

All the World Is Guilty Before God

Romans 3:1-20

Romans 3:1-20 - *"What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?"² Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.³ For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?⁴ Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged."*

⁵ But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.)⁶ Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world?⁷ For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner?⁸ And why not say, "Let us do evil that good may come"?—as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.⁹ What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.¹⁰ As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one;¹¹ There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.¹² They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."¹³ "Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit"

"The poison of asps is under their lips;"¹⁴ "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood;¹⁶ Destruction and misery are in their ways;¹⁷ And the way of peace they have not known."¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

Background Notes

In Romans 3 Paul continues his argument to show that the religious Jew is guilty before God. Even though the Jewish people were the chosen people and had the Law of God, they didn't measure up to God's standards or righteousness. They were guilty before God. Not only was the uncivilized barbarian and pagan guilty before God, and not only was the civilized self-righteous moralist guilty before God, but the religious Jew was also guilty before God. In fact, the whole world was - and is - guilty before God! Look at verses 10 and 12: "As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." And verse 19: "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

So in these first twenty verses of Romans 3, Paul completes the first step towards revealing God's wonderful plan of salvation, but before God's great plan can be revealed, man's great need must be realized. No one can read the first three chapters of Romans and not realize man's desperate need of God's grace in order to be saved.

Doctrinal Points

1. All objections to God's judgment are answered.

This doctrinal point covers the first eight verses of Romans 3. In concluding the argument to show that the religious Jew was guilty before God, Paul answered several objections that might be raised to question God's ways of judgment.

Objection 1. There is no advantage to being one of God's chosen people.

Verse 1: "*What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?*" In other words, if everyone is on the same playing field and everyone is guilty before God, then being a Jew and one of God's chosen people is just a "joke" -- nothing special at all? Answer to the objection: WRONG! Verse 2 tells us that the Jews were especially privileged to have the "oracles of God," the Word of God, committed to them. Don't forget that great blessing and privilege!

Objection 2. God is not faithful to His promises.

Verse 3: "*For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?*" Do you follow the objection there? If God made all these promises to the Jewish people, and the Jews are guilty before God for not believing, then doesn't that somehow make God unfaithful for not fulfilling His promises? Answer to the objection: WRONG AGAIN! Verse 4: "*Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged."*"

In other words, you have the wrong perspective. Man is always wrong when he thinks there is an inconsistency about God. As David said in Psalm 51:4, which is quoted here, God is vindicated every time He is questioned by sinful man. The rest of Romans, particularly Romans 9 through 11, will go on to show how the promises of God to the Jewish people will be completely fulfilled with the Jewish people who believe, both now and in the future.

Objection 3: God is unjust to punish unrighteousness because man's unrighteousness highlights God's righteousness.

Verse 5: "*But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.)*" Do you follow the objection? Answer to the objection: WRONG AGAIN! Verse 6: "*Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world?*" Just because God's righteousness is highlighted by man's unrighteousness, this doesn't mean that God is unjust to punish that unrighteousness. It's still unrighteousness! That's what judgment is all about -- judgment of the Jew and judgment of the entire world.

Objection 4. Since God's truth and glory are enhanced because of man's lying and sin, then God is wrong to judge.

Verses 7-8: *"For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner?"⁸ And why not say, "Let us do evil that good may come?"—as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.*" In fact, some of the Jews were saying that Paul was advancing that argument himself, and Paul said, "No way! That report is slander!" In verse 8 Paul was basically saying, "No, I'm not advancing that argument at all, even though some of my accusers are slandering me that way!" In Romans 6 Paul will take up objection #4 once again. Romans 6:1-2: *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"* So the answer to this objection is: Certainly not! This is wrong thinking about God, and it is justly condemned, as we see here at the end of verse 8: *"Their condemnation is just."*

So all objections to God's judgment of unrighteousness, then and today, are answered right here in the first three chapters of Romans.

2. All the world is guilty before God.

In verses 9-20, we have the conclusion and summation of the argument of Romans up to this point. What is it? **All the world is guilty before God.** Verse 19: *"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."* In verses 10-18 we have a number of quotations from the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament. The purpose of these quotes is to show that Paul's argument, that all the world is guilty before God, is based on solid Scripture. Paul was not coming up with some new teaching here. No! The Scriptures were already clear on this point. All the world is guilty before God!

The Scriptures quoted in verses 10-12 point out the fact that **sin has affected everyone.** Let's read verses 10-12 again. *"There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God."¹² They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one."*

That doesn't leave too much room for exceptions, does it? There are **no** exceptions! All the world is guilty before God. Now remember that this statement is made **in reference to God's standards of righteousness.** There are upright people and moral people, but compared to **God's** standards of righteousness, no one is righteous – no, not one.

The Psalms quoted in verses 13-18 show that **sin has affected every part of us.** Let's read those verses again: *"Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit. The poison of asps is under their lips"; "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are in their ways; And the way of peace they have not known." "There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

Did you know that apart from Christ, you are totally depraved? That description doesn't mean that you have committed the worst sins or every possible sin. It means that:

- 1) you are totally and entirely affected by sin (body, soul, and spirit), and
- 2) apart from Christ, you are capable of committing the worst sins.

This is what the Bible teaches. The whole world is guilty before God.

Practical Application

Where are you on God's scale of righteousness?

Suppose we had a giant measuring scale that reached all the way across the country from the East Coast to the West Coast, and this giant scale represented God's standards of righteousness. Let's say that the West Coast represents one hundred percent righteousness and the East Coast represents zero percent righteousness. Now where would you put yourself on God's scale of righteousness? Would you say that you're about half-way -- maybe in Kansas? Would you say that maybe you're as far as Denver? Or maybe only as far as Pittsburgh? Well, what's the Bible's answer here? If you have not accepted God's gift of salvation in Jesus Christ, you're still on the beach of the East Coast! Apart from Christ, we are **nowhere**.

But here's the good news! If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior, then you're all the way to the West Coast -- you are 100% righteous! You're not working your way across the country. You're not about as far as Denver, slowly working your way to the West Coast -- you're already there! The righteousness of Christ has been given to you, or imputed to you. There's no middle ground! That's what salvation is all about! And that's what the Book of Romans is all about.

So, in conclusion, think through that question. Where are you on God's scale of righteousness?