

The Book of Romans

By Doug Hamilton

Romans 3:1-20 “Three Facts About Sinners”

In the first chapter of Romans we are clearly taught that the gentiles are nothing more than sinners even though they were not under the Law. In the second chapter we learn that the Jews have nothing to boast of for they are convicted as sinners under the Law. In chapter three we will ALL be convicted as sinners. Before he can do this, he will make a comparison of God’s righteousness and man’s unrighteousness. In particular he will single out the Jews.

Romans 3:1-8 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? ² Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God. ³ What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? ⁴ May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man *be found* a liar, as it is written, “THAT YOU MAY BE JUSTIFIED IN YOUR WORDS, AND PREVAIL WHEN YOU ARE JUDGED.” ⁵ 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 in human terms.) ⁶ May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world? ⁷ But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner? ⁸ And why not *say* (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), “Let us do evil that good may come”? Their condemnation is just.

We must not forget that Paul’s dialogical diatribe from the last chapter. It was a common teaching technique of ancient philosophers of the day. In it he would argue both sides of the discussion and allow the listener to come to his side of thinking. This technique continues in chapter three.

The Protester: Is there not an advantage to being a Jew over the gentile?

Paul: They received the Law of God, leading to the promises of God.

The Protester: Why did some of the Jews not keep the Law? Does this mean God does not keep His word?

Paul: No way, God is true and man is the liar. There was also a promised punishment for those whom did not keep the Law. Did not King David “*That You may be justified in your words*” when referring to being punished for his sin with Bathsheba (Psalm 51:4)? Did Abraham not say “*Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly*” (Gen 18:25) when referring to the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah? (Note: He will be using the same two people to make his argument for justification by faith in the next chapter.)

The Protester: Does this mean that God is unrighteous?

Paul: Of course not. It simply means that God is also a punisher of those whom disobey. There is justification of in judgment.

The Book of Romans

By Doug Hamilton

The Protester: Since God demonstrated His righteousness through my sin, then my sin must be a good thing?

Paul: Are you kidding me? Judgment on that logic is just.

With the indictment on both gentiles and Jews, it was time to unleash judgment upon all. Paul uses a rabbinical called *pearl stringing*. In the same way a jeweler would string pearls together to make a beautiful necklace, rabbis would string together many proof texts to make a beautiful argument. In this case the argument was that all mankind is under the power of sin.

Fact #1) Romans 3:9-20 “All Are Sinners in Need of Forgiveness”.

He reiterated that both the Jews and Greeks are under sin (9) and proves it with Old Testament references. “*It is written...*”

10-12 “THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; ¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.” (Psalms 14:1-3)

- Do you think you are righteous? God does not. Do you think you understand the mind of God? God doesn't. Do you think you are the embodiment of good? God most certainly does not think so.

13 “THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING,” (Psalm 5:9) “THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS” (Psalm 140:3)

- Do you think that God did not hear the words of hate, gossip and slander roll off your tongue?

14 “WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS” (Psalm 10:7)

- Do you really think that you have held your tongue in non-offensive ways your entire life? Did you really forget those angry words?

15-17 “THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD, ¹⁶ DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS, ¹⁷ AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN.” (Isaiah 59:7)

- Did you actually forget those hurtful things you did to another? Do you not remember lashing out at another in anger?

18 “THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.” (Psalm 36:1)

- Did it not register in our thoughts all the times we put God out of our minds while taking the path of sin? Are we so ridiculous that we pretend to not have accepted sinful chaos into our lives?

The Book of Romans

By Doug Hamilton

Everyone can shut their mouths and be accountable to the fact that we are all sinners in the eyes of God (19). Nobody is justified under the own merit concerning sin (20). It would serve us well to remember that there is not one person on earth who does not fall under sin.

Fact #2) Romans 3:21-26 “All Sinners Must Be Justified By Faith.”

21-26 But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation ^bin His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Paul said in Romans 1:17 concerning the gospel “*For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”*” It is here in this passage we learn how this comes about. It is through *faith in Jesus Christ* that *there is no distinction*. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (23). The word Paul used in 3:23 for *sinned* is harmartia. It referred to an archer shooting at a target which was out of the archer’s range. Try as he might, the arrow would always fall short. In this case, we were not even close. Then along came Jesus, sinless and blameless; One in Whom the Father is well-pleased (Mt 3:17). He deeply desires to pick up that arrow and walk it over to the target. He takes great joy in sticking the arrow in the bull’s-eye every time. He is just and wants to be our Justifier by making us justified.

The word *justified* means to be shown or proven right or righteous. Our sins separate us from God, for He is righteous and demands righteousness. Our righteousness is like a filthy garment to our righteous God (Is 64:6). Justification simply means “just as if I never sinned.” We receive justification through faith in the atoning power of Jesus.

Fact #3) Romans 3:27-31 “No Sinners Shall Be Justified By Works.”

27-31 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. ²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. ²⁹ Or is God *the God* of Jews only? Is He not *the God* of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one. ³¹ Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.

Paul challenged all the Roman Christian to make a boast of their own righteousness in light of justification through faith. They are not justified by what they have done, but because they believe in what Jesus had done. He died on the cross for both Jews and gentiles. God

The Book of Romans

By Doug Hamilton

expects us to walk in the newness of life, but we are not saved because of it. They were not justified by the works of the Law, but by the *law of faith*.

Application

So what do we do with what we have learned from chapter 3? There are three dangers which Christians need to avoid concerning sin. They are the following:

1) Do not ever forget your daily need for God's mercy.

Just because you responded to the gospel call in the past does not mean you do not need Jesus' mercy on a daily basis. There is a human tendency to fall back on our laurels. We must never forget that we need Jesus' mercy every second of every minute or every hour of every day.

2) Do not ever think you deserve salvation.

It is great if you have been walking in the grace of Jesus, for He expects us to. Do not make the other common mistake of confusing that walk as the source of your salvation. It is the salvation of Jesus that allows us to walk as a forgiven people. Do not become haughty because you have accomplished much in the improvement of your life. You do not deserve salvation, for it is a gift, not a purchase.

3) Do not ever use someone else's sin as a coping mechanism.

Everyone is in a struggle with sin. It does not matter if you are a new Christian or a half-century veteran of the kingdom, there is always temptation awaiting. There is a third common mistake of the Christian when observing others in sin. We tend to use the sins of others to feel better about our own failings. We say things like, "At least I am not like this person or that person", forgetting that our sins will also be judged by God. We do not flinch at our own actions while frowning on the actions of another. Do not fall into this deadly trap of deceit.