

Paul has indicted us all as sinners in need of the grace of God. He has declared that outward ritual is meaningless if it doesn't result in a heart change. In fact, the Gentiles blasphemed God because of the behavior of the Jews (2:24). God will judge our actions and words, not our religious performance (2:6). Then he made a very radical statement for his day. He claimed that a spiritual Jew is one whose heart has been circumcised regardless of their heritage (2:28-29). His peers would have been furious with that statement. They focused on keeping the details of the Law and their heritage. He is telling them that they missed the point. God is concerned about the heart, for out it the actions flow. Anyone can perform religious actions with a vile heart. God looks past the outer appearance to the heart of man (1Samuel 16:7). He searches out our motivations and intentions (2:16).

Chapter three begins with Paul posing a question that he assumes would come from his fellow Jews. It was easy for him to do so, because he had been a religious Jew whose heart was not changed. It was a question he would have asked. <sup>1</sup> *Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?* Romans 3:1 (ESV) If God loves mankind equally, if salvation is open to all who come to Him by faith, and if you can be an inward Jew without keeping all the rituals, then what advantage is it to be descended from Israel? What good is it to have the sign of circumcision?

Paul is helping the Jewish Christians to understand the blessing of their heritage. You could say his reasoning speaks to the child born in a Christian family. What good did it do to grow up with all the do's and don'ts? Why did you have to be different from the culture around you if it earns you no credit with God? That is what circumcision was for the Jews. It was a mark that set them apart. Both the Jews and Christians are called a chosen race, a holy nation, a people belonging to God (1Peter 2:9; Deuteronomy 7:6-7). But you can go to church all your life and not have a heart change. So what advantage is it? I find a lot of people asking the same question today. In fact, it is a growing trend of which Scripture warns us (Hebrews 10:25). Paul's answer addresses Jew and Christian.

<sup>2</sup> *Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.* Romans 3:2 (ESV) The chief reason it is a blessing to be Jewish or to be brought up going to church is the Word of God. The Jews were above all else, keepers of the Word. They meticulously copied the sacred Scriptures, the revelations that came from God. They kept a record of God's interaction with man, of His covenants, His promises, and His commands. To be around the Word is a blessing! Even today the Jews will read their Hebrew text even in liberal synagogues. They delivered to the world the wonder of

**Commented [notes1]: Romans 2:24 (ESV)**  
<sup>24</sup> For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

**Commented [notes2]: Romans 2:6 (ESV)**  
<sup>6</sup> He will render to each one according to his works:

**Commented [notes3]: Romans 2:28-29 (ESV)**  
<sup>28</sup> For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. <sup>29</sup> But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

**Commented [notes4]: 1 Samuel 16:7 (ESV)**  
<sup>7</sup> But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."

**Commented [notes5]: Romans 2:16 (ESV)**  
<sup>16</sup> on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

**Commented [notes6]: 1 Peter 2:9 (ESV)**  
<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

**Commented [notes7]: Deuteronomy 7:6-7 (ESV)**  
<sup>6</sup> "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.  
<sup>7</sup> It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples,

**Commented [notes8]: Hebrews 10:25 (ESV)**  
<sup>25</sup> not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

the Old Testament with all its promises and types and shadows of the coming Messiah. We base our Western civilization on its laws. It was the blessing that liberated slaves, that guided us to checks and balances in government, and that taught right from wrong.

The world before Christianity spread was a very different world of landlords and serfs. The very few owned everything and the rest were virtually slaves. The laws of the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus have given opportunity and increased security. And now much of the world seems intent on reversing that blessing. You only need to go to a country or people group that has never accepted the Word of God to experience the difference.

We are still operating under the residual blessing of those believers that have gone before us (2Kings 10:30), but you can see the degradation on a daily basis. This has nothing to do with politics. It is about antithetical worldviews. **There are rights and wrongs or there are none. There is absolute truth or nothing is true. The Bible is God's Word or it isn't. There is sound logic or there are only feelings.**

Just recently a family from Germany applied for asylum in the USA because the nation of Germany would not let them homeschool. They are an evangelical family and did not want their children to be indoctrinated with the present education system. The children were forcibly taken to school to learn tolerance. The parents were threatened with having their children taken from them. Germany was intolerant of their intolerance. But what is even sadder for us as Americans is that our Justice Department is refusing to give them asylum and justifying the German government's stance. Don't believe me; look it up. We are headed off a precipice if we think abandoning the Word of God will somehow make us a more tolerant and better people (Leviticus 26:18-19).

The Word delivered to us by the Jews is amazing. There is a lack of appreciation for the Old Testament in the church today. Some churches do not even read it. I've been working on another devotional book, *Through the Bible Again*, and I just finished the book of Job. Every time I read it I find it richer, deeper, and more insightful than before. Jory shared the Simply the Story teaching of David and Goliath. How many times have we read or heard that story and for the first time we saw new things that spoke to our hearts! It never grows old. Almost all of our classic English literature refers back to the Bible. But today, more than ever in our history, it is openly slandered and ridiculed. The media comments I hear regarding the Bible display a gross ignorance of its content and meaning.

Now for you, a modern day person raised in the church, what advantage was it? You have heard the great stories. You have been around the rich Word of God and even if your heart has not been changed, you are more familiar than much of the world with the agent of change, the Word of God. <sup>22</sup> *Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,*

**Commented [notes9]: 2 Kings 10:30 (ESV)**

<sup>30</sup> And the LORD said to Jehu, "Because you have done well in carrying out what is right in my eyes, and have done to the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel."

**Commented [notes10]: Leviticus 26:18-19 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> And if in spite of this you will not listen to me, then I will discipline you again sevenfold for your sins, <sup>19</sup> and I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze.

<sup>23</sup> since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; <sup>24</sup> for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, <sup>25</sup> but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you. 1 Peter 1:22-25 (ESV) We are greatly indebted to the Jews for delivering to us the Word of God. Their circumcision is a constant reminder of God's covenant with the seed of Abraham and the need for a circumcised heart (Deuteronomy 30:6).

<sup>3</sup> What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?

Romans 3:3 (ESV) If some of the Jews were bad examples and caused Gentiles to blaspheme God's name, does that mean God won't be faithful to keep His promises to them. Well, some of the promises were conditional upon their faithfulness to keep their side of the deal (Exodus 23:22), but most were not (Ezekiel 36:26). When God went through the covenant blood, He intentionally kept Abram in a trance because God knew Abram couldn't keep his part of the deal (Genesis 15:12). God made a lopsided covenant. There are unconditional promises to the Jews, and that was the big one. Abram's progeny was not faithful to keep the covenant and so God was torn apart and his blood shed just like the animals of the covenant. It wasn't because God failed, but because Abram's descendants failed. Still, God was faithful. His word is faithful. He will keep all His unconditional promises to the Jewish people. He cannot lie. He cannot be unfaithful.

And what of us believers today? What if we are unfaithful? We are all unfaithful, as we will see in the rest of this chapter. If you are trusting in God but you succumb to sin and it grieves your heart, don't live under condemnation (Romans 8:1). God is faithful and just to forgive those who confess and repent (1John 1:9). Our failures can't nullify the faithfulness of God.

<sup>4</sup> By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged." Romans 3:4 (ESV) Paul is quoting David from Psalm 51:4. It is a psalm of repentance. He had just confessed that he had sinned against God. That sin, he said, proved that God was right in what He said and would prevail when He judged. The NIV translates it, "proved right when you speak and are justified when you judge." God will always be in the right. Our sin merely shows that when God declares we are fallen beings and that none of seek Him, He is absolutely correct. When He judges us, He is always justified in sentencing us as He does. Our sin deserves death, for we are in rebellion against all goodness. God will be faithful to His nature regardless of what man does.

The entire world can lie and reject God, but He will be faithful to love us, and to offer us salvation (John 3:17). He will also be faithful to judge those who reject love and mercy. To the obstinate who will not turn, who think they know better than the declaration of His Word, who think their reasoning is better than Solomon and their

**Commented [notes11]: Deuteronomy 30:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

**Commented [notes12]: Exodus 23:22 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> "But if you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.

**Commented [notes13]: Ezekiel 36:26 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

**Commented [notes14]: Genesis 15:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him.

**Commented [notes15]: Romans 8:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

**Commented [notes16]: 1 John 1:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**Commented [notes17]: Psalm 51:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

**Commented [notes18]: John 3:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

judgments of right and wrong are better than those of God's own Son, there must be a day of judgment. His word is the final Word (Job 40:4-5).

*<sup>5</sup> 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.)* Romans 3:5 (ESV) Paul is assuming a counter argument, probably one he had heard. In chapter six he will bring this up again (6:1,15). When we talk about God's grace, some think that the more we sin the greater we can see God's grace. That sounds ridiculous, and it is. It is like saying the darkness is a great backdrop for His light. No! Light dispels all darkness and it doesn't need the darkness. Unrighteousness is evil. It is destructive. It is never innocent. It never adds anything to God.

The idea of it being unrighteous to judge evil is alive and well today. It is the same illogical thinking that says there are no absolutes except the one that says there are no absolutes (Psalm 119:89). It is the same kind of reasoning that says man is basically good in spite of all evidence to the contrary (Psalm 14:1). They deny that man is fallen though in every culture in every part of the world men do destructive things. It is the same kind of reasoning that insists that matter must be eternal and that life came from non-life by a cosmic accident of time and chance (Genesis 1:1). This illustrates the intentional suppression of truth (1:18).

In our day we don't often see the argument that Paul is presenting, except in a few extremes of the religious world. Instead, the modern argument is that there is no such thing as unrighteousness. We'll look at that next week.

*<sup>6</sup> By no means! For then how could God judge the world?* Romans 3:6 (ESV) If sin made God appear to be more righteous and God would be unjust in dealing out His wrath on sin, then there would never be a day of justice. This is one area where man struggles in his heart. We know that somehow there must be justice or life and eternity are entirely unfair. Some say it is resolved through karma. Reincarnation suggests that an infinite series of life and death will eventually work our debt to the universe. There is a problem with that thinking. The only perfect man to ever live was the historical Jesus. If it were true, people would be almost perfect by now. That isn't what we observe or our own experience.

If there is no judgment then God is unjust. If there is no justice there will always be the chaos and pain that sinful man inflicts on others. If there is a holy God, then there must be judgment.

If we examine our hearts we know we long for justice. This is another area where modern thinking is completely illogical. While declaring that the perpetrators of crimes should be rehabilitated, nothing the world offers has slowed the rate of recidivism. I just had a talk with a retired police officer who was frustrated with picking up the same people over and over. They get a sentence of 10 years and are out in 18 months

**Commented [notes19]: Job 40:4-5 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth.  
<sup>5</sup> I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further."

**Commented [notes20]: Romans 6:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

**Commented [notes21]: Romans 6:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

**Commented [notes22]: Psalm 119:89 (ESV)**

<sup>89</sup> Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.

**Commented [notes23]: Psalm 14:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good.

**Commented [notes24]: Genesis 1:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

**Commented [notes25]: Romans 1:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

committing the same crimes. Only Christian discipleship has made a change in the rate because it is the only thing that changes the heart. Chapel services alone don't do it, and neither does education. Education only helps the criminal commit smarter crimes and avoid being caught.

The world refuses to consider the need for the heart to change because the world insists that the heart of man is basically good. The more we operate on that philosophy, the higher our per capita prison rate. When will we face the facts? We talked about the need for judgment in chapter one so I won't beleaguer the point (1:18).

*<sup>7</sup> But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? <sup>8</sup> And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.* Romans 3:7-8 (ESV) Once again, Paul is confronting the lie that Christians encourage sin because it shows the greatness of God's grace. Of course those who saw obedience to the Law as a means of righteousness would think grace received by faith to be a false shortcut to salvation. They didn't understand the same thing that many don't understand today. **We turn from sin because we love the One that freed us from its enslaving power** (1John 1:6). We turn from it because Jesus showed us that it was destroying us and condemning us to the wrath of God. We turn from sin because of the great price that was paid for it, the price that demonstrated the great love of God. That love and goodness of God produces in our hearts a love for the good things of God (1John 3:16). Now we desire to be righteous, not to earn merit with God, but because God's love has won our heart. It isn't ritual obedience, but obedience from a heart of love (6:17). We have made Christ our King and long to please Him in all we do and say.

Paul says the condemnation of those who promote this lie about the grace of God is justly deserved. Those who would turn others from the salvation found in Christ and His Word because of religion, or jealousy, or spite, or whatever reason, are keeping people away from the love of God. What should a just God do to them?

We have a great advantage. We have the Word that declares the love and grace of God is ours by faith. We have countless lessons in this Word that lead us in the path of righteousness for the sake of the LORD's name (Psalm 23:3). We have truth. We have our eyes opened. Let us be continually grateful for all that we have been given and the hope that fills our hearts (Ephesians 5:20).

For those in darkness, whose minds are blinded by Satan, let us pray for an awakening, and for opportunities to share the joy of salvation. Let us never be entangled in fruitless arguments (2Timothy 2:23-24) but always willing to give an answer for the hope that fills us with joy each day (1Peter 3:15).

Questions

**Commented [notes26]: Romans 1:18 (ESV)**  
<sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

**Commented [notes27]: 1 John 1:6 (ESV)**  
<sup>6</sup> If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

**Commented [notes28]: 1 John 3:16 (ESV)**  
<sup>16</sup> By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

**Commented [notes29]: Romans 6:17 (ESV)**  
<sup>17</sup> But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,

**Commented [notes30]: Psalm 23:3 (ESV)**  
<sup>3</sup> He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

**Commented [notes31]: Ephesians 5:20 (ESV)**  
<sup>20</sup> giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

**Commented [notes32]: 2 Timothy 2:23-24 (ESV)**  
<sup>23</sup> Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.

<sup>24</sup> And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil,

**Commented [notes33]: 1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)**  
<sup>15</sup> but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

- 1 What is the Jewish advantage?
- 2 How can we relate to this?
- 3 What are the opposing world views?
- 4 What happens to nations that abandon the Word of God?
- 5 Will God always keep His promises?
- 6 How did Paul use Psalm 51:4?
- 7 How can God judge us?
- 8 Why did people think Christians promoted sin?
- 9 Do we want justice?
- 10 Why do we do good?
- 11 How should we react to those who oppose the Word?