

Romans 3:1-20: No Exceptions

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[0 : 0 0] The scripture text is from Romans chapter 3 verses 1 through 20 page 915. Please stand for the reading of God's word. Then what advantage has the Jew?

Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?

By no means. Let God be true, though everyone were a liar as it is written, that you may be justified in your words and prevail when you are judged. But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say?

That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? I speak in a human way. By no means. For then, how could God judge the world? But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner?

And why not do evil that good may come? As some people slanderously charge us with saying, their condemnation is just. What then? Are we Jews any better off?

[1 : 1 2] No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin as it is written. None is righteous. No, not one.

No one understands. No one seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good. Not even one. Their throat is an open grave.

They use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. In their paths are ruin and misery.

In the way of peace, they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

For by works of the law, no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

[2 : 1 4] Please be seated. Good afternoon to you.

We're in. Well into the Book of Romans. In, in a sense, up to our necks, over our heads. As the dirt is about to be poured onto the grave, as it were.

But we're in. And what a great book this is. And what a privilege it is to proclaim it. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your goodness to us.

We bless and we honor you for your word to us and for us in Christ. Pray, Lord, that we would hear you in your word today, and that your word would affect the kind of life change that it demands of us.

We look to you and bless and honor your name through Christ. Amen. The value of Romans chapter 3 in our understanding the gospel that we embrace and own is well recognized.

- [3 : 39] If you're familiar with the Romans' road to salvation, you know that the first stop is Romans 3.23. The great verse, Romans 3.23, is found within the context of what some consider to be the most important paragraph in the Bible.
- And you'll hear that expounded, explained on next week. But I mention these things because our chapter, our verses today, share, as it were, the chapter space with these other great Roman texts that we know.
- But let me be quick to point out that today's texts, while not as familiar as those referred to, they are not without significance.
- Indeed, it can be and has been seen and has been argued that some of the, by some, that the Romans chapter 3 is in fact the center of gravity in the entire book.
- so argued because the things that Paul addresses here briefly in chapter 3 are more comprehensively addressed in the book elsewhere.
- [5 : 12] Again, so, we really have to come to grips that what we're seeing here this week and next week critical to our understanding of the book as a whole.
- Let me tell you what I see and how I would like to outline and approach the verses that are before us on this afternoon. In verses 1 through 8, I believe that what we see there is the vindication of God's righteousness.
- That seems to be what Paul's concern in verses 1 through 8. The vindication of God's righteousness.
- In verses 9 through 20, what we see is the validation of man's unrighteousness. That is what's in view. And we'll see there that Paul, through Scripture, validates what he has been saying regarding the unrighteousness of man.
- What about the vindication of God's righteousness? Here, Paul argues for the righteousness of God in judging the Jews along with the rest of mankind.
- [6 : 35] God is righteous in doing that. The questions in the mouth of Paul's dialogue partner, they arise naturally out of what was seen or heard in chapter 2.
- out of the content of there, Paul has dealt a death blow, as it were, to the pride of the Jews, a death blow to Jewish pride.
- The diatribe style that we encountered on last week, it resumes here. Take a look at the text. We see what you have in verses 1 through 8.
- You have four sets of two questions each. You see that there? Verse 1, then what advantage has the Jews or what value of, what is the value of circumcision?
- Two questions. Look at verse 3. What if some were unfaithful? Does their unfaithfulness nullify the faithfulness of God? And you can go on down and see in verse 5 and verse 7 and 8, two sets a question followed by an emphatic answer that Paul gives to his imaginary dialogue partner.
- [7 : 56] Short answers follow the two-part question. The issue that seems to be at stake in verse 1 is the value of Jewish heritage.
- The value of Jewish heritage. Notice the questions that Paul wisely put in the mouth of his debate partner. Then what advantage has the Jew or what is the value of circumcision are the questions.
- Is there any value in Jewish heritage given what was said in the previous chapter? If being Jewish and all that means doesn't mean protection from God's judgment, what good is it?
- Again, that's the logic that follows from Romans chapter 2. Is there any benefit to being Jewish? Is our spiritual heritage worth anything?
- is the question on the floor. The question of advantage is raised and answered briefly in verse 2.

[9 : 09] But that is the short answer in verse 2. The long answer that awaited Paul's teaching is found in Romans chapter 9 verses 4 and following.

So you got Paul in a sense he's doing some bullet pointing along the way but answers to broader or more comprehensive answers to the questions that are raised here those answers are found in other places in the letter.

Center of gravity here. We do well to pay attention to what we see. The expected answer was that there's not.

But there's a surprise there isn't it because Paul says very much much in every way. And here's the deal. Right at the top of Jewish privilege or advantage was the fact that they had been entrusted with the very articles of God.

The very words of God himself. The word of God had come both to the Jewish nation but also through the Jewish nation through to the world.

[10 : 24] And while the oracles of God can in fact refer to the Old Testament as a whole it can also refer specifically to the promises and commands and that of God and that seems to be what's in view here in today's text.

You may recall the word of God in Deuteronomy to Israel as far as his identity of them their preciousness to God and the very fact that God had given them or entrusted to them given to him his words.

Deuteronomy chapter 4 verses 8 and 9 and you needn't turn to it. This is what it says. And what great nation is there that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?

And here's the deal. Only take care and keep your soul diligently lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life.

Make them known to your children and your children's children and trust it. The very words of God. God's words have been recorded and preserved but God's words were not simply to be in their care.

[11 : 46] It was to be lived out and displayed in their lives out to the world. And we have nothing less than a similar responsibility in our day.

That as we take the word of God in we are to reflect the goodness and the mercy of God to this world. Jesus put it well. Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and then glorify God.

How is our light going to shine? God was to be on display amongst the covenant people.

They were not simply to be babysitters of scrolls. They were to be wise in their living. Their living was to be visible proof of God's word.

Manifestation of God himself. And what a heritage. privilege. But spiritual privilege means responsibility and accountability.

[12 : 50] And so those today who have been recipients of God's truth. It's not the possession of God's word. It's not whether you have the KJV, King James Version, or the NIV, or the trusted ESV, or the Greek, or the Hebrew text.

It's not that we have them in our possession. Or it's not that we're simply taking notes every week. It's being manifested in our lives and in our living.

That's what God wanted for his people. That's what he wants from us today. Both embracing of the word as well as the doing of the word is what's needed in our lives.

Issue number one, Jewish heritage. Paul answers there. Issue number two, the matter of God's faithfulness or his trustworthiness.

Oh, verse three is just a beautiful verse. In that, notice the faith words. You see them there? This was a very decent translation of what's in the original that really sort of pops out.

[14 : 04] But what if some were unfaithful? does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?

This is a matter of God's faithfulness that's in view. Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? Two of the faith words in reference to the ethnic Jew, unfaithful faithfulness and faithlessness and one with reference to God, faithfulness of God.

What if some were untrustworthy with what had been trusted to them? You see the connection between entrusted in verse two? Does their lack of faith or trust mean that God himself is untrustworthy?

No, no, no, no, no, of course is the answer. Notice the short answer in verse four, but the longer answer that we see elsewhere in the book, Romans chapter nine, verses six and following.

Bullet point here, but further explanation there. By no means. Let God be true, though everyone were a liar, as it is written, that you may be justified in your words and prevail when you're a judge.

[15 : 26] Paul's answer is emphatic. The phrase by no means appears otherwise in diatribe. This is what one gets when he's countering or meeting objections, objecting what has been said.

No way, another way to put it in our day, not on your life, huh, in today's language. God's faithfulness to his promises does not collapse or not nullified just because of the collapse of faith on the part of God's people.

God is not dictated to by the lack of faith, not controlled by the lack of faith, lack of trust, the lack of fidelity on the part of his people.

Oh, wow, how tragic that would be. That would put us in the God position, would it not? But God's faithfulness does not collapse just because of the collapse of faith or trust of people.

And though the entire world would line up against God, God would be vindicated as trustworthy. Are there not those who line up against God in our world today?

[16 : 40] Are we not told that people do not believe those things anymore? Popular opinion doesn't determine what's ultimately true or false.

The safest thing that any of us can do would be to believe God, believe truth. Paul quotes a passage of scripture in defense of what he's saying here.

The situation was when David had committed adultery and murder and then he came to his senses. He acknowledged his sin and repented. Rather than standing in opposition to God, he came to agreement with God and with truth.

And he noticed, he speaks and that's a quotation. It's actually in the Septuagint, which is a little different from what we would see in the Hebrew text. But God will be proved as faithful and true as acknowledged by David in Psalm 51 and 4.

God's words will be proved to be reliable and true and his judgments will be proved to be trustworthy and true. He will prevail when he is judged.

[17 : 55] He is true and faithful to his words, to his promises. Look at verse 5. The issue there is God's justice or his righteousness.

The questions, if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say that God is unrighteous to inflict wrath upon us?

I speak in a human way. While God's faithfulness comes into view in verse 3, what we see here is God's righteousness that is contrasted with the unrighteousness of man.

And just like the faith words pop out in verse 3, the righteous words, or unrighteous as he is here, they pop out in verse 5. But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say?

That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath upon us? If our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, the question seems to be, if our unrighteousness puts God's righteousness on display, is that such a bad thing?

[19 : 15] Is it not then, if, if, if, is not then God unrighteous for inflicting us with wrath because our unrighteousness puts his righteousness on display? Well, he should cut us some slack, should he not?

Again, that seems to be the idea that's there. Is it not an unrighteous thing to inflict wrath on those who make God look so good by their unrighteous deeds?

And Paul recognizes that this is a very human perspective and that's why you have what you have in parenthesis. He said, I speak this in a human way. Again, he was, you might say, getting on line, just sort of in dialogue with this imaginary person.

If my bad makes God look good, is he unrighteous? Is he not unrighteous to punish the very ones who make him look good? Again, that's what's in view.

So, notice the answer, the response. Again, you've got this emphatic, no way, is there injustice on God's part?

[20 : 22] By no means. The short answer we have in this verse, the long answer is found, I believe that's the one in Romans chapter 9, verses 14 and following.

Huh? That comes back forcefully just like it did in verse 4. Paul recognized the twisted sense of justice that such a perspective represented as we see there in the verse, in verse 5.

Twisted sense of justice. No way. Not on your life. That's not the way the judge of all the earth operates.

That's not the way he works. As such were God's standard for judgment, he wouldn't be qualified to judge the world. That's what Paul is saying. It includes an answer of his own for a question of his own.

How then could God judge the world? Bad standards, wrong standards, God does not judge by those standards. Look at the fourth issue, the promotion of God's glory through evil.

[21 : 30] It's what's in view there. But if through my lie, God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? The argument comes on the heels of what has preceded.

The matter that comes into view is that of truth. This dialogue partners lie is contrasted with God's truth. It's a matter there of the means justifying the end, or the end justifying the means.

If the grand goal is God's glory, how that is achieved is up for grabs. And why not adopt the principle of doing evil that good may come from it?

Again, that seems to be the idea. The long answer, Romans chapter six and seven. The bullet point answer is what we see here.

Those who promote such deserve to be condemned, their condemnation is just. And with his answers to the other objections, Paul's response is brief just as it has been.

[22 : 38] The righteousness of God vindicated. Paul's answer to those who would object to his placing Jews and Gentiles on the same level as candidates for God's wrath is that God is faithful to his people who believe.

He is trustworthy and righteous in his judgment. That's his answer. who objects to his contention that Jews are likewise under the wrath of God. Notice the transition.

The shift goes from the vindication of God's righteousness to the validation of man's unrighteousness in verses 9 through 11.

And we see he uses a string of scriptures to prove his point that man indeed. He's already said it, but he's coming to bringing his argument to a close in these verses.

While the character of God, his righteousness, his faithfulness, and truthfulness comes into view in verses 1 through 8, what we see in verses 9 through 20 contrasts with what we see of that.

[23 : 51] These are the things that characterize God, but these are the things that characterize fallen humanity in verses 9 through 20. Notice the two questions in verse 9.

What then? Are Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are alike under sin.

While the Jews were better off by reason of their privilege of being recipients of God's words, they were not better off as it related to being under the wrath of God.

Just like the rest of humanity, there was no escape, no way out for them. Paul reminds us readers of the previous judgment that Jew and Gentile, both groups, all humanity, fall under the influence, the power of sin.

He nips at the feelings of superiority that may existed in the congregation where one would exalt himself over another, the tensions that existed in the Roman church that was there.

[24 : 58] But what he's letting them know that the playing field was level. No place for one-upsmanship. The infection of sin pervaded the entire race.

None had escaped and all were infected. Now, as we see here, Paul just doesn't say this and not give scriptural support.

And this is where he really pulls together quite a few scriptures from the Old Testament in order to drive home his point. After all, he is a biblical preacher here.

And up to this point, he had not used scripture heavily, but here he does. He strings together these scriptures like pearls on a string. He draws upon the Psalms and other passages of scripture.

And notice the use here of the negatives. None is righteous. No, not one. No one understands.

[26 : 00] No one seeks for God. And notice all have turned aside. No one does good, not even one. And he goes, there is no fear before their eyes in verse 18.

He defends his contention that all are under the sway of sin. And therefore, because of that, all are under condemnation. The comprehensive infection of the human race is in view.

The predominance of the Psalms are here. He also uses a quote from Proverbs as well as from Isaiah. The principle under sin, under its power, under its influence.

The pervasive influence comes into view in the verses that follow. And really, what we see here, if you would really take a close look at what we see in this passage, he has shown the Gentiles under sin, chapter 1, verses 18 through 32.

He's shown the self-righteous moralists under sin, chapter 2, verses 1 through 16. And the Jews, chapter 2, on, up, and through chapter 3, verse 8, under sin, and therefore, under condemnation.

[27 : 17] Generally speaking, all of mankind is wayward. And notice in verses 10 through 12, you see their disposition. Paul quotes from Psalm chapter 14 or Psalm chapter 53, and he speaks about the grand sweep.

There's none that is righteous, none who does good. To see that if there was anyone who would understand, who would seek after God, there's none who does good. not even one.

A comprehensive, inclusive indictment from the Word of God. Now, we see the general description in verses 10 through 12, but then we go on down and we see in verses 13 and 14, it speaks about this infection that goes from the head to the toe, and the words are in view in verses 13 and 14.

And generally speaking, the attitude of ignoring God is what we see here. And this is a reminder of what we saw a few weeks ago in Romans chapter 1 verses 18 through 32, where the knowledge of God is suppressed and all become worthless.

the infection of sin here in verses 13 and 14 is shown in their words. Verses 13 and 14 show how humans can be sinful in the use of their words.

[28 : 45] You see that there? Their throat is an open grave. They use their tongues to deceive. The venom of ash is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.

How are you with your words? The sin of our hearts will often find expression in the words of our lips.

But not only their words, but what about their walk? We see that in verses 16 and 17. The shift is from words to walk. Their feet are swift to shed blood, and their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known.

Again, feet, path, way, speaks about not only the words 13 and 14, but their actions, the walk. From head to toe, mankind, under the influence of sin, shows up in our words, shows up in our walks.

But then, you notice the root cause in verse 18, no fear, no respect. The absence of fear, the absence of reverence for God, where that's missing, mankind is up for grabs.

[30 : 00] Anything goes where the fear of God is not the centerpiece of our hearts. When God and the fear of God are not in the picture, our conduct, humanly speaking, suffers.

It's lacking. So we're right back to Romans 1, in principle, as well as in practice. You don't see it presented as graphically here, but in principle and practice, ignoring God, walking away from him, suppressing truth, that seems to be what's in view here.

He brings us right back here. The first part of verse 19 wraps up Paul's present interaction with his Jewish objectors, and he challenges those under the law.

Notice, now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law. So that, again, those who are under the law, speaking about the Jews, so that, so they're included, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world, Jew and Gentile alike, Jew and Greek alike, become accountable to God.

For by the works of the law, no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law is the knowledge of sin. What's he saying here?

[31 : 27] Huh? The entire world is liable to judgment, and the law cannot help because of the nature of the law. It could be a mirror, but it's not the medicine.

It can condemn, but it cannot cure. And again, he's going to deal more with this as we move into chapters 6 and 7.

But that's what we have here. There is no rebuttal, guilty, under condemnation. That's what Paul has set out to prove, and he's done that.

The indictment is finished. The conclusion is in. All humanity is indicted as unrighteousness under the sway of sin and marked for the wrath of God.

No escape for truth suppressing Gentiles or Jews. No escape for self-righteous moral judges.

[32 : 38] So what should the response of mankind be in view of this kind of indictment? one of my favorite movies is the man movie Braveheart.

The movie ends with the torture and the eventual death of the hero William Wallace. At the end of the movie, the executioner tries to get the hero William Wallace to cry out for mercy.

He refuses to do it. But you hear not just the executioner, but you hear there begins to be this chorus that rises up mercy.

Mercy. The men, the women, the children sing the plight that this man is in. With one voice as it were, it begins to rise.

Mercy. Mercy. Mercy. He doesn't cry out for mercy. And the result is the death of the hero.

[34 : 02] The posture of the condemned human race marked out for wrath for God must not be like the hero of a movie or a hero even in history.

And as we see and understand the indictment from heaven, ours must be for a cry of mercy. Because there's none excluded from the indictment of God.

And even as Paul has taken the scope of humanity. Those who have had revelation from God through creation have suppressed the knowledge that they've seen.

Those who would point fingers at others and tell them how bad that they are, yet they do the very things that they point the finger out out at others.

Those who had special revelation from God had been entrusted with the very words of God. All stood condemned.

[35 : 17] The indictment was comprehensive. The sentence was wrath. What's the response? What should it be?

Oh, the songwriters have done well in expressing what our response to what we've seen in these chapters up to this point needs to be.

Augustus Toplatti speaks of it well, penned a course for the human race, for the church, rock of ages, cleft for me.

Let me hide myself in thee. It's not the labors of my hands that can fulfill the law's demands.

Could my zeal know, respite know, could my tears forever flow, all for sin could not atone.

[36 : 26] Thou must save, thou alone. soul, nothing in my hand I bring simply to your cross I cling naked, come to thee for dress, helpless, look to thee for grace.

Foul I to the fountain fly, wash me savior, or I die. Mercy, that's the core, sing it as a solo, but it needs to be the course of the human race, all humanity.

There should be no holdout on those who would cry out to God for mercy. And we can call him because he's faithful, we can call him because he's trustworthy, we can call him because he's truthful, we can call him because he's righteous, we can call him because he has not forsaken his people.

Huh? Cry the mercy. And I believe that there's a group of people here today who have tasted of the mercies of God.

Because we have, we can sing of our Redeemer and all that he has done for us.

[37 : 59] Oh, friends, what can we say? As we come to grips continuously with our personal need, and we don't want to be like those who have a spiritual heritage but don't appreciate that spiritual heritage.

Those who embrace evangelical doctrine or whatever we want to call it but don't live out the kind of lives that bring glory and honor to God.

God's promises will not be nullified by our faith. He will be God. Always will be God. And those who embrace him will partake of him. oh, but we don't want to mock him or to live as if we've never experienced him.

Mercy is our plea. Mercy is our course. May it rise up and may it be the portion of a hall who call on him.

Won't you pray with me? Father, we love you and we thank you this afternoon for we receive your indictment. We receive your guilty charge.

[39 : 23] We receive the charge of the condemnation of the entire race, Lord, and we are in that number. And Lord, because of that, because we have recognized our need, we have called on you.

You have responded to us and we pray for all who have not, Lord, that they would come and that they would join the course, O God, of those who plead and call on you for mercy.

Let's stand.