

Today's Reading

(Sunday 19 May 2024)

Romans 2:17-24 and 3:1-20

¹⁷ But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God ¹⁸ and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law;

¹⁹ and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— ²¹ you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal?

²² You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.

²⁴ For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

3 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? **2** Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

3 What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? **4** 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.”

5 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.) **6** By no means! For then how could God judge the world?

7 But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? **8** And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

⁹ What then? Are we Jews^[e] any better off?^[f] No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰ as it is written:

“None is righteous, no, not one;

¹¹ no one understands;

no one seeks for God.

¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;

no one does good,

not even one.”

¹³ “Their throat is an open grave;

they use their tongues to deceive.”

“The venom of asps is under their lips.”

¹⁴ “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”

¹⁵ “Their feet are swift to shed blood;

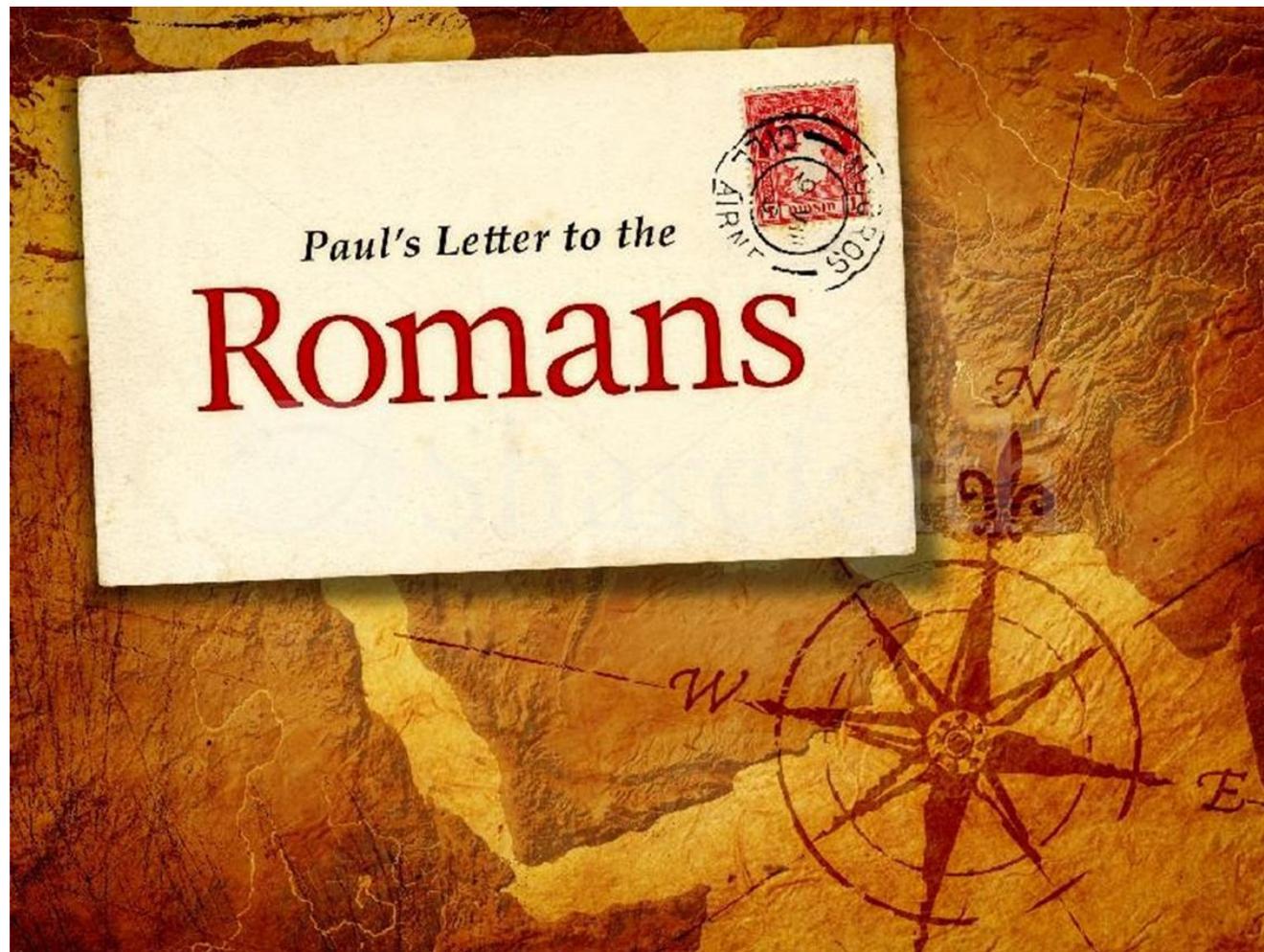
¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery,

¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known.”

¹⁸ “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

19 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.

20 For by works of the law no human being^[g] will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.



**Even Religious People are Guilty
(Romans 2:17-24 and 3:1-20)**

Paul's Direction in Romans, chapters 1-3

- (Romans 1:18-32) Immoral people are guilty before God
- (Romans 2:1-16) Moral people are guilty too
- **(Romans 2:17-3:8) Even religious people are guilty**
- (Romans 3:9-20) The whole world is guilty before God
- (Romans 3:21-31) The righteousness of God through faith

I. Why Do Some Religious People Have Bad Reputations?

(Romans 2:17-24)

The Hypocrisy of the Pharisees

(Luke 11-12)

- Context: Jesus had been invited to dine at home of a Pharisee, where one of them was critical of Jesus not ceremonially wash before the meal.
- “Woe to you, Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God . . . You love the best seat in the synagogues . . . Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves. . . .
- Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers . . .
- Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is **hypocrisy**.”

The Dangers of Hypocrisy

- The hypocrisy of a religious person causes non-believers to reject God: “²⁴ For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you” (Romans 2:24)
- ¹⁶ They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. (Titus 1:16)
- Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. (James 1:26)

II. Religious People Who Try to “Game the System” (Romans 3:1-8)

A story of the businessman who “gamed the system” of grace, leading to a poor reputation and an ineffective witness when sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Letter to the Romans as a “Diatribes”

- Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? ² Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. (Romans 3:1-2)
- . ³ What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? ⁴ 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 3:3-4)
- ⁵ 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.) ⁶ By no means! For then how could God judge the world? (Romans 3:5-6)
- ⁷ But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? ⁸ 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)

Don't be a "Gamer"

- **Keep it simple:**

Here is the conclusion of the matter:

Fear God and keep his commandments,
for this is the duty of all mankind. (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

- **A Gospel of Grace; Not a Gospel of License:**

- "A gospel of license presents many opportunities to stray far from God's intended way of life. A gospel of grace provides the inner work of the Holy Spirit as the way of life" (David P. Seemuth, *Romans*, p. 59)

- **A Connection to Pentecost:**

- "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8)

Paul's Direction in Romans, chapters 1-3

- (Romans 1:18-32) Immoral people are guilty before God
- (Romans 2:1-16) Moral people are guilty too
- (Romans 2:17-3:8) Even religious people are guilty
- **(Romans 3:9-20) The whole world is guilty before God**
- (Romans 3:21-31) The righteousness of God through faith

III. Everyone is Guilty According to the Law

(Romans 3:9-20)

Everyone is guilty of sin:

What then? Are we Jews any better off? [A Question in a "Diatribē"]

No, not at all. For we have already charged that **all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin** (Romans 3:9)

III. Everyone is Guilty According to the Law

- Paul uses Scripture to establish that everyone lives under sin: that no one is righteous
- *Paul follows a common rabbinical practice of stringing passages together like pearls” (John W. Stott).*
- **Romans 3:10-11**
- “None is righteous, no, not one;
11 no one understands;
no one seeks for God.
- **Ecclesiastes 7:20**
- ²⁰ Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.

III. Everyone is Guilty According to the Law

- **Romans 3:12**

- ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;
no one does good,
not even one.”

- **Psalm 14:2-3**

- ² The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man,
to see if there are any who understand,
who seek after God.
- ³ They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt;
there is none who does good,
not even one.

III. Everyone is Guilty According to the Law

- **Romans 3:13a**

- ¹³ "Their throat is an open grave;
they use their tongues to deceive."

- **Psalm 5:9**

- ⁹ For there is no truth in their mouth;
their inmost self is destruction;
their throat is an open grave;
they flatter with their tongue.

- **Romans 3:13b**

- "The venom of asps is under their lips."

- **Psalm 140:3**

- ³ They make their tongue sharp as a serpent's,
and under their lips is the venom of asps.

III. Everyone is Guilty According to the Law

- **Romans 3:14**

- ¹⁴ "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."

- **Psalm 10:7**

- ⁷ His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression;
under his tongue are mischief and iniquity.

- **Romans 3:15-17**

- ¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood;
¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery,
¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known."

- **Isaiah 59:7**

- ⁷ Their feet run to evil,
and they are swift to shed innocent blood;
their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity;
desolation and destruction are in their highways.

III. Everyone is Guilty According to the Law

- **Romans 3:18**
- ¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes."
- **Psalm 36:1**
- Transgression speaks to the wicked
 deep in his heart;^[a]
there is no fear of God
 before his eyes.

III. Everyone is Guilty According to the Law

(Romans 3:9-20)

Everyone is guilty of sin:

What then? Are we Jews^[e] any better off?

No, not at all. For we have already charged that **all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin** (Romans 3:9)

All the Law can do is reveal our sin—it does not make us righteous:

¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:19-20)

Closing Thoughts and Takeaways

1. Some Ways to Avoid a Bad Reputation

- **Show justice, love, and humility**

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the LORD require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

- **Walk the walk when you talk the talk**

This is how we know we are in him: ⁶Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did. (1 John 2: 5b-6)

2. Admonish with Empathy

- Christian aggressiveness is usually ineffective with non-believers
- “As believers interact with a society at odds with God and His law, we are able to help people discern whether or not they are in right standing with Him. This need not be done in a shaming way of self-righteously declaring how sinful others are. We are able to call attention, even gently, to whether people have always done what God would have had them do. In such a way we identify with people in that we, too, have fallen short of what God expects.”

--David P. Seemuth, *Romans*, p. 61

3. Humility with Strength

- The need for personal confession and humility

Simultaneously . . .

- The need to know and defend the teachings of the Bible with confidence
- Everyone is guilty of sin
- Pray for others to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior
- Relationship-building is critical for evangelization (Ethos)
- We are called to share the Gospel, but people are only saved through the power and indwelling of the Holy Spirit: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth” (1 Corinthians 3:6).



Let Us Pray

