

We finish up the doctrine of sin by comparing our unrighteousness to God's righteousness. It goes beyond God as the Creator that gives Him the right to judge the world. God is set apart by any other mortal being or idea in that He is holy and righteous and by that alone, can He rightfully judge.

God's Righteousness Upheld

3:1 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?

After the junior high gigglefest we had when Paul spoke of true circumcision in Roman 2:25-29, Paul answers the obvious followup question to his statement, "Then what is the point of being a Jew?".

Everything.

2 Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

'Oracles of God' is the Old Testament. Israel was the nation that was picked by God, rescued by God, delivered by God, provided by God and entrusted by God so that God could be magnified in the highest and glorified in the highest based on Who He Is and what He does through this tiny little bitty nation. It is through Israel that the world will know who is the One True God. Think about it all the enemies that God has delivered Israel from. No longer in slavery to the Egyptians. As a ragtag nation with no land to call their own, God delivered them into the land He promised them into a land where Satan had several hundred years to raise up enemies to go against God's people. Even better, how Jesus Christ came down and through His death and resurrection was able to not transcend the merciless Roman Empire but was able to overthrow it less than 300 years later.

Little bitty tiny nations don't do that on their own. God does that on His own.

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."

God has always always always upheld His end of the covenant, even if and when we fail. God is faithful even when we are not faithful. Look at Abrahamic covenant: "I will bless the nations that bless you and curse the nations that curse you." Look at the Davidic covenant: "Out of your lineage will be The Messiah who will rescue all and will establish His kingdom and reign forever." Between the time He gave David that covenant and Jesus Christ appear in a manger, Israel falling completely out of favor of God. Yet, God still delivered on what He promised.

We are all liars but God is always true.

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.

When Paul writes his epistles, I cannot think of the exception where Paul was not responding to a letter. Like Paul's letters to the churches in Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus and Phillipi were responses to the letters he received from those respected churches. Much like his other epistles, it seems very clear that Paul is using this epistle to the Romans to answer some of the questions he received earlier.

Sometimes I think it is unfortunate that we don't have the originating letter from the churches (Corinth: is it okay to sleep with my father's wife?). On the other hand, I almost rather not know because I feel like we would try to match up our thoughts and questions against those being asked. If their questions are not the questions we would asked, why even bothering with reading the answer?

Here, Paul is either quoting their question or thought of a possible question as feedback to what he wrote in chapter 2. People might be quick to say, "Okay, if through our sin that God is glorified or through our unrighteousness, God is righteousness, then how can God judge us for our unrighteousness?"

You speak as though His righteousness is utterly dependent on our unrighteousness. You speak as though He wasn't righteous, just and holy before our first parents sin and thus broke all of creation. Remember the Hebrew word *shalom*? This is not peace because of absence of conflict, strife and war. This is true peace that only comes from God. Likewise, God's righteousness is not due to the absence of holiness and righteousness in us. This is righteousness despite our unrighteousness that can only come from God. God is forever faithful despite our unfaithfulness.

No One Is Righteous

9 What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,

Paul already leveled the playing field back in **Romans 2:12 For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.** But look at what Paul is saying thus far in chapter 3. Do we have the advantage? Yes because we had the law and God laid down His standard to us. Are the Jews better off? No.

Do we Christians have the advantage? Yes, because we should know His word and have it written upon our hearts. You have the Word. You should know better. So are we Christians better off?

There are many people who think they are Christians and yet their hearts are not changed by God.

Matthew 7:15-23 (ESV) 15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will recognize them by their

fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. 18 A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

I Never Knew You

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Hebrews 6:4-8 (ESV) 4 For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. 7 For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. 8 But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.

Just because you attend church, listen to nothing but praise and worship, got the Jesus fish on your car, rock the Jesus t-shirts, never cuss and watch inappropriate movies and get yourself deep into the Christian subculture, that doesn't make you better off. I will contend that you are probably worse off because the Word was made available to you.

(Psalm 14:2-3, 53:2-3)

10 as it is written:

"None is righteous, no, not one;

11 no one understands;

no one seeks for God.

How many are righteous? Who understands? How many seek after God?

No one. "No one" in the Greek means "no one".

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

How many turned aside? All.

Who does good apart from God? No one. Not even one.

You? Me? Us? All of us? Anybody who has ever lived and will ever live have sinned.

(Psalm 5:10)

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

(Psalm 140:3)

"The venom of asps is under their lips."

(Psalm 10:7)

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

Here, Paul has taken bits and parts from Psalm 5, 140 and 10 together in order to reproduce the sinfulness of human speech in sequence: throat, tongues, lips, mouth.

throat as open grave - speaks of the inner corruption and deadly effects of speech if used in the wrong way. Read Robert Morris' *The Power of Your Words* if you don't believe me.

tongues to deceive, venom... under their lips, mouth full of curses and bitterness -

- I always loved the spiritual gift of encouragement. What seems random to us, the Holy Spirit will direct a believer to walk up to another person and start speaking words to uplift, rebuild and strengthen. The antithesis of encouragement, however, is flattery, curses and bitterness. What you say might have the same content of encouragement but when those words are meant for evil, they can utterly tear down if not destroy another person.

(Isaiah 59:7-8)

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."

This is just touching on not just Israel's bloodshed and war-filled history but all of history. We, humans, at our very best do nothing slaughter and kill and leave a warpath in our destruction. Funny how this is the complete opposite of God asked us to do, mainly **Ephesians 6:15 (ESV) and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.** Instead of us running and leaving misery in our wake, we should be joyfully run to the four corners of the earth and proclaim that there is a Saviour and Lord who has already conquered death and hell and has come to bring peace in your life and in this time and He is building His kingdom and when the time comes, He will come to reign and rule over all, bring end to all wars and bring everlasting peace. He is the Lion and the Lamb. He is our gracious Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ.

(Psalm 36:1)

18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

What is the root of all sin? Not to put God first. To put something before God. Not to even fear him.

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.

Here is what Paul is saying. You had the law and yet, you are still a sinner. Just because you had the law before doesn't grandfather you in now. Let us put it into modern context: you grew up in a Christian home and your parents believe. Heck, you can go back several generations and you have a family tree full of pastors, deacons and missionaries. But, you were still born a sinner and you still need Jesus, no matter what.

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

Listen, the Mosaic Law required perfect obedience to God where everybody fell short of perfect obedience. God laid down His law, which is perfection that all people have to achieve. But God laid this measurement of perfection and you would come up short so that you go back and see out God for help.

The Righteousness of God Through Faith

21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—

The righteousness of God still upholds despite the law whether we follow it or not. However, the Law and the Prophets bear witness to this.

Who completed the law? Or who because of His perfection, His righteousness and holiness, fulfilled the Law and the Prophets?

Luke 24:44 (ESV) Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

Matthew 5:17 (ESV) "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Whether you are Jew or Gentile, you have sinned. It doesn't matter. If you believe in Christ Jesus...

24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Justified - you are not guilty but rather made right standing by God

His grace - God's unearned favor

redemption - work that was done on the cross by Christ Jesus

25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

propitiation - This goes beyond Christ work on the cross simply "wiping away all of our sins". It is that we were sinful. God rightfully should have targeted all of us and killed us all. Instead, Jesus Christ became sin, took the full force of God's wrath and God was then perfectly satisfied. (**2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who**

knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.)

divine forbearance - There is a theology going around that called states that since the future hasn't happened, the God doesn't know the future. In fact, they take the following passage and use it as an example on how God can have his mind changed:

Exodus 32:9-14 (ESV) And the Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you."

But Moses implored the Lord his God and said, "O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.'" And the Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.

But yet, if I study the Scriptures, I know for a fact since the beginning, God already knew that He would be made flesh, come down, live a perfect life, become sin and die in our place. I read this passage and link this to what we just read in Romans 3:25 and think that God didn't change His mind but rather be slow to anger and take it out on His Son upon the cross.

27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.

From this point, it is silly and pointless to boast in what we did and how we brought our piddly works to Christ so that He would be satisfied with us. Absolutely pointless. These verses totally unravel the thought of salvation by works. Because if salvation was based on what we can do, then we can boast all the day long. Since we didn't do jack squat to save ourselves, we cannot boast in ourselves. If we have to boast, Paul suggests by paraphrases Jeremiah 9:23-24 "He who has to boast, boast i

28 For we hold that one 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 God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 31 Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.