrusted** with God's Word." Application to us: If a person has the Bible, he has a great advantage and a great privilege and a great responsibility. Having a Bible is an awesome responsibility. If we possess the truth, then we are responsible to do something with the truth that we possess. How many Bibles are there in the homes of America which are never opened and never used? The Jews were

entrusted God's Word and they were responsible to obey and believe the written revelation which they had! Were they faithful to their trust or not (see Rom. 3:3)?

Romans 3:3

Apparently the Jews were accusing God of being unfaithful: "Lord, You've given us Your Word and You've given us many promises as a nation, and now why are You being unfaithful to us?" They were accusing God of being unfaithful: "God has chosen us and now He's condemning us!" But in verse 3 Paul shows who **really** is unfaithful!

"**Faith**" = faithfulness

"Shall their unbelief nullify the faithfulness of God? NO! Shall faithlessness in man cancel faithfulness in God? NO!" God gave them His Word and they were the ones who were unfaithful. God did not fail! The Bible did not fail! They were the ones who failed! You can throw pearls before swine and they can trample them into the mud, but this does not change the fact that they are still pearls. Likewise, the Jews can trample all over God's Word, but that doesn't change God's Word and it doesn't alter His promises and it does not affect His faithfulness (see 2 Tim. 2:13).

Romans 3:4

The question raised in Romans 3:3 is answered with a resounding "GOD FORBID!" Paul uses this expression frequently in Romans (3:31; 6:2; 6:15; 7:7; etc.). It is a strong negation meaning "let it not be" or "PERISH THE THOUGHT!"

We should also note in verse 3 that it says "some" not "all." Not all the Jews were unfaithful. There were many (such as Paul, Peter, James, etc.) who believed the promises found in the Word of God. But there were many others who did not. The **majority** of Jews did not believe in Christ as Messiah.

Romans 3:4

Men may be liars but this does not make God a liar! Men may be unfaithful but this does not make God unfaithful! Even if every man on the face of the earth believed in the theory of evolution, this would not make it true. God and His Word (especially Genesis 1-2) would be true and every man would be a liar!

In this verse Paul quotes from Psalm 51:4 (David's great confessional prayer following his sin of adultery):

"**That Thou mightest be justified in Thy sayings.**" Lord, whatever You say is right!

"**And mightest overcome (be victor)**" = Lord, You are always the Overcomer and the Victor! You are always right and You always win every case!

Paul was very wise in using these words from David's prayer of confession. There was hardly anyone that the Jews looked up to more than David, the godly king of Israel and the one who wrote so many of the Psalms. Paul is here reminding them that even David was unfaithful! Even David was an adulterer and a murderer! He committed adultery with Bathsheba and was the cause of her husband's death on the battlefield. David in his own prayer was saying, "Lord, You are right and I am wrong!" David knew that he was GUILTY and in need of God's mercy! If David was guilty and condemned, then this fact would condemn every Jew. What Jew would dare say that he was better than David? [*Note*: When we get to **Chapter 4** Paul will tell us how David was saved!]

Romans 3:5

Not only were the Jews accusing God of being unfaithful (verse 3) but here in verse 5 we see that they were also

accusing God of being UNRIGHTEOUS (unjust, unfair). "Lord, You are unfair to judge us." (Do people today say such things?)

"Commend" = bring to light, magnify

"Taketh vengeance" = inflicts wrath

Paul again answers his own question -- "GOD FORBID (PERISH THE THOUGHT)" --see verse 6.

Follow the logic and reasoning: The unrighteousness of man helps us to see more clearly the righteousness of God. God's righteousness is more clearly seen by means of a contrast. If you don't think your car is very clean, put it next to a dirty car! If you don't think you are very healthy, then spend time in the hospital! If you don't think you are very sinful, then get a glimpse of God's holiness (like Isaiah did in Isaiah 6:1-5). Divine righteousness shines more brightly against the dark background of man's unrighteousness. God's faithfulness shines more brightly against the dark background of man's unfaithfulness.

Thus, here's the argument: "If I have magnified God's righteousness by my unrighteousness, then how can God judge me? If my sin makes God look all the more righteous, then how can God blame me for my sin? My sin is God's gain! God gains by my unrighteousness! My sin makes God look good! My unrighteousness makes God look righteous! My unfaithfulness makes God look faithful! So I'm really doing a favor for God by enhancing and magnifying His righteous character! Thus, if my sin is benefiting God so much, how can God judge me for my sin? Therefore, if God judges me for doing Him service, He must be unrighteous!"

"I speak as a man" -- Paul was just stating the arguments of others.

Romans 3:6

Jews knew that God was going to judge the world and that He was righteous in doing so! The argument is this: "If I am righteous in judging the world, then I'm righteous in judging you (because you are part of the world!)"

The world could use the same silly argument the Jews were using: Consider John 3:16: "God so loved the world." Wicked men could say, "God, the more sinful we are the more Your love is magnified. How then can You judge us? Our wickedness makes Your love look so good!" Such distorted and perverted thinking is along the same lines as this blasphemous bumper sticker: "Christ died for our sins . . . Let's not disappoint Him!"

Romans 3:7

The same kind of argument is used here. "If my lie (my unfaithfulness) magnifies and enhances God's truth, and God is glorified by my lie, then why does God judge me?"

It is true that God can use sin and the wickedness and wrath of man to bring GLORY to His Name (Psalm 76:10). Even a wicked, hard-hearted Pharaoh can bring glory to God (see **Romans 9**:17,18,21,22,23). Pharaoh, following the same perverted logic, could say, "Lord, what right do You have to judge me? I've done You a service! I have helped bring glory to Your Name! I have let everyone see how longsuffering you were to me and how Your power was made known. If I had not resisted You then You would not have been able to perform all of those mighty signs and wonders upon the land of Egypt!" Man's sin can bring glory to God but this certainly does not exempt man from judgment.

Note: Why did God allow sin and evil into His universe? The full answer to this question will never be understood fully by mortal men. One reason might be this: God is concerned primarily about making Himself known (revealing how great and glorious He really is). There are certain aspects of God's wonderful character which could never be made known apart from sin: His mercy, His love, His longsuffering, His grace, His judgment, etc.). For example, how can God show how merciful He is to forgive sinners if there is not any sin and

if there are no sinners to forgive?

Romans 3:8

"Let us do evil that good may come" -- Paul was falsely accused of teaching this. Why? **Because Paul taught that salvation was by grace apart from any works.** He taught that the wickedest sinner apart from any works could be saved (see Romans 3:28; 4:1-5). You could see how Paul's teaching could easily be perverted: "Let's live any way we please and let's do evil because salvation is by grace. The more we sin the brighter His grace. Let's sin the more because it will only magnify grace the more." But remember, PAUL DID NOT TEACH THIS (see Romans 6:1-2). This was a wicked distortion of the doctrine of salvation by grace. Actually the saving grace of God teaches us the very opposite (see TITUS 2:11-12)!

"LET US DO EVIL THAT GOOD MAY COME" -- this is the wicked and unbiblical philosophy that **the end justifies the means.** Paul utterly condemns this philosophy: "whose damnation (judgment) is just (right, deserved)." This philosophy is very popular in our day. Here are but a few examples:

1) **COMMUNISM** -- The whole system of communist morality is based on this philosophy. They do not mind doing evil as long as good may come ("good" = the furtherance and advancement of the communist cause). They think nothing of lying, cheating and even murdering as long as it furthers the cause of communism. "Sin" is anything that hinders the cause (telling the truth could be a sin if it hinders communism).

2) **THE EARLY CHRISTIANS** -- Suppose they had reasoned in this way: "I'll deny Christ so that I will not be put to death by the Romans and then I'll have more days to live so that I can tell others about the Lord!"

3) **SCHOOL** -- "I'll cheat on this exam and this will enable me to pass my course and get my degree and eventually become a medical doctor and then I will be able to save many lives!"

4) **STEALING** -- "I'll steal this bread so that I'll be able to feed my starving family and preserve them alive." The Christian approach: "Lord, I must not do that which is wrong in Your sight and I must not break the Ten Commandments. I refuse to steal because You said, "THOU SHALT NOT STEAL." I'm going to trust You to somehow and in some way take care of my starving family, and I'll do my part and use every **legitimate** means to help them (every **lawful** means)."

5) **EVANGELISM** -- "Souls must be won at any cost!" "I'll cooperate with the enemies of Christ so that they can sponsor my crusades and then I'll be able to preach the gospel to more people!" "To win the world for Christ you need to be like the world and compromise your standards." No, although we should be willing to sacrifice our very lives for the salvation of the lost, we must **never** pay the price of disobedience to God. "Faithfulness to God and obedience to His Word at any cost" should be our motto. We are reminded in 2 Timothy 2:5 that we must play the game God's way and follow God's rulebook! The means that we use to accomplish any given end are very important to God and should be important to us!

REMEMBER THIS:

IT IS NEVER RIGHT TO DO WRONG TO DO RIGHT!

IT IS NEVER RIGHT TO DO WRONG TO DO RIGHT!

Our attitude should be this: "Lord, I'm going to do right no matter how hard it is and I'm going to leave the results with You. You'll have to work it out. DO RIGHT AND TRUST GOD FOR THE OUTCOME!!!"

Romans 3:9

Outline of next section:

1. **THE CHARGE** (Romans 3:9) -- **All** are under sin.
2. **THE INDICTMENT** (Romans 3:10-18).
An indictment is a formal written statement framed by a prosecuting authority (in this case, GOD HIMSELF) charging a person with an offense.
3. **THE VERDICT** (Romans 3:19) -- **GUILTY!!!**

"Then" = therefore, and points back to verse 2. Does the great advantage of the Jew (Rom. 3:2) make him better than the Gentiles? No!

"We" -- (the first "we" of the verse) Paul includes himself with the Jews and humbly identifies himself with the "all" who are under sin.

HOW MANY ARE SINNERS? -- ALL (Romans 3:9,12,19,23)
HOW MANY ARE RIGHTEOUS? -- NONE (Romans 3:10-12)

Jews and Gentiles are both in the same boat (and the boat is sinking!).

"We have before proved" -- In Romans chapters 1-2 Paul has already proved and demonstrated that both Gentiles and Jews are condemned before a holy God.

"Jews and Gentiles" -- this includes everyone!

"Under sin" = under the guilt, power, condemnation and doom of sin

Romans 3:10

"As it is written" -- compare Galatians 3:22. Throughout verses 10-18 Paul is quoting from the Old Testament Scriptures. Here is a listing of the Old Testament passages which Paul refers to:

Romans 3:10-12 from Psalm 14:1-3 and Psalm 53:1-3
Romans 3:13 from Psalm 5:9 and Psalm 140:3
Romans 3:14 from Psalm 10:7
Romans 3:15-17 from Isaiah 59:7-8 and see Isaiah 48:22
Romans 3:18 from Psalm 36:1

These verses show that the Old Testament clearly taught the terrible depravity of the human heart and the terrible sinfulness of man.

Romans 3:10 is a quote from Psalm 14:1-3 and Psalm 53:1-3. Note in Psalm 14:2 -- "The LORD looked down from heaven." This is all from GOD'S POINT OF VIEW! Compare 1 Samuel 16:7. This is how GOD SEES THE HUMAN HEART from His all-knowing perspective! Verse 10 is a summary statement for all the verses that

follow. All these verses show how unrighteous we are. These verses are God's diagnosis of the human heart! (Illustration: I could wash my hands as well as possible, but if I could then examine my hands through a microscope or some other magnifying instrument, I would probably be amazed at the dirt and bacteria and filth that still remains. My own life might seem clean and pure when compared to others, but his is not how God sees me.)

Romans 3:11

"None that understandeth" -- this describes man's spiritual blindness. When it comes to the things of God and the truth of God, there is no understanding (compare 1 Corinthians 2:14).

"There is none that seeketh (who seeks diligently) after God" -- But does not this contradict Acts 15:17 and Hebrews 11:6 which both teach that men do seek after God? The main point of Romans 3:11 is this: Man if left to his own depraved nature would run away from God rather than run to God. Do men naturally go God's way or do they go their own way (Isaiah 53:6)? Do men naturally love the light and come to the light (John 3:19-20)? Did God seek lost Adam or did lost Adam seek God (Genesis 3:6-10)? Do lost men seek after the Saviour or does the Saviour seek after lost men (Luke 19:10)? By analogy to 1 John 4:19 we might say, "We seek Him because He first sought us!" By analogy to 1 John 4:10 we might say, "Herein is God's seeking and saving love, not that we sought after God but that He sought after us!" By analogy to John 15:16, "Ye have not sought Me, but I have sought you." Every believer should thank God for the gracious work that He is willing to do and that He does do in the human heart (see Acts 16:14; John 6:44-45,65). God is the great Initiator. As the hymnwriter says: "Lost in the darkness I stumbled alone, Far from the sunlight of day. Then Jesus found me and made me His own. He drove my darkness away. Before I loved Him, He loved me. Before I found Him, He found me. Before I sought Him, He sought for me. Yes, Jesus cares for me" (Ron Hamilton). God sought us when we were His alienated enemies (Romans 5:6-10) and when we were yet dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1-5). Before Adam ever turned to God, God turned and called to him, "Where art thou?" (Genesis 3:9). ***GOD IS THE GREAT AND GRACIOUS SEEKER!*** Have you been found by Him?

Romans 3:12

"Gone out of the way" -- compare Isaiah 53:6.

"Unprofitable" = become depraved, worthless. It comes from a word meaning "to become sour", like milk when it gets sour. Sour milk is quite worthless.

"None that doeth good (kindness)" -- this word "good" or "kindness" is found in Ephesians 2:7 and Titus 3:4 (God was very kind to the unkind!). God was kind to those who didn't deserve any kindness at all. Depraved men lack goodness or kindness.

Are there any exceptions to what Paul is saying in Romans 3:10-12? Note the emphasis: **none . . . no, not one . . . none . . . none . . . none . . . no, not one.**

Romans 3:13

"Sepulcher" = grave, tomb. God looks down man's throat and what does He see? Compare Matthew 23:27.

"Deceit" -- All men are deceivers and liars from God's point of view.

"Asps" = Egyptian venomous cobras (poisonous words come out of their mouth)

Romans 3:14

Compare Matthew 12:34-35. When a person swears and curses we can say, "Sir, excuse me, but your heart is

showing!" The believer's mouth is to be continually full of blessing (speaking well of God). See Psalm 103:1-2.

Romans 3:15

"**Shedding of blood**" -- these people are described as murderous (shedding of blood refers to a violent, murderous death).

The death of Christ is described in this way (Hebrews 9:22).

The death of Stephen (by stoning) is described in this way (Acts 22:20).

Capital punishment is described in this way (Genesis 9:6).

Romans 3:16

"**Destruction**" = ruin

"**Misery**" = wretchedness, same word as in Romans 7:24-- "Wretched (miserable) man that I am!" We all would have to say the same thing.

Romans 3:17

They have not known the way of peace. Compare man's awful history of warfare in every age and in every generation (beginning on the day that Cain killed Abel). The Society of International Law at London once gave statistics declaring that for last 4,000 years of human history there have been but 286 years of peace despite more than 8,000 peace treaties. In the last 300 years there have been 286 major and minor wars in Europe. Man's history has been a history of war and conditions are not getting better. What wars and conflicts are taking place in the world right now? When man is not at peace with God (compare Romans 5:1), then he is at war with his neighbor.

Romans 3:18

Here is the basic and root problem. There is no reverence and respect for God at all. Men might fear the police or a judge but they have no fear for the Judge of all the earth! The person with a healthy fear of God is the person who is AFRAID of doing anything that would displease the Lord! See Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10 (the fear of God is the "beginning." You can't even get through the door to enter into the Lord's house of wisdom without it). The fear of God should characterize and mark the true child of God (Phil. 2:12; 1 Pet. 1:17).

Romans 3:19

"**Every mouth is stopped (closed)**" -- here is man's defense! He has nothing to say! Man knows that he is guilty as charged! God the righteous Judge KNOWS ALL and SEES ALL and was WITNESS to every sin and crime that we have ever committed. What can we say?

"**GUILTY!**" -- all the world is brought before the judgment of God to hear the verdict "GUILTY" and they are left standing there TREMBLING AND SILENT!

Romans 3:20

There are certain things that the law CANNOT DO and there are certain things that the law CAN DO. According to this verse, what is the law unable to do? It is unable to justify sinful man. But this same verse teaches that the law can give men the knowledge of sin. It can show man his utter sinfulness. The purpose of the law may be

illustrated by a MIRROR. As I carry on the activities of the day, I may somehow get dirt on my face and not even realize it. A mirror serves a wonderful purpose of showing me that I have a dirty face. It shows me that I have a problem. But the mirror cannot wash away the dirt! Likewise, God's holy law can show me that I am a guilty sinner (incapable of keeping God's holy commandments), but it can never save me. It can only condemn me and show me that I need a Saviour. Just as the mirror should drive you to the soap and water, so the **LAW** should drive you to the **LAMB** of God who is able to save you and take away your sins!

Romans 3:21

"But now" -- these words indicate a **turning point**. Thus far everything Paul has said has been "bad news." He has clearly shown man's guilt and condemnation. Paul has shown every man to be a lost and doomed sinner "guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19). **BUT NOW** Paul begins to share the "GOOD NEWS"! The good news is that God has a wonderful plan of salvation ("justification") whereby sinful men may be declared righteous before a holy God! "But now" -- these words indicate a drastic change in the movement of this letter (compare this same expression in Ephesians 2:11-13 and 1 Corinthians 15:16-20).

These next six verses are crucially important. Dr. Alva J. McClain has said the following about Romans 3:21-26:

This section is the very heart of the book of Romans. For this reason, all Christians ought to memorize verses 21-26. If someone should ask me, "Brother McClain, if you could have just six verses out of the Bible, and all the rest be taken away, which would you take?", I would select these six verses. All of God's gospel (Good News) is there, and in a way found nowhere else in the Word of God. [*The Gospel of God's Grace*]

Beginning in verse 21 and continuing to the end of the chapter there is a **KEY WORD** which is found repeatedly. It is the word **RIGHTEOUSNESS** (JUSTIFIED). The word "righteousness" and the word "justified" are from the same Greek word.

v.21-righteousness;
v.22-righteousness;
v.24-justified;
v.25-righteousness;
v.26-righteousness, just, justifier

"Justify" = to declare or pronounce righteous

The key question: **HOW CAN A RIGHTEOUS GOD SAVE AN UNRIGHTEOUS MAN AND STILL REMAIN RIGHTEOUS IN DOING SO?** This question is seen in verse 26 -- **HOW CAN GOD BE JUST AND AT THE SAME TIME JUSTIFY THE SINNER?** That God can righteously **judge** a sinner is no problem, because this is what justice demands. But how can God justify and acquit a wicked person without compromising His own righteousness? "God will not at all acquit the wicked" (Nahum 1:3). That is, He will not leave the guilty unpunished. And yet, in order to save wicked sinners, God must do this very thing! This is a problem that is solved and answered only by the cross (death) of Christ! Christ was punished in our place, as our Substitute, so that we might be acquitted.

"**The righteousness of God is manifested**" -- This is where Paul started in Romans 1:17, but after that passage God's righteousness is not mentioned again until Romans 3:21. Paul first wanted to show us how much we need this righteousness (compare Rom. 3:10)!

"**Without law**" = absolutely apart from (see Heb. 4:15, where "without" also means "absolutely apart from"). This righteousness has nothing to do with keeping the law or with legal works of any kind. It has no connection whatsoever with the law. It is the grace of God, not the law of God, that gives man this righteousness!

In the Old Testament Scriptures we can learn about the righteousness of God that is apart from the law (compare

Romans 1:2), **being witnessed** . . .

- 1) . . . **by the law** (see Genesis 15:6 and Genesis 7:1 with Hebrews 11:7)
- 2) . . . **by the prophets** (see Isaiah 53:11; Jeremiah 23:6).

Romans 3:22

"**By faith**" -- the righteousness of God is received by faith

"**of Jesus**" -- this is the objective genitive which means that my faith has the crucified and risen Christ as its object (compare Gal. 2:20 in the KJV for another example of the objective genitive -- "faith of")

"**all who believe**" -- compare Romans 1:16. **All** need this righteousness (Rom.3:23) and **all** who believe receive this righteousness. The Bible nowhere teaches UNIVERSALISM (that all men will eventually be saved). The Bible teaches a salvation that is offered and made available to all but which benefits only those who believe (compare 1 Timothy 4:10). God limits the benefits of His salvation only to those who appropriate them by faith.

The last part of verse 22 and all of verse 23 may be thought of as a parenthesis: (for there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God). It would also help to read from verse 22 to verse 24 without reading the parenthesis ("all them that believe, being justified . . .").

Romans 3:23

"**All have sinned**" -- All men are in the same boat and the boat is sinking! But God in mercy has provided a wonderful salvation for all of these doomed sinners if they will put their trust in Christ.

"all" -- *ALL MEANS ALL AND THAT'S ALL ALL MEANS!* (as defined by the context). Are there any exceptions to the sweeping statement?

What about the Lord Jesus? Did He ever sin? See 1 Peter 1:19; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 2:22; Acts 3:14; 1 John 3:5; Matthew 27:4; Matthew 27:24; John 19:4; Matthew 27:19; Luke 23:41; Matthew 27:44; Matthew 27:54; Luke 4:33-34; John 8:46; John 8:29; Matthew 3:17; Isaiah 53:9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 7:26; Luke 1:35 etc. The sinlessness of Christ is a very important doctrine. See our notes on **The Sinlessness of Christ**.

What about the virgin Mary? Was she an exception to Romans 3:23? See Luke 1:47 and compare with Luke 5:30-32. What kind of person needs a Saviour? What kind of person was Mary? The first recorded instance of people seeking to worship Mary is found in Luke 11:27. Did the Lord encourage such praise of Mary or did He discourage it? Mary was a godly young woman used by God in a very special way, but beware of Mariolatry.

"**ALL HAVE SINNED**" -- this is a vital Bible truth. Let's go to some of the other places in the Bible where this is clearly taught:

1. Isaiah 53:6 How many are lost?
 2. 1 Kings 8:46 How many sinless people are there?
 3. John 7:19 How many "law-keepers" are there?
- Compare also 1 John 1:8,10

"**Sinned**" -- the word "sin" in the Bible means "to miss the mark" or "to come short of some standard." For example, suppose a basketball coach gave this requirement in order to play on his team: "You must be at least six feet tall or you will not even be considered." All those under six feet would "come short" of the coach's standard and they would miss out on being able to make the team. We have all come short of God's standard.

The Hebrew word for sin is used in an interesting way in Judges 20:16. The children of Benjamin were very skilled at using the sling. These men were left-handed and they could sling a stone at a hair and not **miss**! A hair is a very small target to try to hit, but they could do it and not **miss**! This word "miss" is the word "sin." A sinner is one who MISSES. A sinner is one who does not hit the target (God's target). What is God's target? It is found in Matthew 22:37,39. Have you hit this target perfectly or have you missed?

"The **GLORY OF GOD**" -- this refers to all that God is in His perfect character:

ALL THAT GOD IS:

God is holy.	Am I as holy as He is?
God is righteous.	Am I as righteous as He is?
God is loving.	Am I as loving as He is?
God is good.	Am I as good as He is?
God is truthful.	Am I as truthful as He is?
God is kind.	Am I as kind as He is?
ETC.	
DO I MEASURE UP TO THE GLORY OF GOD OR DO I FALL SHORT?	

There is another way to see whether you measure up or fall short of the glory of God. Suppose you were to stand next to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (the Sinless and Spotless One). How would you measure up to Him? Would you measure up to His righteousness or would you come short of it? Jesus Christ is God's standard of perfection for what every man or woman ought to be.

Compared to Christ, none of us stand very tall! Remember the basketball coach. He said that no one could be on the team unless he measures up to six feet. God says that no one can make heaven unless he measures up to Jesus Christ! This means that none of us are qualified for heaven because we have ALL failed to measure up! However, God knew that we would all fall short, and so He devised a plan of salvation which makes it possible for **believing sinners to be just as righteous as Christ** (See 1 John 3:7 -- "even as **He** is righteous").

More illustrations of Romans 3:23. **Jumping across the Mississippi:** Suppose every person were given the task of jumping across the Mississippi River. An athletic man might jump 20 feet or more. An old lady might only jump one foot. The athletic man may say to the old lady: "Ha! I did much better than you!" But the old lady would reply: "Yes, but we both missed the mark and we both came short of where we needed to be."

Airplanes: Think of airplanes crashing into the side of a mountain. One plane might crash into the base of the mountain, another might crash halfway up the mountain, another might crash into the mountain only five feet from the peak, but all came short and all crashed and perished! Some did better than others but they all fell short! Whether you are less of a sinner than someone else is not the issue. The issue is that no matter how well you might have lived, you have come short of where you need to be. See our notes on the subject of **"What Is Sin?"**

Romans 3:24 Go to the following page

"**Justified**" = declared righteous, pronounced righteous (it is a judicial term). A common definition of "justified" is "just as if I've never sinned," but it is more than this. Not only does it mean that God sees me as if I have never sinned, but it also means that He sees me just as if I have always lived perfectly righteously, that is, from the day of my birth to the day of my death I have always loved the Lord with all my heart, soul, mind and strength and I have always loved my neighbor as myself. How can God see me like this? It is because He sees me clothed in the perfect righteousness of His perfect Son, just as righteous as He is (see 1 John 3:7). In ourselves, of course, we are not righteous at all (Romans 3:10 etc.), but when we believe in Christ God puts the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ on our account (see Romans 4:3-5 and compare Genesis 15:6). God now sees me in His righteous Son (compare 2 Cor. 5:21, and notice the words "IN HIM").

"**Justify**" does not mean "make righteous." See Romans 3:4 (a person cannot **make God righteous**, he can only say that He is righteous and declare Him to be righteous). The Old testament says, "Don't ever justify the wicked" (see Proverbs 17:15). In other words, never say to a criminal, "You are not guilty, you are innocent!" In so saying, you are not **making him righteous** (he is just as much a criminal as he ever was) but you are (wrongly) declaring him to be righteous or innocent. Dr. Alva McClain explains justification as follows:

JUSTIFY MEANS TO PRONOUNCE AND TREAT AS RIGHTEOUS. It is vastly more than being pardoned; it is a thousand times more than forgiveness. You may wrong me and then come to me; and I may say, "I forgive you." But I have not justified you. I cannot justify you. But when God justifies a man, He says, "I pronounce you a righteous man. Henceforth I am going to treat you as if you have never committed any sin." Justification means sin is all past and gone -- wiped out -- not merely forgiven, not merely pardoned; it means clearing the slate and setting the sinner before God as a righteous man, as if he had never sinned, as if he were as righteous as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (ROMANS, THE GOSPEL OF GOD'S GRACE, page 107).

Yes, God sees us JUST AS RIGHTEOUS AS CHRIST. This is why in 1 John 3:7 the saved person is said to be "RIGHTEOUS, EVEN AS (JUST AS) HE IS RIGHTEOUS." In and of ourselves we have sinned and come short of God's righteous requirements (Romans 3:23). However IN CHRIST we do not come short but we are seen to perfectly measure up to all that God demands!

"**Freely**" = literally, "as a gift" (see Revelation 22:17). This same word is found in John 15:25--"without a cause". There was not one thing that Christ did to deserve their hatred (see John 15:25). Likewise, I was justified "without a cause." There was not one thing I did to deserve God's righteousness. God justified me FREELY and not because of anything I have done (just as they hated Christ but not because of anything that He had done).

"**By His grace**" = GRACE means "undeserved kindness, unmerited favor." Here are two Bible definitions of GRACE:

1) Eph. 2:7--"the exceeding riches of His GRACE in His KINDNESS toward US through CHRIST JESUS."

Because of Jesus Christ, God is able to be kind towards those who do not deserve any kindness at all. In Ephesians 2:1-3 we learn that we were dead in sin and deserving of God's wrath and yet God, because of Christ, is able to be kind to those who deserve nothing but His wrath. Grace is God's undeserved kindness!

2) Titus 3:4--"But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared."

Because of the Saviour, God is able to show forth His love and kindness toward man, even the man described in Titus 3:3 (foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another). This man deserves

nothing but God's wrath, and yet because of Christ he is able to know God's kindness and love. "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a WRETCH like me!"

Thus, God's grace is His kindness and love toward man who does not deserve one drop of it!

GOD'S GRACE = that which God gives us which we do not deserve! Can you think of some of the things that God gives you that you do not deserve at all? (forgiveness, eternal life, heaven, etc.)

GOD'S MERCY = that which God does not give us which we do deserve! Can you think some of the things that God does not give you which you do deserve? (His wrath, His judgment, eternal punishment, the lake of fire, etc.)

"Redemption" = this important term means "being delivered or set free by the payment of a price." The Lord Jesus paid the price when He shed His blood and died on Calvary's cross (see 1 Peter 1:18-19). Our salvation is FREE (cf. "freely", Rom. 3:24) but it is certainly not CHEAP! A price had to be paid! The justice of God must be satisfied. The full penalty for sin must be paid. Only then is God free to be gracious toward us.

FOUR ASPECTS OF JUSTIFICATION:

- 1) JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE (Rom. 3:24)** -- Its Source is found only in the unmerited favor and undeserved kindness of God!
- 2) JUSTIFICATION BY BLOOD (Rom. 5:9)** -- Its Basis is in the work which the Saviour did on the cross.
- 3) JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH (Rom. 3:28)** -- Its Channel through which it comes to us.
- 4) JUSTIFICATION BY WORKS (James 2:24)** -- Its Evidence by which we clearly show to others that we have been declared righteous by the living God.

Romans 3:25

"Whom" -- refers to "Christ Jesus" (the end of verse 24). Redemption has just been mentioned (v.24) and redemption should always make us think of the cross-work of Christ which is the subject of verse 25.

"Set forth" = to publicly display. The death of Christ was not done in secret; it was publicly witnessed by men and angels.

"Propitiation" = This is one of the key terms to describe the cross-work of Christ, with emphasis on the "GODWARD" aspect of our salvation. See 1 John 4:10. The word "PROPITIATION" is used in the Old Testament, and there it is translated "MERCY SEAT." The mercy seat was the LID which covered the ark which was located in the most holy place in the tabernacle. The lid was made of solid gold (Exodus 25:17) and at each end the gold was shaped into a winged cherub or angel (Exodus 25:18). Inside the ark was placed God's law, the Ten Commandments (Exodus 25:21). In Romans 7:12 the law is described as HOLY, JUST and GOOD. Is it possible for any sinful man to keep God's law perfectly (Gal. 3:10; Rom. 3:20; James 2:10)? Absolutely not. Thus within the ark, the law cried out with this message:

"THERE IS A PENALTY FOR BREAKING THE LAW AND THIS PENALTY MUST BE

PAID! EVERY LAWBREAKER MUST DIE (Exodus 21:12-17; Rom. 1:32; 6:23)! GOD'S JUSTICE WILL NOT BE SATISFIED UNTIL THE PENALTY IS PAID IN FULL!"

God can never be SATISFIED until sin is punished and the penalty is paid. When Jesus died on the cross, man's sin was punished and sin's penalty was paid in full (John 19:30; 1 John 2:2).

Once every year on the Day of Atonement the high priest would enter the holiest of holies with the blood of the sacrificial animal and he would

sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat (Lev. 16:14-15; Heb. 9:3-7). The **blood** on the mercy seat foreshadowed the cross-work of Christ and had this message:

"THE PENALTY HAS BEEN PAID IN FULL! A SUBSTITUTE HAS DIED AND ALL THE DEMANDS OF JUSTICE HAVE BEEN MET! INSTEAD OF JUDGING THE GUILTY LAWBREAKER, GOD IS NOW FREE TO BE MERCIFUL TO HIM!"

God is completely satisfied and pleased with the work which Jesus accomplished on the cross. **ARE YOU?** Faith says, "God is satisfied and so am I (Rom. 3:25) -- it is **enough** that Jesus died and that He died for me!"

Because God's holiness and justice have been SATISFIED, God is now free to deal with us according to His grace (Rom. 3:24). Thus we can boldly come to a throne of grace, rather than fearfully coming to a throne of judgment and wrath (Hebrews 4:16; 10:19-22)! Praise God for what was done on the cross!

"Through faith in His blood" -- the "blood" refers to the work which He accomplished on the cross. What Christ did must be personally applied and personally appropriated by faith or else it will do a person no good. An illustration of this is found in Exodus 12:7. It was not enough for the Passover lamb to be slain. The blood had to be **personally applied** to the door post and only then would the family be free from the judgment of God which came down upon every home where the blood was not applied. By faith, have you personally claimed for yourself what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross? Have you made it your very own? John 6:53-54 is another illustration of how the cross-work of Christ must be personally appropriated. Consider eating and drinking. Food and drink give physical life only if they are personally appropriated and taken into the body. Just looking at a steak dinner and believing that it is nourishing will do you no good! You must eat it and make that steak dinner your very own!

Romans 3:25

"To declare His righteousness" -- at the cross God demonstrated His righteousness and vindicated His Character. **"HOW CAN A HOLY GOD ALLOW SIN TO GO UNPUNISHED?"** The cross proved that sin does not go unpunished! God proved that He is not indifferent when it comes to sin. God does deal with sin and He deals with it severely.

"For (because of) the remission (passing over) of sins that are past through the forbearance of God" -- A holy and righteous God passed over sin and allowed sin to go unpunished for thousands of years (from Adam to the time of the cross). Prior to the cross, Old Testament believers were in paradise "on credit" (their sins had not been paid for yet, even though they received some of the benefits from what historically had not yet taken place; just as when we purchase something with a credit card, we enjoy possessing the purchased item, even though we have not paid for it yet). God's righteousness was shown at the cross in that God righteously judged and punished every last sin that man has committed (or will commit). The cross is the center point and the focal point of all history. Old Testament believers looked forward to what God would someday do; believers today look back at what Christ has already done.

Romans 3:26

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Here is the great problem which God faced which can only be answered In the gospel: HOW CAN GOD BE JUST (RIGHTEOUS) AND AT THE SAME TIME JUSTIFY (DECLARE RIGHTEOUS) AN UNGODLY, WICKED, SINFUL PERSON? God is righteous in judging sin, but how can God be righteous in justifying the sinner? This problem is answered only in the cross of Christ and in the doctrine of the substitutionary death of Christ. At the cross God devised a plan whereby He could justify the sinner WITHOUT IN ANY WAY COMPROMISING HIS JUST AND HOLY CHARACTER. Many modern-day liberals want God to compromise His character by overlooking man's sin or forgetting about it, etc. God can never do this. He can never be satisfied until sin is judged.

Note in this verse that although God's justification is provided for all men, God only justifies "him which believeth in Jesus." God's gracious gift of justification is offered to all, but must be personally **received** by faith (see Romans 5:17).

Romans 3:27

When it comes to salvation and justification, there is no place for BOASTING, because **God has done it all!** It's His plan, His salvation, His blood that was shed, and we can only BOAST in a great Saviour, certainly not in who we are or what we have done. We are saved by the **WORTH** (who He is), the **WORK** (what He has done) and **WORD** (what He has said) of God, and He gets all the glory! See Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; 1 Corinthians 1:29-31. If salvation were of works, then man could boast (Rom. 4:2; Eph.2:9), but this is not so!

The law of works says, "Work and thou shalt live!"; but you have to work perfectly and keep the law perfectly, because God requires nothing less than perfection.

The law of faith says, Believe and thou shalt live!" (John 6:47; 5:24; etc.). Believe in the perfect work which Christ did on the cross!

Romans 3:28

Here is Paul's conclusion. Justification is by faith and not by works. "Justification by faith" was the great cry of the Reformers (Martin Luther and others) in contrast to the Roman Catholic religious system which taught justification by works.

"**Conclude**" = same word as "reckon" in Romans 6:11 and 8:18 (it means that a person has made a calculation based on the facts and has arrived at a safe and solid conclusion that must be firmly believed).

"**Without**" = totally apart from (cf. Heb. 4:15 "without sin"; Rom. 3:21; etc.). Paul's conclusion is in apparent conflict with James 2:24 -- "ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." This apparent contradiction is solved as we understand that James and Paul were looking at a man's salvation from different perspectives.

Paul and James did not contradict each other; rather they complemented each other. What both men wrote was inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16) and true. Paul's focus was on the unsaved man and how he might get right with God. James' focus was on the saved person and how he might show his faith and demonstrate the reality of his faith.

Paul's Teaching	James' Teaching
You cannot be saved by works. (Ephesians 2:8-9)	You cannot show that you are saved without works (James 2:14,18).
Go to the following page	Go to the following page

<p>How can a person be saved?</p> <p>By faith alone (Rom. 3:28)</p>	<p>How can a person show that he is saved? How can he “show his faith”?</p> <p>Only by works (James 2:18)</p>
<p>Faith without works saves. (Romans 3:28)</p> <p>This is a living faith (saving faith).</p>	<p>Faith without works does not save (James 2:14).</p> <p>This is a dead faith (James 2:17,20,26)</p>
<p>Faith alone saves.</p>	<p>The faith that saves is not alone.</p>
<p>A person is not saved by works.</p> <p>(“Works” are rejected by Paul as the means of salvation: it is wrong to say that a person must do good works in order to be saved.)</p> <p>These are meritorious works, that is, works done to try to merit or earn salvation.</p>	<p>A saved person will perform good works.</p> <p>(“Works” are understood by James to be the result of salvation: a person does good works because he is saved.)</p> <p>These are faith works, that is, works that spring from a faith that is real and living.</p>
<p>Paul agreed with James.</p> <p>He taught that good works must accompany saving faith (Eph. 2:10; Tit. 3:8; Gal. 5:6; Phil. 2:11-12).</p>	<p>James agreed with Paul.</p> <p>He taught that a person inherits the kingdom only by faith (James 2:5) and that Abraham was justified by faith (2:23).</p>
<p>Paul used the example of Abraham when he first believed in God (Rom. 4:3 and compare Genesis 15:6).</p>	<p>James used the example of Abraham when his faith was tested by God, about 40 years later (James 2:21 and compare Genesis 22).</p>
<p>The error Paul corrected:</p> <p>Salvation is by the works of the law (the error of legalism).</p>	<p>The error that James corrected:</p> <p>Works are unnecessary after a person is saved (the error of antinomianism).</p>
<p>Paul wrote about how a guilty sinner may be justified before God.</p>	<p>James wrote about how a believer can show that his faith is genuine (justification or vindication before men).</p>
<p>At the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 the key issue was that salvation is by grace through faith and not by the works of the law. See the error in Acts 15:1 and Peter’s conclusion in Acts 15:9,11. James, who took a lead role in this discussion never voiced any disagreement with Peter or Paul over this crucial matter.</p>	
<p>Paul’s perspective: He was viewing the guilty sinner who needed to be right with God. (The sinner is in view.)</p>	<p>James’ perspective: He was viewing the believer (or professing believer) who needed to demonstrate that his faith was real. (The believer is in view.)</p>

For a more detailed study on this important issue see Justification by Faith and Justification by Works--Did James Contradict Paul?

Romans 3:29-30

God's glorious gospel is not limited to one nation. God created all men and God died for all men, and thus the gospel message is offered to all men. This is taught in Romans 10:12 -- "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for THE SAME LORD over all is rich UNTO ALL that call upon Him." God's gospel is not just for the Jews; it is for "WHOSOEVERS" (see Romans 10:13).

"**Circumcision**" = Jews

"**Uncircumcision**" = Gentiles

In the earlier chapters of Romans Paul skillfully proved that both Jews and Gentiles were lost in sin and under God's condemnation (Romans 3:10). This was the bad news! Now Paul shares the good news that justification is offered to ALL MEN, both Jews and Gentiles. And for both groups it is received in only one way: BY or THROUGH FAITH! The real question is not whether you are a Jew or a Gentile. The real question is whether or not you are JUSTIFIED (whether or not you are a believer in the Crucified and Risen One).

Romans 3:31

"**Make void**" = render ineffective, nullify

"**God forbid**" = let it not be, may it never be, perish the thought!

"**Yea**" = on the contrary

The law is established when it serves the purpose for which it was given (see Romans 3:20). There are certain things which the law can do (Romans 3:20; 7:7-14) and there are certain things which the law cannot do (Romans 8:3; Galatians 2:16; Romans 3:20; etc.).

Biblical Christianity is neither legalistic nor lawless. Legalism does not establish the law but rather it nullifies it. Salvation by grace (the true gospel) establishes the law. **WHAT IS LEGALISM?**

"Do we then make void the law?" Do we put the law out of a job (do we render the law inactive, out of work)? Does the law have nothing to do? Have we reduced the law to inactivity? NO! GOD FORBID! The law and the gospel have different jobs. They each have their own jobs to do. The problem comes when you give the law the gospel's job (salvation) or when you give the gospel the law's job (condemnation). See Galatians 3:17 which teaches that the law cannot put the gospel out of a job (see Gal. 3:19 -- the law has its own job). The law's job is to "work wrath" (Rom. 4:15). Never mix the two, or you will ruin both! The gospel never waters down God's righteous standards of holiness ("the law"). On the other hand, LEGALISM does not establish the law but instead it disgraces it. Legalism brings the law down to something that man can keep (supposedly).

The law is established when its penalties are enforced. The Lord Jesus Christ established the law by bearing its penalty.

May the LAW OF GOD drive us to the LAMB OF GOD!
