

Romans 3

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3:1-8 Paul proposed and answered four objections Jews would raise against chapter two's doctrine.

3:9-20 Scripture condemns all men, Jews and Gentiles, as fully unsalvageable under the curse of sin.

3:21-31 Here is the gospel of justification by grace first presented other than the hint earlier (1:16-17).

Introduction:

1. The key to the first twenty verses of this chapter is found in 1:18 – 2:29, especially 1:32 and 2:1.
 - a. The argument started at 1:18 ... all men are very guilty before an angry God, deserving death.
 - b. Paul will continue this argument through 3:20, providing the proof and destroying objections.
 - c. Man has no ability, desire, instruments, means, or rituals for a synergistic concept of salvation.
 - d. Why must Paul continue to argue? To completely and finally answer skeptical, scornful Jews.
 - e. Why must Paul continue to argue? To establish God's free and gracious salvation is necessary.
 - f. Why must Paul continue to argue? To deny any Jewish or other efforts for conditional salvation.
 - g. Why must Paul continue to argue? Because he must systematically refute any Jewish legalists.
2. This chapter contains godly and wise answers to skeptical and/or scornful questions by natural men.
 - a. Here we find dialogism, the rhetorical device of presenting instruction in the form of a dialogue.
 - b. Here we find prolepsis and procatalepsis, or prebttal, the raising of objections with the answers.
 - c. Here we find Paul anticipating questions and objections, which he both proposes and answers.
 - d. Here we find Paul's gracious and wise concessions to questions when he can allow them (1-2).
 - e. Here we find Paul's dogmatic and forceful rejection of any questioning of God's character (4,6).
 - f. Here we find Paul using *reductio ad absurdum*, reducing an argument to absurdity (6,8).
 - g. Here we find Paul's holy and harsh condemnation of questioning God or slandering apostles (8).
 - h. Here we find Paul by inspiration answering and not answering Jewish fools or scorers, just as the scriptures would direct (Pr 9:7-8; 23:9; 26:4-5; Matt 7:6; II Tim 2:23; Titus 3:9-11; etc.).
3. If the sovereignty of God was not overtly declared as chapter two ended, it sure is as three opens!
 - a. God's choice among the nations to reveal and conceal His truth by scripture is pure sovereignty.
 - b. God limited revelation by scripture to only the smallest nation on earth – Israel (Ps 147:19-20).
 - c. If the Bible is absolutely necessary to Arminian salvation, why did He deny the world the means?
 - d. **He also confuses men.**
4. Always remember to fully establish total depravity of men before debating eternal life with anyone.
 - a. Note Paul's method here beginning in 1:18 and continuing all the way to 3:20 to condemn man.
 - b. If you do not establish man's total depravity, men's schemes of salvation will include his activity.

- c. If you do establish man's total depravity, then God must operate to change man before he acts.
- d. Spiritual death of our nature as a result of Adam's sin is fundamental (Gen 2:17; Eph 2:1-3).
- e. God must work above, apart, and before human response (John 1:13; 3:8; 6:44; 10:26-28; etc.).
- f. Prior to God's regenerating work of grace, man is a blind rebel (Rom 8:7-8; I Cor 1:18; 2:14).
- g. **Seven proofs.**
- h. For a full dose of **total depravity**.

1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?

What advantage then hath the Jews?

- A. Having reduced the Jews to the same legal condition as Gentiles before God, Paul then refuted any remains of Jewish confidence by dialogism (1-8) and scripture (9-20).
 - 1. He left Jews and Gentiles under a true law of individual performance without respect of persons, partiality, or regard for religious privileges or esteemed rituals (2:1-16).
 - 2. He condemned the Jews more severely for evilly violating their own law (2:17-24).
 - 3. He made the Gentiles appear superior to the Jew, if he were to keep the law (2:25-27).
 - 4. He destroyed any assumed Jewish value in eternal circumcision in the flesh (2:28-29).
- B. Paul raised an objection of the Jews and proceeded to answer it in this and the next verse.
 - 1. This is part of his use of the rhetorical device *dialogism*, teaching by way of dialogue.
 - 2. Within his dialogistic method, he used figures of speech, prolepsis and procatalepsis.
 - 3. Compare 3:3-8,31; 6:1-2,15; 9:14,19-21,30-33 for similar methods of argumentation.
- C. The Jews rightly knew they were special, so they rejected Paul reducing them to Gentiles.
 - 1. They not only knew the word of God (Am 3:2, etc.), they knew it by family history!
 - 2. They knew they had covenants and promises that no other nation on earth ever had.
 - 3. They knew God had made a significant difference with their nation among all nations.
 - 4. It would be natural for Jews to reason that Paul was seriously in error by denying how they understood the Old Testament and its covenant and historical blessings on Israel
 - 5. The proud Jews would not easily accept Paul reducing them to the level of Gentiles.
- D. If salvation were not included in this special relationship to God, then what was it worth?
 - a. It was common among the Jews to presume eternal salvation as an inalienable right.
 - b. For Paul to reduce them to the Day of Judgment with Gentiles was hard to accept.

Or what profit is there of circumcision?

- A. The rite had been given to Abraham; how could it have no saving power with them?

- B. The question could easily include citizenship and Israel's covenants, for circumcision was the means and signs of citizenship and covenant promises.
- C. The question could easily include the rite itself as a peculiar ordinance from Jehovah.
- D. Since Paul does not answer circumcision directly, we will assume more of its role in citizenship and covenant promises.

2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

Much every way.

- A. There were advantages to being a Jew in just about any way a person could analyze it.
- B. Observe the inspired wisdom of enthusiastic concessions where they can be granted, even if Paul knew the one *way* which they sought was not included in his *every way*!
- C. From providential protection and prosperity to dietary and sanitary laws, from the monotheistic knowledge of Jehovah to a detailed sacrificial system in which He delighted ... the Jews were blessed ... but they had no advantage when it came to justification.

Chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

- A. But the great reason was the scriptures, which were given to them and no other nation.
- B. See Deut 4:5-8; 6:20-25; 32:45-47; Psalm 147:19-20 for the great blessing of scripture.
- C. Notice that Paul neatly and cleanly leaves salvation out, for they had no such advantage.
- D. Paul will shortly take their chief blessing and turn it on them to condemn them (3:10-20)!
- E. How thankful are you for the scriptures? For they are a great heritage (Ps 119:111; etc.).

3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

For what if some did not believe?

- A. Paul made the scriptures the chief blessing of the Jews, so the next objection is based on that issue, for the Jews believed they had salvation in the promises of scripture (Jn 5:39).
- B. They could not entirely disagree with Paul's condemnation of the nation's righteousness, so the objection conceded that *some* of Israel may not have believed the scriptures.
- C. This is clearly a Jewish objection, for Paul never used merely *some* in 1:18 – 2:29, for the context is one of condemnation of all Jews (and Gentiles) without exception.

- D. This is a Jewish objection rather than Paul “chasing a rabbit” and praising God’s faith in the everlasting covenant toward *some* unconverted elect that did not believe.
- E. The immediate consequence (3:5) is to continue their false arguments and objections.
- F. The Jews sought to make Paul argue for more than he was – they wanted to make him guilty of opposing and denying the faithfulness of God and the benefits of His religion.
- G. The Jewish legalist: if some Jews have not believed, God’s covenant promises still stand.

Shall their unbelief.

- A. If a Jew, or some Jews, or even many Jews, did not believe the scriptures, which was their chief blessing, the Jews did not consider that a violation of their covenant promises.
- B. This Jewish presumption is still alive and well today, for the Dispensationalists and other followers of Jewish fables falsely presume the Abrahamic covenant was unconditional!
- C. They still presume Israel has a right to Palestine forever, though the Bible clearly states that God fulfilled the land and other promises to them (Joshua 21:43-35; Neh 9:7-8).
- D. The land in the Middle East was given to the Jews conditionally, and they lost it and were scattered throughout the world exactly in agreement with God’s covenant promises.
- E. **About the land promises.**
- F. **What did Abraham think?**

Make the faith of God.

- A. Here is one of those genitive phrases that we must analyze in context to determine if it is subjective-genitive or objective-genitive.
- B. What is *the faith of God*? It is the faithfulness, righteousness, or truthfulness of God: we know this by reading what Paul defended about God in the next verse ... *Let God be true!*
- C. What is the faith of God? Therefore, we understand it to be subjective-genitive, where faith is understood more along the sense of faithfulness i.e. God is faithful to perform.
- D. Yet, the argument also has an objective-genitive sense, for it was the religion and promises of God that the Jews trusted to deliver them in spite of their sins, and the definite article *the* introducing *faith* tends in this direction.
- E. The covenant God made with Israel was conditional, so God’s faithfulness and truth are confirmed by His casting the Jews out and rejecting them for their sins, as Moses wrote.

Without effect?

- A. The Jews were sure Jehovah’s own integrity would cause Him to save the Jews anyway.
- B. The Jews were fatalists in the sense that God was bound to unconditionally save them to heaven,

regardless of how they lived, because of His relationship and promises to them.

- C. They falsely assumed it for natural blessings (Jer 7:1-10), and they assumed it for heaven.
- D. They missed the conditional nature of the blessings and curses, though their fathers had experienced both many times, and though they were presently under Roman dominion!
- E. The Jews did understand and believe the sovereignty of God, but in this case they falsely presumed on it as being the crucial basis for delivering them from coming judgment.
- F. The Jews assumed God's promises to Abraham's descendants were theirs (Gal 3:16).
- G. The Jews took God's promises to Abraham as unconditional (Matt 3:9; John 8:39).

4 God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

God forbid.

- A. Here is Paul's very concise rejection and revulsion of their objection and suggestion.
 - A. Rather than forbidding it himself, Paul appealed to the truth and righteousness of God.
 - B. Paul used this expression ten times in the book of Romans and only four times elsewhere.

Yea, let God be true.

- A. As opposed to their fatalistic presumption on God for salvation regardless of their conduct, Paul instead appealed to the absolute truthfulness and integrity of God.
- B. A fundamental truth of all doctrinal and theological reasoning must be the absolute integrity and faithfulness of God regardless of any contrary opinion of any or all men.
- C. What did Paul appeal to? He appealed to the conditional nature of God's covenant with Israel and all the blessings and curses clearly delineated in scripture based on conduct!
- D. God's dealings with men are such that their wickedness shows Him perfectly just, especially to those to whom He has revealed His will and consequences of all actions.
- E. God has declared the truth in His covenant with the Jews, and He has never violated it.

But every man a liar.

- A. Instead of acknowledging the Jewish objection of some, Paul reverted to what he had been teaching since 1:18 ... all men were condemned ... all were liars, as he stated here.
- B. The result of condemnation is due only to man's sins, not to God's lack of faithfulness!
- C. It is man's fault from the very beginning to the very last hour ... every man is a liar – a sinner by many counts (1:18) and a violator of the covenant Jews trusted for salvation.
- D. The Jews claimed the covenant, read it, and memorized it, but they broke its plain terms.
- E. Claiming salvation by God's covenant while sinning was to be a liar in covenant terms.

F. Compare the value of scripture.

As it is written.

- A. The quotation is taken from David's prayer of confession regarding Bathsheba (Ps 51:4).
- B. David had as much right to claim salvation as any, for he had many specific promises given to him and his seed, but He declared God absolutely right and righteous to judge.
- C. He knew the only basis for practical forgiveness was his broken heart and God's mercy.

That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings.

- A. God had spoken severe judgments against David by Nathan the prophet, and David admitted these declared judgments were just and right due to his own sins.
- B. Every word of judgment that God has spoken or written is just, for it is men that sinned.
- C. God is justified when men repent of sins and acknowledge Him to be right (Lu 7:29-30).

And mightest overcome when thou art judged.

- A. There is nothing but perfect justice and righteousness in God when He judges (Ps 51:4).
- B. Which clears Him from any wrongdoing when any man would sit in judgment on Him!

5 But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)

But if our unrighteousness.

- A. Here comes the Jewish skeptic/scorner taking the next level of objecting against Paul.
- B. No longer denying their unrighteousness, the Jewish objection seeks theological faults.
- C. Rather than any further denial of their sins, the Jewish mind seeks a new dilemma.

Commend the righteousness of God.

- A. If our sins magnify God's righteousness by showing Him just, how can He condemn us?
- B. Paul had just declared the doctrine in the preceding verse, but he rejected this conclusion.

What shall we say.

- A. Paul proposes an objection that he believes the natural mind of man would suggest.
- B. He used this method quite often, but especially in Romans (4:1; 6:1; 7:7; 9:14; etc.).

Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance.

- A. If God chose the Jews, and His righteousness is glorified by their sins, how can He take vengeance on them, since He derives benefit from their sins?
- B. The Jewish objectors now seek to force Paul to find fault in God's own character.

- C. Sinful men always want to bark against God's sovereignty, as they do here and in 9:19.

I speak as a man.

- A. Paul spoke as a man ... a natural, skeptical, scornful man objecting to God's judgment.
- B. Here he acknowledges that the exchange in this passage is not his internal questions.
- C. Let this be a warning to all those melancholies or scorners that question everything.
- D. Remember Solomon's, Jesus', and Paul's thoughts about wasting time on foolish and unlearned questions (Pr 23:9; Matt 7:6; II Tim 2:23; etc.).
- E. Read Isaiah 45:9-10 and meditate on it until you are humbled down to kiss His feet.
- F. Read Romans 9:19-21 and meditate on it until you are humbled before God even more

6 God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?

God forbid.

- A. Paul again appealed to God Himself to deny and reject such a preposterous charge.
- B. Let this be a warning to all those melancholies or scorners that question everything.
- C. If God has revealed His judgments in scripture, it is not your place to question them.
- D. Read Romans 9:20 and meditate on it until you are humbled down to kiss His feet.
- E. If the Bible says it, we believe it, and that settles it. Why do you need more? For there is no more to give you, and the perverse spirit that wants more will trouble you for life.

For then how shall God judge the world.

- A. Paul does not waste time trying to explain matters to such a profane objection.
- B. He used the logical and rhetorical method of *reductio ad absurdum*, meaning he reduced the argument and objection to absurdity by declaring its logical consequence.
- C. The Jews knew God would judge the world and obtain glory from it (Ps 76:10; Ec 12:14).
- D. The Jews knew God would get glory for His righteousness in the judgment.
- E. Therefore, if their objection had any merit, it would make God unable to judge the world.
- F. There is nothing to hinder God from judging the world and you, because the world and you have given Him all the righteous grounds He needs to destroy and torment both.
- G. God will not have a problem judging the world, because He will do right (Genesis 18:25).

7 For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?

For if the truth of God.

- A. The objector via Paul now makes the issue of God's judgment to be personally unfair.
- B. He first implied God's unrighteousness (3:5), but now he defends himself against it.

- C. Paul had introduced God's truthfulness against man's lies, and it is now used this way.
- D. This is very similar to the objector and complaint Paul will deal with in Romans 9:19.

Hath more abounded through my lie.

- A. If God's truthfulness has been exalted and glorified by my lie, He should not judge me.
- B. If as God's chosen Jew, my faults exalt God's righteousness, why does He pick on me?
- C. This is very similar to the objector and complaint Paul will deal with in Romans 9:19.

Unto his glory.

- A. Paul declared this fact back in verse 4, when he quoted David from Psalm 51:4.
- B. The objector reasons that since God's glory is from Jewish sins, God should be happy.

Why yet am I also judged as a sinner.

- A. It is not fair for me to be judged as a sinner, when God gets benefits from my sin.
- B. How can God possibly judge men when sin gets Him glory? See Romans 9:19-21.

8 And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.

And not rather.

- A. Ignoring the parenthetical material momentarily, this is Paul's second *reductio ad absurdum*, as he takes the Jewish objection to an extreme to show how foolish it was.
- B. Paul's response runs like this: If you think it is unfair for God to judge sinners when He gets glory from their sin and their judgment, then why not go all the way and teach that men ought to sin in order to bring greater glory to God.

As we be slanderously reported.

- A. There were slanderers among the Jews that reported Paul's doctrine as promoting sin.
- B. How many times have you heard similar scornful blasts against the doctrine of election?

And as some affirm that we say.

- A. Slanderers lie to destroy another's character, reputation, or doctrine, as they did to Paul.
- B. Others, as here, falsely understood Paul's doctrine and confirmed error to the same effect.

Let us do evil, that good may come.

- A. Paul reduced their objection of 3:7 to absurdity by saying why not take it all the way to increasing sin in order to accomplish greater good for God and His glory.

- B. The conclusion is absurd enough to not require any further refutation of the argument.

Whose damnation is just.

- A. Anyone who takes the doctrine of God and thinks it promotes sin is worthy of damnation.
- B. It is valuable to remember this rule when Arminians mock or ridicule God's our election.
- C. Those that oppose God are clay calling the Potter stupid (Rom 9:19-21). God forbid!

9 What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

What then?

- A. Paul now returned to the first question proposed and answered regarding the Jews (3:1-2).
- B. What conclusion may be drawn from the many and chief advantage of the Jews (3:1-2)?
- C. Diverted for a few verses to answer objections, Paul returned to the basic Jewish issue.
- D. This question does not refer to Paul's definitive conclusions against skeptical objections (3:3-8), but rather a return to the real issue at hand ... presumed Jewish salvation.

Are we better than they?

- A. The Jews were very convinced that they had a legal advantage for salvation and eternal life before God over the Gentiles, and it would be easy to have this false assumption.
- B. John and Jesus had to deal with this presumptive confidence (Matt 3:9; John 8:38-44).
- C. The first person and third person pronouns here indicate Jews compared to Gentiles, with Paul including himself as a Jew (Acts 21:39; 22:3; Rom 11:1; II Cor 11:22; Phil 3:5).
- D. The proof that this is indeed the line of reasoning is proven by the rest of this verse.
- E. Paul will refer to this error of Jewish thinking again (Rom 3:29; 4:9; 9:24; 10:12; etc.).

No, in no wise.

- A. Paul's very clear negative answer is definite and definitive against the Jewish confidence.
- B. He had granted the Jews every kind of advantage in great degree and a great blessing by the scriptures (3:2), but he denied here that they have any advantage by another measure.
- C. What is the different measure by which the Jews had no advantage at all? Legal salvation, justification before God, or the righteousness needed (1:17; 2:5,16; 3:9,19,21-26; etc.)!
- D. How do we know this is Paul's point here? By simply reading the rest of this easy verse.

For we have before proved.

- A. Paul explained that his summary negative answer is based on conclusive evidence given.
- B. Paul's argument to prove all men guilty before God had continued from 1:18 to 2:29.

- C. The evidence already provided was sufficient to prove the case – all men are condemned.
- D. It is our wisdom to prove total depravity before entering upon any serious debate about salvation, for this is the inspired example here, and it cuts off much foolish reasoning.
- E. If we establish total depravity well enough, then unconditional election and monergistic regeneration are necessary and obvious conclusions; without doing so, we push on a rope.

Both Jews and Gentiles.

- A. Though Paul listed the Jews first here, he had condemned the Gentiles first (1:18-32), thus he pointedly reminded the Jews that they were clearly and definitely guilty as well.
- B. Follow Paul's inspired approach that fully condemned Gentiles and Jews (1:18 – 2:29).
 - 1. He first condemned all the Gentiles by sin against creation and providence (1:18-28).
 - 2. He then condemned the Gentiles by a list of universal sins deserving death (1:29-32).
 - 3. He then condemned the Jews for aggravated guilt by hypocrisy and privilege (2:1-5).
 - 4. He then condemned the Jews, denying exceptions, by breaking their law (2:6-13,16).
 - 5. He then condemned the Gentiles for having the law placed in their hearts (2:14-16).
 - 6. He then condemned the Jews for sinning against specific duties of their law (2:17-24).
 - 7. He then condemned the Jews for missing the vital issue of circumcision (2:25-29).

That they are all under sin.

- A. Jews and Gentiles, the two classes of humanity in context, are without exception guilty!
- B. The issue here is not mankind's sin nature or vital condemnation, but rather legal guilt.
- C. They are under sin in the sense that they have sinned and are due God's judgment for sin.
- D. Gentiles would not be excused for ignorance; the Jews would not be saved by privilege.

10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

As it is written.

- A. Not content with condemnation clearly proven and settled, Paul added further evidence.
- B. He had granted them the chief blessing of scripture, but now he used it against them!
- C. He had used the scriptures in general already as a law not kept by the Jews (2:12-24).
- D. He then used the scriptures to describe the character and conduct of all men (3:10-20).
- E. The most powerful way to reason is with the scriptures (Isaiah 8:20; Matthew 4:4,7,10).
- F. Paul used this method often, pulling from various scriptures (Rom 15:9-12; Heb 1:1-14).
- G. Do you know what is written? Where it is written? And what is the sense of the writing?
- H. Here are six quotations from six places in the scripture to define human depravity:
 - 1. The first quotation (3:10-12) is taken from Psalm 14:1-3 and Psalm 53:1-3.
 - 2. The second quotation (3:13ab), against man's speech, is taken from Psalm 5:9.

3. The third quotation (3:13c), against man's speech, is taken from Psalm 140:3.
4. The fourth quotation (3:14), against man's speech, is taken from Psalm 10:7.
5. The fifth quotation (3:15-17), dealing with human action, is taken from Isaiah 59:7-8.
6. The sixth quotation (3:18), dealing with the fear of God, is taken from Psalm 36:1.

There is none righteous.

- A. The issue at stake is legal righteousness to stand before God, introduced by Romans 1:17.
- B. The key issue for man and salvation is this: how should man be just with God" (Job 9:2)?
- C. The place quoted is Psalm 14:1, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is none that doeth good.*"
- D. The place quoted is Psalm 53:1, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: *there is none that doeth good.*"
- E. The lack of goodness in Psalm 14:1 and Psalm 53:1 is defined as corruption and abominable works and iniquity by the verses themselves, meaning unrighteousness.
- F. The inspired sense of *good* from these two source passages is *righteous*. Let God be true!
- G. Let it be understood from here to 3:18 that the primary focus is the Jews, for 3:9 and 3:19 indicate that they are still the ones that need to be reduced to the level of the Gentiles, and for the fact that the quotations are from their scriptures to and about their nation directly.

No, not one.

- A. This additional clarification to prove the full sense of *none* is not found in either Psalm.
- B. We do not care if this is a quotation from the Septuagint or the Holy Spirit's paraphrase!
- C. We trust God the Holy Spirit for the definitive and powerful addition for universal guilt.
- D. What does *none* mean? It means that there are no exceptions, no, not a single exception!
- E. For a full dose of **total depravity**.

11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

There is none that understandeth.

- A. The place quoted is Psalm 14:2, "The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, *to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.*"
- B. The place quoted is Psalm 53:2, "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, *to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God.*"
- C. What is this understanding? It is the comprehension and knowledge that a Creator God ought to be feared and loved and a righteous and holy God ought to be carefully obeyed.
- D. How do we know this is the sense? By context, for if we consider and analyze this second verse in light of the first, we can see that God's existence and righteousness are at stake.
- E. How do we know this is the sense? By context, for if we consider Paul's doctrine of 1:19-28, we can

see that rejecting the knowledge and worship of God is the damning crime.

- F. Is man truly this bad, corrupt, depraved, and evil? It is an inspired fact of divine revelation and it is confirmed by human experience and human history
- G. Do other scriptures confirm this horrible condition and indictment of the human race? Oh yes, and they should be considered (Gen 6:5; Ps 10:4; Luke 16:28-31; John 1:5; I Cor 1:18,22-24; 2:14; Eph 2:1-3; 4:17-19).
- H. How then can sinners hear the gospel, believe, and be saved? They must be born again first! by a sovereign, monergistic work of God! and given a new and spiritual nature that will understand and believe! or they will never consider the gospel seriously (John 1:12-13; 3:3-8; 5:24-29; 6:44,65; 8:43,47; 10:26-27; Acts 16:14; I John 4:15; 5:1).
- I. This verse declares the great doctrine of human depravity, and it must be dealt with fully before attempting to apply any faith and good works verses of the Bible toward salvation.
- J. Let it be understood from 3:10 to 3:18 that the primary focus is the Jews, for 3:9 and 3:19 indicate that they are still the ones that need to be reduced to the level of the Gentiles, and for the fact that the quotations are from their scriptures to and about their nation directly.
- K. This verse denies and rejects the foolish notion of conditional election, for when the Lord looked down to see how many sought Him and wanted to make a decision for Jesus, He found none seeking Him ... no, not one! Therefore, election must be unconditional!
- L. For a full dose of **total depravity**.
- M. For detail about depravity, see **Seven Proofs of Unconditional Salvation**.
- N. For another view of depravity, see <https://letgodbettrue.com/bible/salvation/calvinism.pdf>.

There is none that seeketh after God.

- A. The place quoted is Psalm 14:2, “The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and seek God.*”
- B. The place quoted is Psalm 53:2, “God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *that did seek God.*”
- C. What is this seeking God? It is man realizing he is but a creature and seeking unto his Creator to worship and love Him and find out what he ought to do to please Him better.
- D. Forget seeking to get saved! Man’s arrogant depravity denies he has a need to be saved!
- E. There is no Bible evidence or human evidence of men innately or naturally seeking God, for the true and living God is not in any of their thoughts (Ps 10:4).
- F. Man is so consumed with himself and his plans that he does not leave them to seek God.
- G. Man is so resentful of authority that he rejects God’s claims. Think Adam (Gen 3:7-10).
- H. See the explanation for the first half of this verse to compare other supporting scriptures.
 - I. What about men that do seek God, like Cornelius? We know he was already born again with a new spiritual nature, for he feared God and did righteousness (Ac 10:4,22,34-35).
- J. The faith of justification, which Paul taught next (3:21 – 5:1), cannot originate in the human heart,

which he described as abominably corrupt without goodness or exceptions.

K. For more about [Cornelius](#).

12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

There are all gone out of the way.

- A. The place quoted is Psalm 14:3, “*They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*”
- B. The place quoted is Psalm 53:3, “*Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*”
- C. There are none following God or seeking God ... no, not one ... in the way He set for man, whether in Eden, the Jews under written law, or Gentiles under law of conscience.
- D. Who are *they*? It is directly the Jews, though it includes Gentiles for universal depravity.
- E. Let it be understood from 3:10 to 3:18 that the primary focus is the Jews, for 3:9 and 3:19 indicate that they are still the ones that need to be reduced to the level of the Gentiles, and for the fact that the quotations are from their scriptures to and about their nation directly.
- F. The history of Israel shows the Jews leaving God’s way (Deut 12:8; Judges 17:6; 21:25).
- G. But before Israel, Eve made a silly choice to follow the devil rather than God, and then Adam made a conscious choice to leave God’s way for Eve (Gen 3:1-6; I Tim 2:14).
- H. But before Israel, the whole world corrupted God’s way on the earth (Genesis 6:5, 12).
- I. How many of the Jews and Gentiles, in that order, went out of God’s way. Read it – *all*!
- J. How many ways please God? *The way!* One way! Can we agree to disagree? No way!

They are together become unprofitable.

- A. The place quoted is Psalm 14:3, “They are all gone aside, *they are all together become filthy*: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”
- B. The place quoted is Psalm 53:3, “Every one of them is gone back: *they are altogether become filthy*; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”
- C. Who are *they*? It is directly the Jews, though it includes Gentiles for universal depravity.
- D. Did any leave mankind to seek God individually or separately? No! They did it *together*!
- E. Is there another sense in which all men left God together? Yes, in Adam (Heb 7:9-10).
- F. What is *unprofitable*? It is a figure of speech, meiosis, of intentional understatement, for mankind’s corruption and abominable works and iniquities (Ps 14:1,3; 53:1,3).
- G. For they pleasure of their Creator, they were unprofitable and far less – very abominable!

There is none that doeth good.

- A. The place quoted is Psalm 14:3, “They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: *there is*

none that doeth good, no, not one.”

- B. The place quoted is Psalm 53:3, “Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; *there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*”
- C. How many exceptions are there to the rule of *all* and *together* earlier in the verse? *None!*
- D. What is *good*? It is goodness or righteousness defined by God, which is altogether very different from what men think is good, for whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Rom 14:23).
- E. True *good*, or righteousness, is keeping God’s commands with a loving and fearing heart.

No, not one.

- A. The place quoted is Psalm 14:3, “They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, *no, not one.*”
- B. The place quoted is Psalm 53:3, “Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, *no, not one.*”
- C. How many exceptions are there to David’s word *none* by the Holy Ghost? Not one!
- D. The summary of Psalm 14:1-3 and 53:1-3? In general, Jews and Gentiles are totally depraved without any regard for their Creator God or His standard of righteousness.
 - 1. There is not a good or righteous one among them who can stand legally before God.
 - 2. There is not one of them that understands their predicament and seeks after God.
 - 3. They all left His way, together become unprofitable, and are evil without exception.
- E. Paul then detailed some of the common and specific sins of the human race (3:13-18).
- F. For a full dose of **total depravity**.

13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:

Their throat is an open sepulcher.

- A. The place quoted is Psalm 5:9, “For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; *their throat is an open sepulchre*; they flatter with their tongue.”
- B. Let it be understood from 3:10 to 3:18 that the primary focus is the Jews, for 3:9 and 3:19 indicate that they are still the ones that need to be reduced to the level of the Gentiles, and for the fact that the quotations are from their scriptures to and about their nation directly.
- C. Let every reader tremble before these four successive clauses condemning your speech!
- D. God hates liars, false witnesses, and those who sow discord among brethren (Pr 6:16-19), which puts them in a horrible stead for standing before His holy judgment in the last day.
- E. The wrath of God Paul revealed from 1:18 to this place is surely coming on those whose speech has included filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting (Eph 5:3-7). Be not deceived!
- F. We should cry out in anguish like Isaiah about our unclean lips and friends (Isaiah 6:5-7).

- G. An open sepulcher reveals the decaying filth of the dead, or a sinful heart (Mat 12:34-37).
- H. Observe the quoted text more carefully and see this very point in its context (Psalm 5:9).
- I. Therefore, we must keep our hearts with all diligence to perfect speech (Pr 4:23; 22:11).
- J. For more about **sinning by speech**.
- K. For more about **sinning by speech**.

With their tongues they have used deceit.

- A. The place quoted is Psalm 5:9, “For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; *they flatter with their tongue.*”
- B. Or less likely it is from Jeremiah 9:3, “*And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies*; but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD.”
- C. The Bible condemns deceitful speech, even when you negotiate a purchase (Prov 20:14).
- D. All liars shall have their part in the lake of fire, declares the word of God (Rev 21:8,27).
- E. How could Joseph’s brothers and Jezebel and others lie to the horrible pain of others?
- F. Here we have the sin of bearing false witness or slander (Ex 20:16; Ps 101:5; Pr 19:5,9).
- G. Here we have the sin of flattery (Job 17:5; 32:21-22; Psalm 12:3; Proverbs 26:28).

The poison of asps is under their lips.

- A. The quotation is from Psalm 140:3, “They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; *adders’ poison is under their lips.* Selah.”
 - 1. **Asp.** A small, venomous, hooded serpent, found in Egypt and Libya; also applied to a species of viper found in parts of Europe, and used poetically of venomous serpents.
 - 2. **Adder.** A small venomous serpent or snake; a viper.
- B. The Bible uses many metaphors for speech, such as the cutting of a sword (Prov 12:18).
- C. If you have ever misrepresented another person, read what God thinks of it (Prov 25:18).
- D. How could Eliab, knowing of David’s anointment to be king, slander his young brother?
- E. Reader, have you ever done any backbiting, talebearing, slandering, or whispering? If so, you have the poison of asps under your lips, you have raped a person in a way that may be worse than physical rape in some respects, and you are condemned before God (1:29-30; Lev 19:16; Pr 11:13; 16:28; 18:8; 20:19; 25:9-10,23; 26:20; II Cor 12:20; etc.).

14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

Whose mouth is full.

- A. The quotation is from Psalm 10:7, “*His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud*: under his tongue is mischief and vanity.”

- B. Let it be understood from 3:10 to 3:18 that the primary focus is the Jews, for 3:9 and 3:19 indicate that they are still the ones that need to be reduced to the level of the Gentiles, and for the fact that the quotations are from their scriptures to and about their nation directly.

Of cursing and bitterness.

- A. The quotation is from Psalm 10:7, “His mouth is full *of cursing and deceit and fraud*: under his tongue is mischief and vanity.”
- B. A view of God’s holiness caused even the prophet Isaiah to rue his speech (Isaiah 6:1-7).
- C. It is impossible to bless and worship God while cursing others by our speech (Jas 3:9-12).
- D. What could and should have been for health is used for death (Prov 15:4; 18:21; 12:18).
- E. If you call a brother a name without God’s leave, you are guilty of murder (Mat 5:21-26).
- F. For more about [sins of the tongue](#).
- G. For more about [sins of the tongue](#).

15 Their feet are swift to shed blood:

Their feet are swift.

- A. The quotation is Isaiah 59:7, “*Their feet run to evil*, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths.”
- B. Yet, Solomon also warned his son of wicked companions with the same trait (Prov 1:16).
- C. Let it be understood from 3:10 to 3:18 that the primary focus is the Jews, for 3:9 and 3:19 indicate that they are still the ones that need to be reduced to the level of the Gentiles, and for the fact that the quotations are from their scriptures to and about their nation directly.
- D. Men move from place to place by their feet, and here feet are a metonym for taking men away from the paths of peace to find a victim for their violent ambitions (Prov 1:16).
- E. How quick and fast is the natural man to react to many offences with thoughts of murder!
- F. How could Cain so quickly murder his righteous (not merely innocent) brother Abel?
- G. How could the Jews so quickly and violently react against the Son of God and His grace?

To shed blood.

- A. The quotation is Isaiah 59:7, “*Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood*: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths.”
- B. God hates violence and the violent (Ps 11:5; Prov 6:17). Consider the Flood (Gen 6:11).
- C. Do you hate gratuitous violence and its perpetrators, or has Hollywood bewitched you?
- D. The violent explosion of great wrath by those crossed is a mark of the devil, not of God.
- E. If you think few have ever literally shed blood sinfully, think of abortion, genocide, social experiments, war, violent movies, and evil thoughts of your heart (Matt 5:21-26).

- F. Bitterness, envy, grudges, and hatred are murder of the heart, merely lacking opportunity.

Destruction and misery are in their ways:

Destruction and misery.

- A. The quotation is Isaiah 59:7, “Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; *wasting and destruction* are in their paths.”
- B. Let it be understood from 3:10 to 3:18 that the primary focus is the Jews, for 3:9 and 3:19 indicate that they are still the ones that need to be reduced to the level of the Gentiles, and for the fact that the quotations are from their scriptures to and about their nation directly.
- C. Rather than describing the symptoms or consequences of wicked living on their own lives, this verse describes the mayhem they cause in the lives of others (Pr 11:29; 15:27).
- D. They are far from being peacemakers, as they actually foment trouble (Proverbs 4:14-17).
- E. Men can be so troublesome by nature that their tender mercies are cruel (Proverbs 12:10).
- F. How many marriages, families, and homes are destroyed in peace, love, joy, and happiness by the lazy, moody, selfish, and wicked conduct of one or more persons.

Are in their ways.

- A. The quotation is Isaiah 59:7, “Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; *wasting and destruction are in their paths.*”
- B. Do you cause misery in any of your relationships? Husbands can cause misery to wives (Mal 2:13-14; I Pet 3:7), wives to husbands (Pr 21:9; 30:23; I Cor 7:5); parents to children (Col 3:21), and children to parents (Ge 26:34-35), among all other relationships.
- C. Consider how other relationships are corrupted by selfishness ... employment, nations, churches, family feuds, etc.
- D. God hates those that sow discord among brethren (Pr 6:16-19). Consider it well, reader.

17 And the way of peace have they not known:

And the way of peace.

- A. The quotation is from Isaiah 59:8, “*The way of peace* they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.
- B. Let it be understood from 3:10 to 3:18 that the primary focus is the Jews, for 3:9 and 3:19 indicate that they are still the ones that need to be reduced to the level of the Gentiles, and for the fact that the quotations are from their scriptures to and about their nation directly.
- C. Men by nature are malicious, envious, hateful and hating, and loving to fight (Titus 3:3).
- D. If you are not a peacemaker, then you are contrary to the God of glory and come short of His glory (3:23), for He is a King and Prince of peace and peacemakers (Jas 3:17-18).

Have they not known.

- A. The quotation is from Isaiah 59:8, “The way of peace *they know not*, and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.
- B. To maintain peace in a church or family or marriage requires your endeavor (Eph 4:3; Jas 3:17-18), but the wicked choose to give place to the devil and hold grudges (Ep 4:26-27).
- C. If you hold bitterness or grudges, God hates you and will throw you down into hell (Lev 19:18; Jas 3:14-15; 5:9). In the meantime, no one can stand you, and your life is hell.
- D. Forgive others! The way of peace is forgiving others! The way of war is to hold grudges.

18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

There is no fear of God.

- A. The quotation is from Psalm 36:1, “The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that *there is no fear of God* before his eyes.”
- B. Let it be understood from 3:10 to 3:18 that the primary focus is the Jews, for 3:9 and 3:19 indicate that they are still the ones that need to be reduced to the level of the Gentiles, and for the fact that the quotations are from their scriptures to and about their nation directly.
- C. Regarding the fear of the Lord, consider its first occurrence in the Bible, where Abraham made a judgment about the Philistines not having it (Gen 20:11).
- D. The fear of God is one of the great subjects of the Bible, mentioned repeatedly as a basic and essential duty of man toward God (Deut 10:12; Job 28:28; Ps 111:10; 112:1; Prov 1:7; Eccl 12:13; Luke 12:4-5; Heb 12:28-29; etc.).
- E. The fear of God results in obeying God and hating sin (Pr 8:13; 14:16,27; 16:6; Ps 97:10; 119:104), so this verse further condemns all as well, for all have not always hated evil!
- F. Then how do some fear God, like Cornelius (Acts 10:2,22,34)? Because God gives it to some by regeneration, inspiration, providence, chastening, His word, warnings, etc. (Deut 17:19; Ps 46:6-11; 55:19; Jer 32:39-40; Acts 2:1-3; etc.).
- G. For more about the **fear of God**.

Before their eyes

- A. The quotation is from Psalm 36:1, “The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God *before his eyes*.”
- B. When something is in our sight, it is usually also in our thoughts, but not the fear of God.
- C. The summary damnation of mankind just given leaves him totally at enmity with God.
 - 1. The Jewish dream that some might be faithfully righteous by the law is very false.
 - 2. The Arminian idea that some will seek God to participate in salvation is very false.
 - 3. Salvation must be by God’s gracious work without man’s approval or cooperation.
 - 4. Thus, Baptist brethren in 1655 wrote, “**Therefore consent not with those who hold that God**

hath given power to all men to believe to salvation.” [Midland Confession.]

5. The faith of justification, which Paul taught next (3:21 – 5:1), cannot originate in man, which he has described as abominably corrupt without goodness or exceptions.
- D. Therefore, the next section (21) will introduce the unconditional grace of God in Christ.
- E. **Unconditional.**

19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Now we know that what things soever the law saith.

1. What does the law say? Paul quoted six places, and they damned the objects (3:10-18).
2. What does the law say? Men are totally filthy and abominable in general and by specifics.
3. The Jews would of course agree with the above scriptures ... applying them to Gentiles!
4. But Paul now identified the direct and main object of the scriptures, the Jews under them!

B. It saith to them who are under the law.

1. The Old Testament scriptures, the whole of the law, were sent to the Jews about the Jews.
2. While Gentiles are in a sense under the law (2:14-15), they are not under it like the Jews.
3. If the Jews trusted the scriptures, then they needed to submit to its condemnation of them!
4. The declarations of depravity Paul quoted were not given to the Gentiles (Ps 147:19-20).
5. Try to keep in mind at all times in this epistle that Paul is refuting Jewish legalistic trust.

C. That every mouth may be stopped.

1. Which mouths needed to be stopped? Mouths of Jewish legalists presuming on salvation.
2. Are these boastful mouths mentioned? Paul had identified them (2:1,3,13,17-23; 3:1,9).
3. How did Paul initiate this last section (3:9)? Rhetorically asking about Jewish superiority.

D. And all the world may become guilty before God.

1. Paul's inspired argument had to finally condemn the Jews to condemn the whole world.
2. He had condemned Gentiles without excuse (1:20); now he had the Jews as well (3:9-18).
3. For a full dose of **total depravity**.

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Therefore by the deeds of the law.

- A. Why the *therefore*? A final conclusion to destroy any Jewish confidence left in the law.
- B. Paul drew his conclusion from God's law itself condemning Jews and Gentiles (3:10-19).

- C. He had already refuted the foolish notion of hearing the law rather than keeping it (2:13).
- D. The law had absolutely no exceptions ... no, not one ... of Jews serving God profitably.

There shall no flesh be justified in his sight.

- A. Not a single Jew could stand before God and claim righteousness by keeping of the law.
- B. Jews believed this about Gentiles, but Paul included them as condemned human flesh.
- C. The conclusion is convincing and certain – Jewish legalists were wrong and condemned.
- D. The law condemned by general axioms (3:10-12) and specific charges of sin (3:13-18).

For by the law is the knowledge of sin.

- A. The law identified the standard of righteousness the Jews could not achieve (Ro 2:12-24).
- B. The law identified the universal axioms of condemnation that included Jews (Ro 3:9-20).
- C. Paul will teach the law was designed to show the exceeding sinfulness of sin (Rom 7:13).
- D. The law's purpose was not salvation, but rather condemnation, by proving man guilty.
- E. For a full dose of **total depravity**.

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

But.

- A. Ah, glorious disjunctive! Here is the transition from Paul's first argument to his second.
- B. What is a disjunctive? A conjunction that does not coordinate, but introduces a contrast.
- C. Paul turned right at this point from proving condemnation to explaining free salvation!
- D. Note how Paul summarized the gospel with similar words at the epistle's end (16:25-27).
- E. This is the first major division in the epistle, and separating the previous verses helps understanding. If you want to understand Romans, then get 1:18 – 3:20 down tightly.
- F. He proved by many different approaches the condemnation of all men from 1:18 to 3:20.
- G. He then proved justification and salvation of the elect by Jesus Christ from here to 5:21.
- H. Reader, death is grasping at your life this very minute, but after death comes judgment by a holy and righteous God (Heb 9:27) ... you are damned and doomed without this *but*!
- I. The Bible has many such glorious uses of the disjunctive *but* introducing a gracious contrast to the sin and death previous (Rom 5:8,20; 6:17,23; Gal 1:15; II The 2:13; etc.).
- J. There are only 3751 occurrences of *but* in the King James, so have a pleasant Bible study.

Now.

- A. The *now* here does not identify Paul's change in writing but God's change in revelation.

- B. While it is true Paul now took up the description of God's salvation of the elect in Jesus Christ, he used *now* to identify the Day or Year, even called Today, of the New Testament message of salvation, which provided the acid test for Jewish integrity!
- C. The gospel era, or the Day or the Today of the New Testament, is precious (II Cor 6:1-2).
- D. Compare these wonderful prophecies from the Old Testament of the Day of salvation, meaning the era of the New Testament (Ps 95:7-11; Isaiah 49:7-8; 61:1-11; 63:1-6).
- E. Compare these wonderful statements of the New Testament regarding this time of deliverance and salvation revealed by the gospel (Luke 4:19; 19:42-44; Heb 3:7 – 4:11).
- F. The time was fulfilled ... the time of waiting for Messiah ... was fulfilled with the arrival of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ our Lord (Mark 1:15; Luke 2:38; Gal 4:4).
- G. The two covenants, Old and New, ran side by side for forty years, from John the Baptist announcing the new to the destruction of Jerusalem that abolished the old (Luke 16:16; John 4:20-24; Heb 8:13; 9:10).
- H. Note how Paul summarized the gospel with similar words at the epistle's end (16:25-27).
 - I. It is a great blessing to live after the apostles with that which is perfect and the more sure word of prophecy detailing the obscure (I Cor 13:8-10; I Pet 1:10-12; II Pet 1:19-21).
- J. Many prophets and righteous men desired to see and hear what you have (Matthew 3:17).

The righteousness of God.

- A. Paul only made mention of this glorious subject in his introduction and summary (1:17).
- B. God's righteousness, as there so here (1:17), is the perfect righteousness that satisfies God, which we must have in order to stand before Him and be saved from condemnation!
- C. The subject is more necessary to us than the perfect righteous character of God Himself.
- D. God has legally clothed us in the perfect righteousness of His Son Jesus Christ (Ps 17:15; Isaiah 61:10; Dan 9:24; Mal 4:2; Rom 4:5-6; 5:17-21; 8:1-4; 9:25-33; 10:3-5; I Cor 1:30; II Cor 5:21; Gal 5:5; Eph 4:24; Phil 3:9; II Tim 4:8; II Pet 1:1; Rev 19:8).

Without the law.

- A. The key to the soteriological part of Romans (chapters 1-11) is Paul's constant refutation of any role for Jewish legalism in justification or salvation.
- B. God's righteousness is not connected with Moses, Sinai, the Law, or Israel in any way.
- C. What law did Paul mean? He meant the moral law of God, indicated in context (2:12-27).
- D. The law was hopeless for justification (Ga 3:21), so this righteousness is without the law!
- E. The law was impossible for justification (3:19-20), since it had to be obeyed rather than heard (2:12-16; 3:19-20), so this righteousness is without the law!
- F. The glorious message for elect Israel was God's righteousness without the law (10:1-5).
- G. Paul defined its role and defended its use later (3:31; 7:7-14,22,25; 8:1-4; 13:8-10; etc.).
- H. Paul defined its role and defended its use elsewhere (Galatians 3:21; I Timothy 1:5-11).

- I. Jesus obeyed the law and fulfilled its promises perfectly (Matthew 5:17-20; Rom 8:3-4).

Is Manifested.

- A. To manifest something is to reveal it and make it evident, obvious, and plain. See comments on its previous use in 1:19.
- B. Paul's introduction of righteousness earlier included the gospel revealing it to men (1:17).
- C. Note how Paul summarized the gospel with similar words at the epistle's end (16:25-27).
- D. The gospel of Jesus Christ brought forth great light in the obscure darkness of the world and even of the Old Testament scriptures (Is 60:1-3; Matt 4:16; Luke 1:76-79; 2:32).
- E. Compare Paul's wonderful words about God's eternal elective grace and purpose in salvation made manifest, where he also used *but* and *now*, as here (II Tim 1:9-10).
- F. God promised eternal life in eternity, but manifested it by the gospel in time (Tit 3:1-3).
- G. The great mysteries of the gospel are revealed in the New Testament (I Timothy 3:16).
- H. Another manifestation of righteousness is yet to come (8:19). Lord Jesus, come quickly!
 - I. For more about the [gospel](#).
 - J. For more about the [gospel](#).

Being witnessed by the law and the prophets.

- A. The *law and the prophets* is one of several ways the Holy Spirit described the Old Testament scriptures (Matt 22:40; John 1:45; Acts 13:15; etc.).
- B. The Old Testament scriptures gave witness, or testified, or declared the gospel truth of salvation by the Messiah of God, Jesus Christ (Luke 24:44,47; John 1:45; 5:39).
- C. The *law of Moses* gave advance witness (Gen 3:15; 22:18; 49:10; Deut 18:15-19; etc.).
- D. The *prophets* gave witness (Is 7:14; 9:6-7; 53:1-12; Da 9:24; Hag 2:7-9; Mal 3:1-3; etc.).
- E. The *psalms* gave advance witness (Ps 2:1-12; 16:9-11; 22:1-31; 110:1-7; 118:22; etc.).
- F. The Old Testament taught salvation to patriarchs, Jews, Gentiles (mostly by prophecy).

22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

Even the righteousness of God.

- A. **Even.** An intensive or emphatic particle. "exactly, precisely." From the epistle's beginning, the key to our salvation is the righteousness of God (1:17).
- B. The adverb *even* identifies what follows as the fulfillment of the new revelation (3:21).
- C. God's righteousness, as there so here (1:17), is the perfect righteousness that satisfies God, which we must have in order to stand before Him and be saved from condemnation!
- D. The subject is more necessary to us than the perfect righteous character of God Himself.

- E. We must be legally clothed in the perfect righteousness of God's Son Jesus Christ (Ps 17:15; Isaiah 61:10; Dan 9:24; Mal 4:2; Rom 4:5-6; 5:17-21; 8:1-4; 9:25-33; 10:3-5; I Cor 1:30; II Cor 5:21; Gal 5:5; Eph 4:24; Phil 3:9; II Tim 4:8; II Pet 1:1; Rev 19:8).

Which is by faith of Jesus Christ.

- A. God's righteousness we desperately need is not by the law but by faith of Jesus Christ.
- B. We trust the King James Bible, so we do not alter this text to read, "faith in Jesus Christ," which modern translations do to conform the text to their concept of faith and its role.
- C. The grammar does not indicate how this phrase should be understood from three options.
1. Genitive case phrases such as this can only be interpreted by context and comparison, for the genitive phrase itself does not prove whether it is subjective or objective.
 2. See cases of subjective-genitive (I Jn 3:16; Hag 2:7; Dan 11:37; Jas 2:4; II Cor 5:14).
 3. See cases of objective-genitive (Luke 11:42; I Tim 3:6; 6:10; Acts 13:34; Jude 1:21).
 4. See the link below for more detail about subjective or objective genitive case phrases.
 5. The *faith of Jesus Christ* could be our faith in Jesus Christ, as modern Bible versions make it, though this or similar phrases using the preposition *of* generally do not mean *in*, though we presume so in Ephesians 3:12.
 6. The *faith of Jesus Christ* could be the doctrine, gospel, or religion of Jesus Christ, as in Jas 2:1 and Rev 14:12, though this usage typically requires the definite article *the*.
 7. The *faith of Jesus Christ* could be His trust in God that directed His obedience for us.
- D. We choose the interpretation that it is Jesus Christ's faith and trust in God that guided and motivated His obedience in life and death to legally secure God's righteousness for us.
1. If we choose faith *in* Christ, as modern versions, we create a tautology or redundancy, since our faith is identified again immediately by the word *believe*. We want to avoid righteousness being by faith to those with faith or by believing to those that believe.
 2. If Paul intended our faith in Jesus Christ, he well knew how to write it, as he did in other places (Gal 3:26; Eph 1:15; Col 1:4; 2:5; Mark 11:22).
 3. We want to preserve the distinction in the text between *by* (Jesus Christ) and *unto* and *upon* (those that believe), for the source of righteousness is different than its objects.
 4. We know it is His faith and obedience that counts legally (3:24; 5:17-19; II Cor 5:18-21; etc.), so we are not taking a position contrary to the testimony of scripture.
 5. This is what we have been taught by those coming before us, which we do not change without overwhelming evidence to the contrary.
 6. We choose this interpretation in Galatians 2:16; 3:22; and Philippians 3:9, which has similar phraseology, for the same reasons as given here.
 7. Our different interpretation here from most expositors should not bother us more than our different interpretation of Heb 4:12 and other texts commonly misinterpreted.
 8. If the apparent latitude in interpretation of this phrase bothers you, ascribe it to inspired

ambiguity, where a phrase can have one or more senses consistent with truth!

E. Our Lord's faith, or His confidence and trust in God, is a certain and great fact of the gospel, for He had greater faith His entire life than Abraham or other examples of faith.

1. Justification is by obedience of One, and He obeyed in life and death (Rom 5:15-19), which obedience could not have pleased God without being founded on great faith.
2. Scripture says by prophecy and fulfillment He trusted God (Ps 16:1; 18:2; Heb 2:13).
3. Our Jesus was more faithful than Moses, who had great faith (Heb 3:1-6; 11:23-29).
4. His prayer in Gethsemane was heard due to His fear and faith (Heb 5:7-8; Mat 21:22).
5. His perfect obedience to the will of God secured our sanctification (Heb 10:7-10).
6. But without faith, He could not have pleased God (Heb 11:6; Matt 23:23; John 8:29).
7. When compared to all the examples of faith from the Old Testament (Heb 11:1-40), Jesus is clearly the superior example of faith we should aspire to follow (Heb 12:1-2).
8. Jesus is not the object of justifying knowledge, making it our knowledge; but rather He is the subject of it, for justification is by His knowledge of God's will (Is 53:11).
9. The knowledge Jesus had was that faith and confidence in God that led Him all His life, took Him through Gethsemane, His horrible trial, and His miserable crucifixion, until He finally committed His spirit to His Father at the moment of death.
10. His enemies testified that He had great faith and trust in God (Ps 16:8; Matt 27:43).
11. How can there be greater faith than giving His soul to God (Lu 23:46 cp Mat 27:46).
12. His perfect fulfillment and obedience to the law required more faith than any man.

F. Could *faith of Jesus Christ* take another option and teach justification by Christ alone?

1. Surely! Then the sense would be we are justified by the gospel or religion of Christ, which involves the legal faith and work of Christ apprehended by our faith in Him.
2. Surely! Then the sense would be we are justified in the very same sense as belief at the end of the verse, for our faith apprehends the legal faith and work of Jesus Christ.
3. The phraseology is used otherwise in Jas 2:1 and Rev 14:12 and maybe other places.

G. How does our faith of believing in Christ relate to Jesus Christ's faith in God His Father?

1. Faith cannot regenerate us vitally, justify us legally, or elect us eternally. It is for us.
2. Our faith is the first act of a quickened heart to lay hold of eternal life by God's grace.
3. Our faith must be compared to Abraham's faith, for his was the classic example referred to many times, which only proved justification when joined by his works.
4. To faith we add seven good works to confirm election (II Pet 1:5-15; James 2:14-26).
5. Faith does nothing more than any other good work of the new man (I Tim 6:17-19).
6. Faith, and works that follow true faith, are the evidence of eternal life to our hearts.

H. Some will likely object that we are too fancy and loose with the words of scripture here.

1. Their argument that Paul never ascribed faith to Jesus is circular reasoning, just as others condemn our use of Heb 4:12, for Paul never called Jesus the Word of God!

2. While we do not like to misapply even one phrase of scripture, even when the application is consistent with truth taught elsewhere, we know Jesus had great faith.
 3. We will not apply this interpretation other than in the four cases given above, for the ambiguity here allowing it does not apply to other places where it is clearly our faith.
- I. For more about **genitive phrases**.

Unto all and upon all them that believe.

- A. The faith here is clearly our faith, as Paul returned to his introductory summary (1:16-17).
- B. Our faith is the identifying and evidentiary mark that shows God's righteousness upon us.
- C. God's righteousness is formally and forensically declared for believers (see 3:25-26).
- D. The key point here is the repetitive use of *all* to classify all Jews and Gentiles together.
- E. The value is not on the two prepositions – *unto* and *upon* – but rather on the repeated *all*.
- F. The message of the gospel and Scripture commands faith in Jesus Christ (Mark 1:15; Acts 8:37; 15:11; 16:31; 20:21; Gal 3:22; I John 3:23; etc., etc.).
 1. Assurance of eternal life begins with faith in Christ (John 20:31; I Jn 5:13; II Pet 1:5).
 2. Faith in Jesus Christ is the evidence of eternal life (John 5:24; 6:47; I John 5:4-5).
 3. There is no message of hope in Scripture to be held out for unbelievers (II Thess 1:8).
 4. Faith is fruit of the Spirit, not a condition for the Spirit (Ga 5:22; Lu 1:15; I Pet 1:21).
- G. Faith is the result of eternal and legal justification, rather than the condition or means.
 1. Otherwise, the natural man of condemned rebels must exercise faith as the condition!
 2. We actually obtain our faith through the righteousness of Jesus Christ (II Peter 1:1).
 3. Faith follows regeneration, and regeneration must follow justification (I John 5:1).
 4. Those that believe *are justified* (passive, perfect), rather than shall be (Acts 13:39).
 5. Faith is an act of righteousness, and it must follow from righteousness (I John 3:7).
 6. We believe because Jesus Christ has already redeemed us from the law (Gal 4:4-6).
 7. Cornelius was accepted with God before he exercised faith in Christ (Acts 10:34-35).
- H. Paul did not distinguish here between faith as evidence or faith as a condition for regeneration, but rather between faith in Christ and obedience to the law for justification.
 1. The epistle of Romans, unlike that to Ephesus, does not deal much with regeneration; it must be assumed by the testimony and doctrine of the rest of the New Testament.
 2. However, the condition of all natural men just described (3:10-18) precludes decisional regeneration or decisional justification. Faith must originate with God.
 3. Works by faith or from faith are ignored, for Paul had to establish faith against works.
 4. Romans opposes Jewish legalists; other scriptures more clearly condemn Arminians.
 5. Faith producing works is even greater evidence (Jas 2:14-26), but Paul must first establish faith in Jesus Christ against the works of the law to refute the Judaizers.
 6. The emphasis here is not the faith of Christ against our faith in Christ, but rather our faith in

Christ's work against any Jewish confidence in the works of Moses' law.

7. Paul denied that faith is a work in Romans, for he was not opposing Arminians, who teach that God regenerates and justifies believers on the grounds of their faith.
8. The epistle of Romans contrasts faith and law works; James profession and works.
 - I. Legal justification is God's sovereign work (Rom 3:24; 4:5; 5:6-11,16-19; 8:29-34; 11:6).
 - J. The gospel merely reveals justification (Rom 1:17; II Cor 5:18-21; II Timothy 1:9-10).
 - K. Faith is our means of identification with Jesus Christ, whereby we know we have eternal life, are justified, and shall be justified in the sight of God in the great day to come.
 1. Faith proves eternal life to oneself and others, so we preach faith in Christ (I Jn 5:13).
 2. To make our calling and election sure, we must believe ... and more (II Peter 1:5-11).
 3. Paul taught conduct to lay hold on eternal life no different than faith (I Tim 6:12,19).
 - L. Faith will be set forth here and throughout Romans as a new principle, economy, system, "law," basis, or so forth for hope of justification under the new covenant. Compare how works were the principle, economy, system, "law," and basis for the old covenant.
 1. Paul used Romans for the nature of New Testament religion (faith vs. old covenant works), not the condition or means of regeneration or the *ordo salutis* of theologians.
 2. This same line of reasoning must be used to contrast the two covenants.
 - M. For more about **faith and works**.
 - N. **Old Baptist on faith's role**.

For there is no difference.

- A. There is no difference between Jews or Gentiles when it comes to the salvation of God.
- B. The law cannot and will not save either; belief in Christ is identifying evidence for both.
- C. Whether Jew or Gentile, faith in Jesus Christ is the only basis for claiming righteousness.

23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

For all have sinned.

- A. This verse and clause explain the last clause of the previous verse that there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, for both are sinners and short of God's approval.
- B. Paul had before proved that both Jews and Gentiles were condemned sinners (3:9,19).

And come short of the glory of God.

- A. This verse and clause explain the last clause of the previous verse that there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, for both are sinners and short of God's approval.
- B. What is the glory of God that sinners come short of? For this verse depends on the sense.
- C. No man by natural character or conduct has ever measured up to the glory of God's inherent

righteousness and the glory of that place where God dwells forever.

- D. Sin has made man unacceptable in the sight and presence of God, thus there is the desperate need for justifying redemption to declare man righteous in the sight of God.
- E. In some respects, God made man in His image, but man corrupted God's image greatly.
- F. Even the prophet Isaiah was mortified by His sins in God's presence (Isaiah 6:1-7).
- G. Even the apostle Peter was mortified by His sins in the presence of Jesus (Luke 5:8).
- H. For a full dose of **total depravity**.

24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Being justified.

- A. The glorious passive voice of this verbal phrase should cause joy in God our Saviour!
- B. Justification is God absolving a sinner from his sins and declaring him to be acceptably righteous on the ground and merit of Jesus Christ's substitutionary life and death for him.
- C. Some say justification may be defined as, "Just as if I had never sinned," but this is weak.
- D. We say, "Just as if I had never sinned, and just as if I had lived Jesus' perfect life."
- E. Justification not only absolves and declares free from the condemnation and guilt of sin; it also declares us as perfectly righteous in the sight of God by legal substitution by Jesus.
- F. God sent Jesus Christ to perfectly keep the Law for us and has applied it to us (8:3-4)!
- G. It is the *legal or forensic* work of adjudicating and declaring a person righteous, who had correctly and previously been condemned as guilty for offences.
- H. Justification is a *forensic* term describing our legal standing before God as Judge.
 - I. We are justified by Christ's perfect righteousness being positively applied to our account, and our sins being negatively paid for by His death, before God as Judge.
- J. Legally God does not see our sins, and instead He sees us in Christ's righteousness.
- K. God is perfectly just; He cannot acquit or clear wicked men (Ex 34:7; Job 10:14; Na 1:3).
- L. Compare related facets of salvation: acceptance, imputation, mediation, pardon, propitiation, reconciliation, satisfaction.

Freely by his grace.

- A. Justification is a free gift by the grace of God. It is not an offer demanding performance.
- B. Justification is a free gift by the grace of God. It is not a reward dependent on obedience!
- C. What is grace? It is much more than unmerited favor, as some say. It is demerited favor!
- D. What is grace? It is the opposite of conditional works and a reward, by definition (11:6)!
- E. What is grace? It is mutually exclusive to anything associated with the "do and live" law!
- F. Justification is not an offer; it is a gift. By faith we know the eternal gift is true of us.

- G. It is only free to us, for it came at a great price to God and Christ through death.
- H. Justification is entirely free by God's gracious gift eternally, legally, vitally, and finally.
- I. Practically we believe for the assurance, confidence, and declaration we are righteous.
- J. For more about **eternal life as a gift**.

Through the redemption.

- A. Redemption is the *economic or financial* work of buying some thing or some one back from another that has a legitimate and binding claim against it.
 - 1. The firstborns were God's, but substituting a lamb *redeemed* them (Ex 13:13; 34:20).
 - 2. The Law defined how a man could be *redeemed* from negligent homicide (Ex 21:30).
 - 3. The Law defined how to *redeem* assets or persons that were sold (Lev 25:25; etc.).
 - 4. God *redeemed* Israel from Egypt for its full value (Ex 15:16; I Chr 17:21; II Pet 2:1).
- B. Redemption is an *economic* term describing purchase from the claims of God as Creditor.
 - a. Jesus redeemed us from claims of God's law by payment of His own precious blood.
 - b. See Psalm 49:15; Romans 3:24; I Corinthians 1:30; Galatians 3:13; 4:5; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 9:12-15; I Peter 1:18-20; Revelation 5:9.
 - c. Jesus entered God's presence once and obtained eternal redemption for us (He 9:12)!
 - d. Compare redemption by Christ's blood to evangelistic efforts to save by money gifts!
- C. Compare related facets of salvation – purchase, buy (Ac 20:28; Ep 1:14; I Co 6:20; 7:23).

That is in Christ Jesus.

- A. Salvation is wrapped up in the Son of God, formed to be a perfect Savior (Heb 2:14-18).
- B. Without God sending Jesus to die for us, there is no hope of any reconciliation to God.
- C. God's purpose and grace was given to us before the world began in Jesus (II Tim 1:9).

25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

Whom God hath set forth.

- A. The entire foundational basis for salvation is found in God's will and plan (Eph 1:3-12).
- B. God sent Jesus into the world in time, which Paul identified as *now* (3:21; II Tim 1:10).
- C. But God had set Him forth from eternity to do so (I Pet 1:20; Tit 1:2-3; Eph 3:9-11).

To be a propitiation.

- A. Propitiation is the *mediatorial or relational* work of appeasing an offended party to bring about reconciliation and unity where there had been enmity.

1. **Propitiate.** To render propitious or favourably inclined; to appease, conciliate (one offended). [OED.]
 2. Jacob sent a gift to Esau before meeting as a propitiation to appease him (Gen 32:20).
- B. Propitiation is *mediatorial* describing purchase of peace for us with God as Antagonist.
1. Jesus Christ was sacrificed on Calvary to make peace with God on behalf of the elect.
 2. He is the propitiation for all the sins of the elect through the whole world (I John 2:2).
 3. The greatest rule of love is God's love of us and His Son as propitiation (I John 4:10).
 4. God the Father had faith, confidence or trust, in the blood of His Son Jesus Christ.
- C. Compare related facets of salvation: reconciliation (Rom 5:10) and atonement (Ro 5:11).

Through faith in his blood.

- A. We understand this as God's faith in Christ's blood as sufficient to satisfy divine justice.
- B. God saw the travail of Christ's soul on the cross and was satisfied for sinners (Is 53:10).
- C. The issue here is God's ability to declare men righteous who had sinned for 4000 years.
- D. Through faith, God set Jesus Christ forth as a propitiation; through forbearance He declared sinful men for 4000 years righteous by Christ. Note the parallel argument.
- E. God had faith in Christ's blood to forbear sins for 4000 years and declare men righteous!
- F. We understand the transaction here to be the same transaction as that in Heb 9:14-15.
- G. How can this be our faith in Christ's blood (though it is taught elsewhere as in 4:24 and 10:9), when the matter under consideration is remission of sins of generations gone by!
- H. Our faith in the blood of Christ or God's acceptance of it cannot help justify any others.

To declare his righteousness.

- A. This is a forensic and legal definition of justification – to declare guilty sinners righteous!
- B. The righteousness is Jesus Christ's by perfect obedience applied to sinners before God.

For the remission of sins.

- A. **Remit.** To forgive or pardon (a sin, offence, etc.). **Remission.** Forgiveness or pardon granted for sins or offences against divine law; the canceling of, or deliverance from, the guilt and penalties of sin. [OED.]
- B. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission (Heb 9:22). See blood in the context.

That are past.

- A. The sins by the elect for 4000 years were forgiven by God through faith in Christ's blood.
- B. Even those sins that were past – those before and under the old covenant – were covered through God's forbearance and faith in Jesus Christ's sacrifice for them (Heb 9:14-15).

Through the forbearance of God.

- A. The acting agent in this verse is God ... setting forth, trusting, declaring, and forbearing.
- B. Through faith God set Jesus Christ forth as a propitiation; through forbearance He declared sinful men for 4000 years righteous by Christ. Note the parallel argument.
- C. Being just, God cannot merely forbear sin and sinners, no matter how greatly desired.
- D. His forbearance was based on a perfect substitute He knew would occur (Rom 4:17).

26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

To declare, I say, at this time.

- A. The gospel era, the day of salvation, is when God publicly declared His righteousness.
- B. Prior to the Jesus Christ's death and the gospel time, God had faith and forbearance.
- C. Now gospel preachers carried His declaration of Christ's righteousness to the world.

His righteousness.

- A. Is this the righteousness of God or the righteousness of Jesus Christ? Of Christ in God.
- B. Jesus Christ fully satisfied the righteousness demands of God's law for us believers.
- C. It was by the obedience of One that many are made righteous – Jesus Christ for us (5:19)!

That he might be just.

- A. God must be just, for it is a necessary part of His nature to righteously punish all sins.
- B. God is just in all doctrine and theology, unable to acquit or clear (Ex 34:7; Nahum 1:3).
- C. By punishing Jesus Christ for every sin forgiven, He maintained His perfect justice.

And the justifier.

- A. By infinite wisdom, God designed substitutionary salvation to justify sinners! Glory!
- B. How can a just God, Who cannot acquit or clear, forgive any? Only by substitution!

Of him which believeth in Jesus.

- A. The identifying mark of those benefiting from this declaration is faith in Jesus Christ.
- B. Our faith does not elect us, justify us, regenerate us, or glorify us. It is evidence of such.
- C. We lay hold of eternal life and God's promise in Christ by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- D. There is much that should follow our faith to give further assurance and evidence of life

27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

Where is boasting then?

- A. Glorious question! The Spirit praises God's gracious salvation from the view of boasting.
- B. Recall, Paul has already rebuked the Jews for their great propensity to boast (2:17,23).
- C. How can there be nationalistic boasting in a system of justification ignoring nationality?
- D. Since they were committed to boasting of their relationship with God, their possession of His law, and their righteousness over that of the Gentiles, Paul forces them to consider how much boasting is allowed for or provided for in a plan of justification by free grace.
- E. Paul's careful language of 3:19-26 defined and limited justification as God's free gift by grace through Jesus Christ's substitutionary work for hopelessly condemned sinners.
- F. Under the law, the Jews could boast of having the means (the law itself) and ostensibly keeping it (hearing it, wearing it, and otherwise giving ostentatious lip service to it).
- G. Paul will not let this matter end easily, for he raised it again shortly regarding Abraham (4:2); and he will thoroughly reduce man to dependent clay before he finishes (9:9-24).
- H. Justification by grace through Jesus Christ and claimed by faith provides definite answers to objections (3:27 – 4:10), and it is a great pleasure to watch Paul by the Holy Spirit introduce the questions and objections and then answer them.
- I. For the sake of maximum learning, remember that Paul is correcting Jewish legalism, so the contrast is always salvation by grace apprehended by faith against the Law of Moses.

It is excluded.

- A. This plan of justification, from God's free grace through a redemptive purchase by Jesus Christ's blood and claimed by faith without works of the law, when rightly understood, does not allow boasting by man at all, for he is the recipient of a free gift (6:23).
- B. God cannot and will not allow any boasting in His presence (I Cor 1:26-31; Eph 2:8-9).
- C. We rejoice in making this the seventh and most glorious proof of unconditional salvation, as you may see [from this link](#).
- D. Based on this principle emphasized by Paul here and elsewhere, we use it as an interpretive device to help form the sense of some passages appearing to give man a role.

By what law? Of works? Nay:

- A. What law excludes human boasting? Paul by the Holy Spirit used the word *law* differently for a lesson. Here he uses it as a word for doctrine, economy, principle, system, or religion, which the Jews would understand in light of their law of works.
- B. Does the *law of works*, which the Jews had and exalted, exclude boasting? Not at all.
- C. The *law of works* was entirely based on human performance, as it was a system of conditional justification rewarding man's perfect conduct (Lev 18:5; Neh 9:29; Gal 3:12).

- D. If a man were able to keep the law and obtain heaven, he would be there on his merits, thus allowing him the right to boast of his accomplishments against all those in hell.
- E. A law or system of salvation like Moses' Law, being conditional on human performance, gave man every right to boast in its limited extent and their presumed compliance.

But by the law of faith.

- A. The only law or system of salvation excluding boasting is God's unconditional plan of justification by free grace through Jesus Christ's redemptive work laid hold of by faith.
- B. The *law of faith* is the Spirit's use of law in a different sense to refer to the doctrine, economy, principle, system, or religion based on justification by faith rather than works.
- C. Believers see all the power and wisdom in God Himself through Jesus Christ (1:16-17).
- D. Remember, Paul is not correcting Arminians and other heretics who have formed another conditional system of justification based on missionary endeavors and man's decision.
- E. Paul will declare before he ends, once he can ignore Jewish legalists, that justification and eternal life are by God's unconditional grace (5:6-19; 8:28-39; 9:15-16; etc.).

28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Therefore we conclude.

- A. Truth lovers appreciate conclusions, for we come to resting places regarding doctrine.
- B. A *therefore* usually indicates a conclusion, but Paul by the Spirit expressly declared it.
- C. Paul proved already that a system of conditional justification, especially one based on the Jewish system of Moses' law, cannot possibly be true or ever succeed (1:18 – 3:20).
- D. Paul defined the true doctrine based on God's free grace and Christ's work (3:21-26).
- E. Paul assumed here and shortly that the Jews understood that boasting condemned any system, as he has just argued in 3:27 (4:2; Is 10:15; 42:8; 48:11; Jer 9:23-24).
- F. Paul's conclusion is based on at least three general groups of evidence for grace by faith.
 1. Mankind is guilty and condemned, regardless of the law in any sense (1:18 – 3:20).
 2. Justification is based on God's grace in Jesus Christ's redemptive work (3:21-26).
 3. Boasting cannot be included at all, as Paul has and will argue (3:27; 4:2).

That a man is justified by faith.

- A. The faith here is our faith, as assumed in 3:22 and 3:26 and pursued from here on, the evidence of justification and the initial event bringing God's declaration of righteousness.
- B. The words *by faith* cannot mean a condition, instrument, or means for election in eternity ... or a synergistic participation in Jesus Christ's legal work on the cross and in heaven ... or a decisional act of cooperation in one's quickening and regeneration from death but rather the identifying

evidence that lays claim to justification for our assurance.

- C. Why did Paul not constantly contrast the works of the law to *justification by grace*, instead of *justification by faith*? Because the crucial issue with Jewish legalists was the identifying evidence and personal assurance of justification against their nationalistic confidence in their relation to Abraham, their confidence in the Law, etc.
- D. Why did Paul not teach here that faith without works is dead? Because it would have diluted his argument and confused his hearers susceptible to Jewish legalism, so it is taught elsewhere in this epistle and in other epistles (Rom 6-8,12-16; Jas 2:14-26; etc.).
- E. Though justification in several phases is entirely by grace irrespective of faith, yet justification is declared, identified, and proven to be upon men with faith, as Abraham illustrates in chapter four, confirmed by works (Jas 2:14-26; I Thess 1:2-4; etc.).
- F. For more about **faith and works**.
- G. **Old Baptist on faith's role**.

Without the deeds of the law.

- A. There can be no combination of grace and works of Moses' law, otherwise both are corrupted and perverted, for their very definitions are mutually exclusive (11:6).
- B. There can be no combination of grace and works, otherwise Christ's works are made of none effect and the heretical compromiser falls from the truth of grace (Gal 5:1-4).

29 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:

Is he the God of the Jews only?

- A. This question is connected to the question opening verse 27, for the boasting of Jews was in their Jewishness, not in the God of the Jews.
- B. Grasp the subtlety and rejoice! If justification is outside the Law of Moses and based only on faith, what hinders Gentiles from believing God's promises in Christ by the gospel?
- C. If God's covenant with Moses and Israel is no part of true justification, then there is no particular advantage for Jews. As Paul earlier stated, "No, in no wise!" (3:9).
- D. Not fully elaborated here, as he will elsewhere, there is no further distinction between Jew and Gentile due to the gospel of grace through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

Is he not also of the Gentiles?

- A. They knew He was the God of saints before Abraham, from whom the Hebrews came.
- B. They knew He was the God of exceptional Gentiles like Melchisedec and Ruth.
- C. They knew there were Gentile fellow believers in Christ sitting on the pew beside them, even as they had this epistle read to them!

Yes, of the Gentiles also.

- A. Indeed! God created the Gentiles and could save any of them He chose by His free grace in Jesus Christ, evidenced by their turning from idols to serve the living God by faith.
- B. The Council at Jerusalem had come clearly to grips with this fact (Acts 15:6-21).

30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

Seeing it is one God.

- A. Since there is only one God who created and can save Jew or Gentile, there is no reason to think there is any difference in the means of justification for either party.
- B. Paul appealed to this very simple argument of one God in another place (Gal 3:20-29).

Which shall justify.

- A. Why the future tense? Because there were many Gentiles to be yet called by the gospel to believe and lay hold of justification by faith.
- B. Why the future tense? Because the ultimate act of justification will be God's formal pronouncement in the Day of Judgment (II Tim 4:8; Rev 3:5; 19:8; 20:11-15; 21:27).
- C. Remember the five phases of justification, so you can identify what is eternal in the counsel of God and what is yet to take place, for our faith actually waits for the promise of righteousness by faith through the power of the Spirit (Gal 5:5; Phil 3:8-9; II Tim 4:8).
- D. **Five phases of justification.**
- E. **Old Baptist doctrine** (1647).
- F. **Old Baptist doctrine** (1732).

The circumcision by faith.

- A. The argument and emphasis made here are not the preposition *by* but the noun *faith*.
- B. If any argument can be made from the difference of *by* and *through* is that there is none!
- C. There are not two ways of salvation! There is only one salvation, claimed by faith!

And the uncircumcision through faith.

- A. The argument and emphasis made here are not the preposition *through* but the noun *faith*.
- B. If any argument can be made from the difference of *by* and *through* is that there is none!
- C. There are not two ways of salvation! There is only one salvation, claimed by faith!

31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we

establish the law.

Do we then make void the law through faith?

- A. Our beloved brother continued to introduce objections and questions he knew could or would be asked, which leaves us with a very thorough doctrinal statement in few words.
- B. Does the law or system of faith destroy the purpose or value of the law of God to Moses?
- C. Paul has hammered the Jews and their law hard from 2:1 through 3:30, yet the Jews knew that God had given that law to Moses and their nation with great drama and seriousness.
- D. Did Paul's doctrine of grace through faith make God's introduction of the law vain?

God forbid.

- A. The answer to Paul's proposed objection against faith is a definite and strong negative.
- B. Does free justification by God's Son nullify the law of Moses? Not a chance! No way!

Yea, we establish the law.

- A. The gospel establishes the law. How? By revealing its true purpose and fulfillment!
- B. The purpose of the law is condemnation, not justification, and it does its job well (3:19)!
- C. The moral law of God in this context is the defining standard of how humans can please and satisfy God's righteousness to be acceptable to Him, but no man could come close!
- D. Jesus Christ fulfilled the law both positively and negatively for us (8:3-4; Gal 3:13).
- E. Our Lord had declared this intent of His very early to the Jews (Matthew 5:17-18).
- F. He also fulfilled the law's prophecies of salvation from Genesis 3:15 to Malachi 4:1-6.