

GOD'S FINAL VERDICT
Romans 3:1-20 Part 6
Pastor Rick Edwards

Paul makes his closing arguments for God's case against humanity.

1. QUESTIONS: PAUL ANSWERS ALL OBJECTIONS **Romans 3:1-9**

Note the five questions and answers

- **Why be religious V 1** **Regarding the Jews uniqueness**

Answer: It's a privilege to be a Jew V 2

- **Will the Jews lack of faith nullify God's promises V3** **Regarding God's faithfulness**

Answer: No. Not at all! V 4

- **Does our sin make God look good V 5** **Regarding God's righteousness**

Answer: NO!!!!!! V 6

- **Why can't we go on sinning? (vs. 7)** **Regarding God's truthfulness**

Answer: We get what we deserve V 8

- **Are we any better? (vs. 9)** **Regarding Man's sinfulness**

Answer: No V 9

II. QUOTATIONS: PAUL SUBMITS SUPPORTING TESTIMONY **Romans 3;10- 18**

"As it is written..." Paul uses Old Testament Scripture

- **No one is without sin! No one seeks God. V 10-12**
- **Sin wastes V 13a**
- **Our speech is deceitful V 13b**
- **Our speech is poisonous V 14**
- **Our actions are violent V 15-17**
- **No fear of God V 18**

III. CONCLUSION: PAUL SUMMARIZES GOD'S CASE **Romans 3:19-20**

- **The whole world is accountable to God.**
- **The whole world is without excuse.**

God gave the Law in the Bible for two reasons:

- **It makes us aware of our sin. 3:v20**
- **To point us toward Christ. Galatians 3:23-24.**

THE VERDICT:

The final verdict is man is guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. The whole world is lost. The bottom line is everybody needs to be saved.

GOD'S FINAL VERDICT

Part 6 Romans 3:1-20

We've been going through this book verse by verse. Tonight we look at the last 20 verses of the first major division of Romans. Paul makes his closing arguments of God's case against humanity. The purpose of this section is to show that everybody needs Jesus Christ, salvation.

In chapter two we looked at the fact that God judges people. We are not to judge anybody. We looked at seven reasons why we're not to judge anybody. Paul is building this case and takes different groups in our world and shows why each group is guilty.

Tonight we're doing the conclusion. Next week we get into the good news. We've been in the bad news -- sin. Paul, in chapter one, talks about how there are pagans, rebellious people, who thumb their nose to God and do their own thing, getting into all kinds of perversion and live as though there is no God. Those people will be judged.

In chapter 2, he says, Those of you who think you're good moral people and respectable, you're no better off. He talks about in chapter 2 those who are respectable, who say, "I'm no pervert!" He says you have some things in your life that you've done wrong.

Then there are some religious people who are not just a good moral person and certainly not somebody who's living without God, I'm a religious person. Last week we saw that religion has never saved anybody. Rules and regulations and rituals are just not enough to give you a passport into heaven.

Tonight Paul sums up everything we've looked at in the last five weeks and draws some conclusions.

Imagine this first section as a courtroom case. Paul is the prosecuting attorney making the case that everybody in the world has done something wrong in their life and will therefore be judged and we need a savior.

In this section he does what any good lawyer would do. When a lawyer comes to the conclusion of a case he usually does three things.

First, he anticipates the questions that are in the minds of the jurors and he answers them in advance.

He sees the jury thinking "What about this and this..." Paul makes his closing arguments in the first nine verses.

Then he brings in supporting evidence. He brings in some testimonies and quotations from the Old Testament in support of what he is doing (v. 10-18). In the last verses he summarizes his conclusion and asks for a verdict.

In the first eight verses of chapter 3 Paul asks some questions and gives some answers. First, we're going to look at the objections that Paul answers and the questions. There are five

questions and five answers. Paul loved to use questions and answers as a teaching tool. In a synagogue setting it was perfectly normal for the teacher to speak and then say, "Are there any questions?" And he'd open it up. Paul, because he's writing to the Romans just imagines a dialogue here and asks the questions himself and then answers them himself. This section we're going to look at tonight is without a doubt the most difficult section in Romans to understand. It's also one of the most difficult sections in the entire Bible. If you'll understand that Paul is asking questions and then answering them himself, it is going to make a little more sense to you.

Paul is the prosecuting attorney. The opposition stands up and say, "I object." The background for these questions are in the pervious chapter. **Paul has just told the Jews that their religion will not get them to heaven.**

In fact, he says, nobody's religion will get you to heaven. He says you're not going to make it because of your race, religion, or ritual.

In reading chapter 2 it seems that there is absolutely no difference between Jews and Gentiles. Paul is not saying that. He's just saying none of us are innocent. It's as though Paul stands face to face with some hecklers. These Jews keep coming up with questions. Paul answers these questions in these first nine verses.

There are ten question marks in these first nine verses. Paul is going to ask these questions and then he's going to give some answers. Likewise there are four exclamation points -- four answers.

1. The first question is about the Jew's uniqueness. 3:1 *"What advantage is there then in being a Jew? Or what value is there in circumcision?"* Paul is saying, Some of you are thinking, **"Why be religious?** If working hard and going to church and being circumcised and keeping the law and serving the Jewish holidays won't get me into heaven, why should I even do it?" Is there any advantage in being a Jew over being a pagan if we're all guilty?

Paul answers in v. 2. *"Much in every way."* **It's a great privilege to be a Jew.** Praise the Lord! If you're Jewish you ought to be proud of it. There is advantage to it. What is that advantage?

- **First of all they have then entrusted with the very words of God.**

The Greek word for "first of all" means chiefly, of primary importance. When Paul says "first of all" it sounds like he's going to give a whole list of advantages for being a Jew and he gives one. Why? He's saying this is the most important one. 9:4-5 he lists the other advantages.

He's saying that the greatest thing the Jews had going for them was that God had given them His word, more than all the rituals and all the other things, **God had given them His word.**

The best thing they had going for them was the Old Testament. This is the Jews' great distinction. God told them, This is the Word and it has been entrusted to you.

Exodus 25. **Why did God give them the Word?**

- **The first reason that God gave the Jews the Word was to care for it and protect it.**

We, as Christians, have a lot to thank the Jews for because they have preserved the Bible for thousands of years.

. God says I'm giving the Jews the Word to take care of it and protect it so that down through the ages people will have it.

Romans. That was part of the Jewish privilege talked about in v. 2. But there were two parts to this entrustment.

- **The second thing the Jews were to do with the Word of God was to share it.**

The Jews were to be the missionaries to the rest of the world. God did not make them the chosen nation so they could say, We got it and you don't! He did not make them to be a special group so that they could say, We're the In crowd. Everybody else, forget it! **He made them to be evangelists to the world. They were to take the Word of God and share it. But did they do that? No, they didn't.**

The Jews did one of the two things God gave them the word for. They took care of it, preserved it. But they didn't share it. They thought that "We're the chosen people" meant We're the only people. But God said, "I gave you the Word so that you could share it with everybody else." The Jews saw their position as a position of prestige and privilege. But Paul said, You have an advantage yes -- the Word of God, but you also have a responsibility.

2. The second question that Paul deals with is in the next verse. Underline "God's faithfulness".

That's what the question is about. The first is about the **Jew's uniqueness** and the second is about God's faithfulness. Paul imagines some saying, **"What if some of them did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness?"**

Paul is saying there are obviously some Jews who were not faithful to God. The whole Old Testament talks about that: there were some who were and some who weren't.

This question could be asked several ways:

- Will God give up on the Jewish nation because some of them were unfaithful?
- Will God rescind all of His promises to the Jews because they didn't follow Him?
- Does the Jews' unfaithfulness cancel God's promises to them?
- Did God make promises to the Jews?
- Did the Jews keep their part of the bargain? No.
- Then can God break His promises?

Paul says, v. 4, "Not at all. Let God be true and every man be a liar. As it is written so that you may be proved right in your words and prevailing in your judging." The question Paul asks now is, **Since the Jews did not follow God's word completely does that mean that all the promises God made to them, God doesn't have to keep them any more?**

Paul says, No! Not at all! This is a favorite expression of Paul's. Not at all!

It's used thirteen times in Paul's writings and nine times in the book of Romans. The literal translation is No! No! No! No! No! No! It means God forbid! It is the strongest statement you can make in the Greek language. It means Absolutely not!

God does not break His promises even when our performance doesn't warrant it. There are some people questioning God's faithfulness.

They're saying since the Jews were unfaithful to God does that mean that God can now be unfaithful to the Jews?

He doesn't have to keep all the promises He made to them? Paul says No! Even if every person in the world is a liar, God is true.

In the Bible there are two kinds of promises.

There are conditional promises and there are unconditional promises.

- **Conditional promises:**

"If you do this then I will do this." *"Ask and it shall be given unto you."* The condition is Ask, the promise is It shall be given unto you. It doesn't say if you don't ask He's going to give it anyway. There is a condition. How about *"Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."* Condition: call on the name of the Lord. If you do your part, God does His part. 2 Chronicles 7;14 *"If my people which are called by My name shall humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and forgive their sins and heal their land."* There is a promise and there's a premise. Those are conditional promises.

- **Unconditional**

There are also in the Bible many promises that are totally unconditional whether we do what's right or not.

These are the promises that Paul is talking about here.

There are some promises to the Jews that God made regardless of what they did.

- For instance, **God promised the Jews that eventually they would have a Messiah.** Did the Jews deserve that Messiah? Were they faithful all through the years of the Old Testament? They weren't. But did God send the Messiah anyway? Sure. Even though He knew that they were going to reject Him, He sent Him anyway. That was an unconditional promise.
- The Bible also says that one day Christ is going to come back. That's a promise. It doesn't matter what you do or what you don't do. That promise is not conditioned upon you. This is what Paul is talking about here.

He's saying some of you are saying that since the Jews have blown it and then God can forget everything He's promised to them. Paul says No, **God's promises are based on His character not on man's performance.**

Aren't you glad that some of God's promises aren't based on how you perform? I'm really glad! Paul bases his answer on Psalm 89:30-37. These were the verses Paul was thinking about when this second question came up.

These are verses on the faithfulness of God. "If his sons forsake My law and do not follow My statutes, if they violate My decrees and fail to keep My commandment I will punish their sin with a rod and their iniquity with floggings but I will not take My love from him, nor will I ever betray My faithfulness. I will not violate My covenant or alter what My lips have uttered. Once for all I have sworn by My holiness I will not lie to David and his line will continue forever and the throne endure before Me like the sun. It will be established forever like the moon, a faithful witness in the sky."

- God is saying that even though the Jewish nation has not done what I told them to do, I still love them and I still will fulfill the promises that I made to them.

If you want an example of the faithfulness of God, look at the nation of Israel. How many of those nations in the Old Testament are still around today?

Only one! Israelites. Because God is faithful.

We see the faithfulness of God in the nation of Israel. That ought to be an encouragement to us. **One of the reasons why these promises in the Bible ought to be so precious to us is because they are absolutely trustworthy. You can count on them. God will never go against His word. God says it and it will happen!**

Paul is saying that God is still not through with Israel. He is working with the church today but God still has a plan for Israel. He still has promises to keep and to fulfill.

3 That leads us to question 3. V 5-6

The first question: The Jews' uniqueness.

The second question: God's faithfulness.

The third question: God's righteousness.

Romans 3. This is regarding God's righteousness. *"But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness..."* This passage is probably the hardest passage in Romans to understand in the Greek and the English. **Paul is talking about faulty logic here and he's going to point out that it doesn't make sense but it was a common excuse that the Jews were giving at this time.** v. 5 *"If our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly what shall we say, that God is unjust in bringing His wrath on us? I am using a human argument."* Living Bible: *"But some say our breaking faith with God is good. Our sins serve a good purpose. For people will notice how good God is when they see how bad we are. Is it fair then for Him to punish us when our sins are helping Him? That is the way some people talk."* Phillips: *"But if our wickedness advertises the goodness of God do we feel that God is being unfair to punish us in return. I'm using a human tit-for-tat argument."*

Paul is saying that some people are saying, "You've just said that God is faithful to us even when we're unfaithful to Him. Therefore it seems that when I sin God forgives me and when I sin more and God forgives me more, then every time I sin it makes God look good because it shows how forgiving He is. **Therefore God shouldn't be upset with me when I sin because my sin actually makes God look good.**"

If our sin makes God look good and more gracious why should we be judged for it. Why should He condemn us because actually we're doing God a favor.

By our sin, God shows what a great guy He is and so He ought to thank us for our sin. That's the logic in this sentence.

Paul says in parenthesis "*I am using a human argument*". **This is human logic and sometimes human logic is insanity.** He was realizing you could twist what he was saying and that people were saying that the Jews' unfaithfulness actually reinforces God's faithfulness.

Illustration: A guy goes out and commits adultery over and over. His wife remains faithful to him. The husband comes in to his wife and says, "My unfaithfulness just makes you look better. Because you're staying faithful to me even though I'm unfaithful to you and it shows what a great lady you are!" So one day this wife finally says, "I've had enough! I'm not going to take any more! That's all I'm going to put up with." Husband comes in: "What gives? Why are you mad at me? My unfaithfulness just shows your patience. In fact instead of being upset you ought to thank me for my adultery because it shows what a great person you are." Does that make sense? No.

And Paul is destroying this. In this court case he's taking every single objection that the Jews are bringing up and blowing it out of the water. It's distorted logic.

His answer: "*Is that the right way to think about it? Certainly not! If that were so how could God judge the world?*"

If God doesn't have any standards, and He lets everybody get away with anything, how can He be fair if He doesn't have any standards?

If sin results in doing good then God can't judge anybody because everybody would be doing good everytime they sinned.

4 Questioning God's truthfulness. V 7-8

v. 7 "*Someone might argue, 'If my falsehood, enhances God's truthfulness and so increases His glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?'*"

This is kind of an extension of this last argument. Paul is saying "Let's take your logic a step further. **If all the bad things I do make God happy because it gives Him the chance to show His grace, then why would God condemn me?** And if the truth of God has increased through my sin, then why am I still judged? Can I be blamed for something that brings glory to God? How could God call me a sinner, if my sin shows what a forgiving person He is?"

Paul was an intellectual giant, a genius. He uses what philosophers call "you take it to it's logical, illogical conclusion." Push it to the extreme and show how stupid it really is.

v. 8 *"Why not say as we are being slandered as purported to be saying, and as some claim that we say, Let us do evil that good may result."*

He's saying, If every time I sin it brings more glory to God because it shows what a forgiving person He is, then let's live it up!

Let's gross out on evil so God can be super forgiving! Does that make sense? No!

Paul is saying, God does not need our evil to contrast His goodness. That's cheap grace.

- That's basically saying, It doesn't matter what you do as long as you believe the right thing.
- There are a lot of people going to church and believing the right things . . . but their life style?
- They live for the Lord on Sunday and then live for the devil the rest of the week. That's the way a lot of people are.

Paul is saying, You don't want to go out and sin more to prove what a gracious God He is.

A lot of people do that with God. They think that God is some old grandfather up in the sky who's loving but absolutely harmless.

Like you take your kids to grandpa's house. He's rocking, gumming his teeth... You say, We'll be back in a little while and leave the kids. The kids tear up the house! Grandpa's sitting there smiling, kind of senile.

The kids think, "Grandpa must love this. Let's do it even more!" Because he's such a pushover and you know he can't stop you.

A lot of people think God is that way. I've had people come to me in counseling and said this: "I know the choice that I'm making is wrong, but I'm going to do it anyway because I know that God will forgive me."

That can be used in all kinds of instances. If there is anything that really upsets me, it's that! I want to say, **"What kind of fool do you think God is? Don't you think He sees through that? Do you think that a God who would let you get away with that is worthy to be worshipped?"**

Forgiveness is not a license to sin. Never confuse forgiveness with approval. They are two totally different things. Forgiveness from God does not mean approval.

Can a parent forgive a child for doing something wrong and still let them reap the consequences of their behavior?

Maybe you stole some candy at the store. Your parents forgave you but you still had to pay back for the candy. Even though you were forgiven.

You can go out and get your life messed up in a certain kind of lifestyle and ask God to forgive you but you will still reap what you've sown.

The consequences are still there. It can happen in any area of life. You can make a mistake, sin, ask God to forgive you, repent and God will forgive you. But we still hold scars.

- Paul is saying, Don't presume on the grace of God. V 8

Paul's response to that attitude was the last thing he said in v. 8. *"Their condemnation is deserved."*

If you think you can go out and sin and get away with it and ask God to forgive you, you get what you deserve.

5 One last question, verse 9.

Are we any better?

Paul is this great prosecuting attorney making his closing arguments: *"What shall we conclude then? Are we [Paul's fellow Jews] any better. Not at all. We have already made the charge that all Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin."*

The last question is about man's sinfulness.

These are the five excuses:

- **the Jews' uniqueness,**
- **God's faithfulness,**
- **God's righteousness,**
- **God's truthfulness,**
- **Man's sinfulness.**

Paul says "Are we any better?" referring to his own Jews. No.

Some people think from verse 1 that the Jews have an advantage. Paul does say they have an advantage. He doesn't say they're better. **There's a difference. They do have an advantage. They have the word of God.**

2. Closing argument. The questions. V10-18

Then Paul goes into section two which is 10-18 which are the quotations. Paul brings in his supporting testimony and since he's speaking to Jews he uses their own Old Testament to reinforce his case.

Paul quotes five Old Testament passages. He took the five Old Testament passages, put them together and wrote a poem. v. 10-18 are a poem composed of five quotations out of the Old Testament.

We have in these verses Paul's topical sermon on sin. And like a good Baptist he has three points.

- **Point #1 he talks about man's character (v. 10-12);**
- **Point #2 he talks about man's conduct (v. 13-17);**
- **Point #3 he talks about the cause of sin.**

He does a spiritual clinic of man. He takes some X-rays of the human being and gives the diagnosis that everybody is terminally ill. This is Paul's final inditement.

Paul in these verses makes 14 statements:

1. No one seeks God. No one is righteous

v. 10-12 actually comes from Psalm 14:1-3. Paul says "There is no one righteous not even one." Universal sin. Nobody bats 1000. All races, all religions, all nationalities. "No one who understands. No one who seeks God."

Many people seek the things that God offers but they don't seek God. I Cor. 10:20 says they're actually sacrificing to demons.

People are not seeking God.

They're seeking things about God but not God.

In fact, they don't seek God. They run from God. Paul makes a case of that.

You don't seek God; He seeks you. Remember the bumper stickers "I found it!" The only problem with that is that God wasn't the one who was lost. God's not lost. It should have said, "He found me!" When you look at the parable of the lost shepherd -- there isn't such a parable!

There is the parable of the lost sheep. It wasn't the shepherd who was lost it was the sheep. It wasn't the sheep trying to find the shepherd, it was the shepherd trying to find the sheep. Jesus didn't say, I came to earth to be found. He said "*I came to earth to seek and to save that which is lost.*" Who's doing the seeking? Not man. God is doing the seeking.

What are all these religious people looking for? God says they don't know what they're looking for.

2. v. 12 "**Sin Wastes** "And all have turned their own way" everybody's doing their own thing. Knox: "*Everybody's taken the wrong course*" they're detoured. "*They have altogether become worthless.*" Circle "worthless" -- in the Greek the word was originally used for sour milk. It literally meant these have gone sour. They stink! Have you ever had a thermos of milk and leave it set for a few days? Nothing stinks worse than sour milk! It's wasteless. Useless. **The point: Sin wastes.**

3. Our speech is deceitful V 13b

Our speech reveals our heart.

This is a quote from Psalm 5:9 "***Their throat are open graves, their tongue practice deceit.***"

The next couple of verses he's going to talk about our speech. Our speech gives our sinfulness

away. When you go to the doctor and he wants to check your health what is the first thing he says? Stick out your tongue! By looking down your throat and looking at your tongue he can diagnose your health.

God says He can do it spiritually. "Stick out your tongue.

Let Me see what you've been saying. Let Me see what you've been talking about and I can tell what you're like." What you say is what's inside of you. *"Out of the heart a man speaketh."* Living Bible: *"The poison of vipers is on their lips."*

That's a quote from Psalm 140:3. Living Bible: *"Their tongues are loaded with lies. Everything they say has the sting and poison of deadly snakes."*

Vipers have a sac in the back of their mouth and they can kill people by their mouth. Can human beings kill people with their mouth? Yes. We strike at each other with our words.

4. Our speech is poisonous v. 14 *"Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."* That's from Psalm 10:7. He's talking about garbage mouth. Foul speech is an offense to God.

5. Our actions are violent 15-17.

He moves from the throat, tongue, lips and mouth to *"their feet are swift to shed blood, ruin and misery mark their way and the way of peace they do not know."* **That is from Isaiah 59:7-9.** They are violent and as a result their lives are filled with misery. They don't know peace. This would be a good verse for the cornerstone of the United Nations building. *"The way of peace they have not known."*

6. No fear of God V 18

Finally he gives the cause in v. 18. *"Because there is no fear of God before their eyes."* (Psalm 36:1). The reason why we do our own thing is because we don't even let God enter our thoughts.

Paul starts with questions then he moves to quotations then he moves to conclusion. The last two verses (19-20) summarizes everything Paul's been building in the first three chapters of Romans. *"Now, we know that whatever the law says it says to those who are under the law so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God."*

Paul say, Summing it up I can say two truths:

- One, the whole world is accountable to God.
- Two, the whole world is without excuse.

He says every mouth will be silenced. You're going to stand before God and you'll be speechless! You will not be able to defend yourself. You will not be able to say "I was innocent". The whole world is accountable and the whole world is without excuse. We're helpless.

Not only that we're hopeless, without Christ. Verse 20. *"Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law. Rather through the law we become conscious of sin."* Paul says here, no one can ever be saved keeping the Ten Commandments. No one can ever be saved by keeping all of the law. No one has ever been saved by keeping the law. Why was the law given? If it can't get you to heaven, why did God give the Law?

God gave the Law in the Bible for two reasons:

- **It makes us aware of our sin.**

Through the law we become conscious of sin. When you have a standard you know when you fall short. When you have a goal you know when you don't reach it. When you have a law you know when you break it. The first purpose of the law is it shows us we need to be saved.

- The second purpose of the law. **The second purpose of the law is to point us toward Christ.**

Galatians 3:23-24. *"Before this faith came we were held prisoners by the law locked up until faith should be revealed.*

The law imprisons people; it doesn't set people free. Grace sets people free, not the law. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith." The second purpose of the law is to point us toward Christ. It shows us we have a need to be saved and then who the savior is; it directs us to the one who can save us.

The final verdict is man is guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. The whole world is lost. The bottom line is everybody needs to be saved. Whether you're respectable, religious or rebellious. Ray Steadman titled this passage, "Total Wipe Out". It's a description of the doctrine of the total depravity of man.

That's the bad news!

Next week we get into the good news. Between v. 20 and v. 21, J. Vernon McGee says it's like the Grand Canyon. Like night and day.

All of a sudden Paul switches roles and becomes the attorney for the defense. All of a sudden we realize that we don't have to live under condemnation. One verse: Romans 8:1 *"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* That's the good news.