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By Dan Maines

Romans 3

Romans 3:1-2

Then what advantage does the Jew have? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Great in every respect. First, that they were entrusted with the actual words of God.

† Paul anticipates the Jewish objection. If both Jew and Gentile are under judgment, what value remains in being Jewish? He answers that Israel did have a real advantage. They were entrusted with the oracles of God, meaning the covenant

Scriptures.

† Deuteronomy 4:8 declared that no other nation had such righteous statutes. Israel's possession of the law was a covenant privilege. Yet privilege without obedience only increased guilt.

† Josephus (Against Apion 1.8) argued that Israel's laws were superior to all others. Paul does not deny their greatness but insists that possession without faithfulness brings condemnation.

Romans 3:3-4

What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? Far from it! Rather, God must prove to be true, though every person be found a liar, as it is written: "So that You are justified in Your words, and prevail when You are judged."

† Israel's unbelief could not nullify God's covenant promises. Human failure does not overthrow divine faithfulness.

† Paul cites Psalm 51:4. David acknowledged that his sin only proved God righteous when He judged. Likewise, Israel's unbelief magnified God's covenant justice.

† Philo wrote that God's truth is unchangeable and human weakness cannot undo it. Paul takes this principle and applies it to Israel's covenant failure.

Romans 3:5-6

But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking from a human viewpoint.) Far from it! For otherwise, how will God judge the world?

† Paul confronts a false argument. Some might reason that sin is useful since it displays God's righteousness. He rejects this logic. God must judge sin to remain just.

† God's judgment is universal. Israel is not exempt. The phrase "judge the world" points to the covenant world of Jew and Gentile together, not the end of the physical universe.

Romans 3:7-8

But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner? And why not say (just as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), "Let's do evil that good may come of it"? Their condemnation is deserved.

† Paul was accused of teaching that sin glorifies God. He condemns this slander. God's grace is not an excuse for lawlessness.

† Early critics of Christianity charged that its teaching encouraged immorality. Tacitus (Annals 15.44) describes how Christians were accused of "hatred against mankind." Paul refutes such misrepresentation directly.

Romans 3:9

What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin.

† This is Paul's conclusion to chapters 1 and 2. Both Gentiles and Jews stand guilty. There is no covenant immunity.

† Ecclesiastes 7:20 declares, "Indeed, there is not a righteous person on earth who always does good and does not ever sin." Paul applies this universally.

Romans 3:10-12

as it is written: "There is no righteous person, not even one;

there is no one who understands, there is no one who seeks out God; they have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, there is not even one."

† Paul quotes Psalm 14:1-3 and Psalm 53:1-3. These texts originally condemned Israel as much as the nations. Paul weaves them into a universal indictment.

Romans 3:13-18

"Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving," "The venom of asps is under their lips," "Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness," "Their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their paths, and they have not known the way of peace." "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

† Paul strings together a chain of Psalms and Isaiah to show the depth of human corruption. Sin affects speech, actions, and attitudes. The law itself testified to Israel's failure.

Romans 3:19-20

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law none of mankind will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes knowledge of sin.

† The law condemns those under it, namely Israel. But since Israel was God's covenant people, their failure closes every mouth. No one can claim righteousness by law.

† The Dead Sea Scrolls (1QS 11) also admitted that human works cannot establish righteousness without God's mercy. Paul confirms this truth in Christ.

Romans 3:21-22

But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been

revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, but it is the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction,

† This is the turning point. God's righteousness is revealed apart from the Law. It is witnessed by the very Scriptures Israel trusted, but fulfilled in Christ.

† Isaiah 46:13 promised, "I bring near My righteousness, it is not far off." Paul declares it has now come in Christ.

Romans 3:23-24

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus,

† Jew and Gentile alike have sinned. All fall short. Justification is not earned but given freely through Christ.

† The language of redemption recalls Exodus 6:6. Just as God redeemed Israel from Egypt, He now redeems His people from sin in Christ.

Romans 3:25-26

whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in God's merciful restraint He let the sins previously committed go unpunished; for the demonstration of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

† Christ's death is the covenantal mercy seat. His blood is the propitiation, fulfilling Leviticus 16 and the Day of Atonement.

† God's forbearance with Israel's past sins is now explained. The sacrifices foreshadowed Christ. In Him, God is both just

and justifier.

Romans 3:27-28

Where then is boasting? It has been excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

† Boasting is excluded. Justification is by faith, not by works of law. This dismantles Jewish pride and opens covenant membership to all nations.

Romans 3:29-30

Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.

† Paul affirms monotheism. The one God justifies Jew and Gentile alike through faith. This fulfills Deuteronomy 6:4, "The Lord is one."

Romans 3:31

Do we then nullify the Law through faith? Far from it! On the contrary, we establish the Law.

† Faith does not abolish the Law but fulfills it. The Law pointed to Christ, and in Him it reaches its goal.

† Origen and Augustine both argued that Paul did not dismiss the Law but showed its true purpose, fulfilled in Christ.

How it applies to us today

† Boasting in religion, heritage, or rituals cannot justify us. Faith in Christ alone establishes righteousness.

† God is impartial. Jew and Gentile alike are included by faith, not flesh.

† The law cannot save, but it exposes sin. Christ alone redeems.

† Our faith today establishes the Scriptures, proving that God's word has been fulfilled in Christ.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

Source Index

† Josephus, Against Apion 1.8 – Israel's pride in possessing the law

† Philo, On the Unchangeableness of God – God's truth cannot fail

† Tacitus, Annals 15.44 – Early accusations against Christians

† Dead Sea Scrolls, 1QS 11 – Righteousness depends on God's mercy

† Origen, Commentary on Romans – The law fulfilled in Christ

† Augustine, On the Spirit and the Letter – Justification by faith, not works

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