

Book Study #5 ROMANS

Rom. 3:9-31 No One Is Righteous

Before We Begin...

1. How would you describe your parents' disciplinary style when you were growing up Has this affected the way you have disciplined your own children or those in your charge?

Exploration... Discovery... Revelation...

2. Paul emphasizes the complete sinfulness of man by referring to several different parts of the body that man uses to disobey God. In the space below, identify those body parts and write in your own words the description Paul gives them.

(v.13)

(v.15)

(v.14)

(v.16)



3. According to our passage, what does the law do? What is it unable to do?

4. What is it that causes "every mouth" to be "silenced?" (v.19; see v.27)

5. What does the latter part of this passage (vv. 21-31) tell us about righteousness and justification?

Where they come from

How they are obtained

Who receives them

6. What does the phrase, "there is no difference," tell us about the gospel? (v. 22)

7. How does the death of Christ demonstrate God's justice? (vv. 25-26)

8. How does the principle of justification by faith "uphold the law"? (v. 31)

Commentary: This passage concludes the portion of the letter (1:18-3:20) in which Paul makes the point that all men, Jew and Gentile alike, are sinful and deserving of God’s judgment. This point is essential to the message of Romans, because unless there is something to be saved from, there is no need of the gospel. Here Paul finishes off his argument by bringing together several Old Testament quotations which describe man’s utter sinfulness.

v. 9 What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? . . . The “we” here refers to Christians, as in 3:8. Having condemned Jewish law-breakers in 2:17-27, Paul now reminds believers that they are no better off. (This is similar to 2:1, where he turned from describing sinful Gentiles to describing sinful Jews.) Sin and guilt are not unique to Jews or Gentiles, but are universal. **Jews and Gentiles alike...** This phrase encompasses all mankind. All are “under sin;” under its power and control (Rom. 6:15-17).

vv. 10-12 As it is written . . . In the following verses, Paul strings together quotations from several Old Testament passages, to emphasize that what he is saying is not some new doctrine, but is the consistent teaching of the Scriptures. This quote is from Psalm 14:1-3. **There is no one righteous** . . . Paul makes absolutely clear his main point: all men, without exception, are sinners. (See also Solomon’s prayer in I Kings 8:46). All have turned away . . . Men do not merely ignore God, they actively avoid him (see Isaiah 53:6).

vv. 13-14 Their throats are open graves . . . In verses 13-18, Paul emphasizes the complete sinfulness of man by specifying different parts of the body, along with the sins which are characteristic of each one. Here, using quotes from Psalms 5:9, 140:3, and 10:7, Paul emphasizes the corrupt and deadly nature of men’s speech. (See also James 3:6, 8.)

vv. 15-17 This passage is a quote from Isaiah 59:7-8. Here Paul brings out the speed with which men rush to commit sins; also, its habitual nature--sin is not an occasional pastime, but a way of life.

v. 19-20 Now we know . . . In response to the possible objection that this description applies only to Gentiles, Paul invites his readers to reason with him reminding them that the law was given, not to make men righteous, but to expose their sin and eliminate any excuse of ignorance. As a result, it is impossible to achieve a right standing with God by keeping the Law. The next major section of Romans begins with 3:21-5:21.

v. 21 righteousness from God . . . Paul is speaking here of a right legal standing before God, of being “declared righteous in his sight” (3:20). This righteousness does not come from within ourselves, or from our right actions; rather, it comes from God. **But now . . . has been made known** . . . These phrases indicate that the gospel is something which was not previously understood, although it was alluded to in the Old Testament (see Luke 24:25-27; Gal. 3:23-25). The gospel is a “mystery”, something which was part of God’s plan from the beginning, but which only now has been fully revealed (Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:3-9).

v. 22 through faith in Jesus Christ . . . Faith does not earn salvation; salvation has already been earned for us by Christ. It is merely the means through which salvation comes. Note that this faith is specific. It is not what many people mean when they say “have faith”, a general confidence that everything will work out. It is faith in a specific person, Jesus Christ, and in his saving works on our behalf. **There is no difference** . . . This phrase is a “hinge”, linking what comes before with what comes after. The righteousness which comes through faith in Christ is to all who believe. There is one way of salvation for all men, because there is one common problem: all have sinned. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, between those raised as Hindu, Muslim, or Christian, between “good” people and “bad” people. All have the same problem, and that problem has only one solution.

v. 23 fall short of the glory of God . . . It is difficult to pin down the precise meaning of this phrase, but the general intent is clear enough. Because of sin, man falls short--of God’s holiness, of the divine image he had when first created (Gen. 1:27; Psalm 8:5), of fellowship with God (Ex. 34:29, 33-35). In the Scriptures, “glory” describes the dignity and honor which come from fulfilling the purpose for which we are created, and that is what sin prevents.

v. 24 and are justified . . . This justification is synonymous with being “declared righteous in his sight” (3:20). It does not mean to be made virtuous, so that one no longer sins. Rather, it means to be acquitted of sin, so that one is no longer considered guilty. This comparison to a court of law is appropriate, because Paul has just stated that the law is what makes us conscious of sin and makes us accountable to God (3:19-20). through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus . . . Here Paul uses another comparison: prison and the slave market. The word “redemption” was used to describe the release of prisoners after payment of a ransom, and also to describe the freeing of slaves after payment of a price. The key idea here is that Jesus Christ purchased our freedom from sin by paying the price of his own life (1 Cor. 6:20; Rev. 5:9).

v. 25 a sacrifice of atonement . . . The word translated “atonement” has the primary meaning of propitiation, or the turning away of wrath. God temporarily withheld punishment for the sins committed before Christ, but that punishment was only delayed, not eliminated. Through his death on the cross, Christ suffered God’s wrath for sins past, present, and future, so that those who have faith in him would not experience it. Even now, God is demonstrating his patience, withholding punishment for sins so that people can have every opportunity to repent and be saved (2 Pet. 3:9).

v. 26 he did it to demonstrate his justice . . . This verse tells us why Christ had to die. In order to demonstrate his mercy, God desired to save sinners. But he could not simply overlook their sin and remain just; sin must be punished. So in order to do both, Christ died in our place to satisfy the demands of justice.

v. 27 Where then, is boasting? . . . Someone who was able to achieve righteousness by her own efforts could justifiably take pride in that accomplishment. But there is no place for self-righteous pride in Christianity. In order to have faith in Christ, we must realize that we cannot make ourselves acceptable to God (see Eph. 2:8-9).

vv. 29-30 Is God the God of Jews only? . . . Here Paul uses one of the Jews’ most cherished doctrines, the belief in one God, as an argument for the gospel. It goes like this: if there is only one God, then He must be the God of all people. And if there is only one God for all people, then any salvation which is limited to Jews must be false. Thus, the true way of salvation must be open to all people, and it is: faith in Christ!

v. 31 Do we then, nullify the law . . . Having faith does not mean that the Law is meaningless. Rather, faith upholds the law by giving the law its rightful place—not as something to keep to earn salvation, but as a standard to show us our sin and prepare us for Christ (Gal. 3:24).