

Introduction

Romans chapter 1:18-3:20 can be summarized with one word: condemnation. That's all there is without Jesus, and nobody is exempt. The Jews, however, felt secure in their justness because they were God's chosen people. But even with all their advantages, they were just as sinful and broken as the Gentiles. In fact, the Jews knew God's Word and so they were even more accountable. In light of this, the book of Romans will redefine what it truly means to be a Jew.

A note for Christians: How easily we accuse others and excuse ourselves. If we arrogantly think that by our flesh we're not guilty, we make the same mistake the Jews did. Although we are saved, we can become unconsciously hypocritical too. Christianity is about daily repentance.

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

Chapter 2:17-18

4 JEWISH PRIVILEGES

1. YOU CALL YOURSELF A JEW

The word Jew comes from one of the tribes of Israel: Judah, meaning "praises to Yahweh." They were God's special people, commissioned to give God praise. Yet they stood behind the name "Jew" as if that was all they needed.

2. YOU REST IN THE LAW

They rested in the fact that they had the law, but the law cannot offer rest. There is always more work to be done. Jesus is the only one who could say "It is finished," having done all God's will. They thought having the law made them immune to judgment.

3. YOU BOAST OF GOD

They boasted in their relationship to God, feeling superior to the Gentiles who didn't know him. "We worship the one true God, not like those foolish idolatrous Pagans who have many gods of wood and stone."

4. YOU KNOW HIS WILL

They could discern what is good and approve the things that are more excellent. This is because they knew God's will in the law, unlike the Gentiles who didn't know it by their laws.

Chapter 2:19-20

4 JEWISH PRACTICES

1. A GUIDE TO THE BLIND

The Jews considered Gentiles to be blind because they didn't have the law. They were supposed to lead others, yet Jesus called the Pharisees blind guides of the blind because they missed the heart of the law.

2. A LIGHT TO THEM IN DARKNESS

Israel was to be a light to the nations, but they repeatedly failed that mission. Jesus declared he was the true fulfillment of this. He is the light of the world and so are those who follow him.

3. INSTRUCTORS OF THE FOOLISH

Trusting in themselves, they didn't see that they too needed correction, so they became foolish.

Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.
PROVERBS 26:12 *

4. TEACHERS OF LITTLE CHILDREN

They were confident they could teach the immature ones, yet didn't understand the central subject of the law.

Chapter 2:21-23

5 RHETORICAL CHARGES

Despite their advantage, they didn't practice what they preached, what they knew to be right. **Religion has no power to change the heart;** it only made them think of everyone else as blind foolish babies. These verses show that although they taught others, they didn't teach themselves. Though they preached "do not steal," they stole. Though they said not to commit adultery, they did it themselves. Though they hated idolatry, they committed the same. Even if they didn't do some of these things physically, they did so in their hearts, as Jesus teaches in Matthew 5. So although they boasted in the law, through breaking the law they dishonored God.

Chapter 2:24

ONE FINAL JUDGEMENT

The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. (See Isaiah 52)

Israel destroyed themselves through idolatry and God was mocked by the nations around them as a result.

Chapter 2:25-29

DISMANTLING THEIR LAST LINE OF DEFENSE - CIRCUMCISION

The Jews thought the sign of circumcision, which was even older than the law, was undeniable proof of their righteousness. **But circumcision was never a substitute for obedience**, as it was really supposed to serve as a mark of their devotion to God. They had superstitious confidence that circumcision would save them from the lake of fire, but obedience is what both the law and the circumcision demands. What's outward may not always be true of what's inward. The true and better circumcision is one made without hands by the spirit. God is redefining what it is to be called a Jew, and obedience with faith and repentance is what warrants praise of God. Paul is using Scripture to show these Jewish scoffers who think the gospel undermines God's covenant (like Paul used to), that in reality they are breakers of the law and betrayers of the meaning of circumcision. They were in darkness and needed Christ to correct them too.

Chapter 3:1-8

7 OBJECTING QUESTIONS

What advantage has the Jew? What profit is there of circumcision?

Paul will get into other advantages in future chapters, but first of all it's a big deal that they were entrusted with the words and promises of God. True, the law was not enough to save you, but it was not without value. It was never intended to provide life, but to point to the savior. "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first..."

What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?

Absolutely not! God's promises to Israel were not empty, despite their stiffnecked and rebellious history. He is right even if everyone says he's a liar. He will fulfill his unconditional promises regardless of the unfaithfulness of men.

Chapter 3:1-8

7 OBJECTING QUESTIONS CONT.

If our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what should we say?

Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? If our sin brings glory to God, why am I being judged?

These bizarre objections to God's judgment use inverted logic which Paul shows to be foolish. Some think, "Isn't it unjust of God to punish me since his righteousness is shown by my unrighteousness?" Some even accused Paul of preaching, "Let us do evil, that good may come." Others think, "he made me this way, so really it's his fault." This blame game sounds like Adam when he told God "the woman you gave me told me to do it." Unrepentant hearts still do these same mental gymnastics to avoid admitting they're wrong. But the fact that people even think such ridiculous things show that the judgment against them is just. They are wrong because:

- 1. God didn't make man this way. We were made to be image bearers bringing glory to him, but we rejected him.*
- 2. He is not immediately punishing sin, but showing his glory through offering grace. He didn't make you to sin, he made the gospel for you to be saved from sin.*

Chapter 3:9-20

THE GRAND FINALE

This section shows a thorough indictment of all humanity. The word "none" is used 4 times and the word "all" is used 3 times, emphasizing that no one is good and all are sinners. Paul quotes many Old Testament Scriptures, and the context of those citations are about both Jews and Gentiles. This reflects the sentiment that everyone has sinned and fallen short of God's standard. The law exposes sin so that every mouth is stopped and shown to be guilty before God. While the law is helpful, it can't fix sin. It's essentially a stop sign for a car without brakes.

Conclusion

After 62 verses detailing the human condition, mankind is left speechless and condemned to eternal death. Proven guilty, the sentence is everlasting destruction. Verse 21 is the well-timed rescue, transitioning to joyfully declaring God's intervention through his son. After this epistle's introduction, the reader should be well-primed with a repentant heart, ready to learn of the salvation Jesus offers.

Romans

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