

The Epistle to the Romans

Chs 2 & 3

Paul's longer than usual letter to Jesus' friends in Rome is postmarked circa 57 A.D. The Jews have been dispersed for seven centuries, having been captured by Babylon and Assyria (both aka Iraq), Persia (today's Iran), Greece and occupied by Rome.

As B.C. became A.D. a Carpenter-turned-Rabbi is claiming to be the Jews' long-awaited Messiah, doing miracles, drawing SRO crowds, shaking up the religious elite who'd soon have Him crucified.

No Place Like Rome

Roma with its one million rules 60 million (a fifth of the world). Its temples honor non-gods like Apollo and Jupiter. God's toehold in this power capital is a band of Christ-followers, mostly Gentiles. Paul writes to instruct them on how man can be made right with God. Thanks to the cross, men, women, Jews, Gentiles, free and slaves -- all now have equal, direct access to God.

Before Christ gave Paul his message of "salvation by faith alone," for 1,500 years both Jews AND Gentiles had come to God through Judaism, a religious system of laws and sacrifices which they failed to keep (Isaiah 56:6-7; Acts 3:21 vis a vis Romans 16:25-27). This was a preview that Jesus, the sinless Lamb of God, would come to serve your and my death sentences for our sins and the sins of the world (John 1:29)! **Let's read Romans 2:1-29.**

Carrot or Stick? *Romans 2:1-16*

In criticizing others we condemn ourselves. Since God's justice with the person we're belittling was settled at the cross, are our standards really higher than God's?

DISCUSS: Paul informs us that God's goodness leads us to repent, to change. How do we try to change others' behavior?

What about those who've never heard the Gospel? God answers through Paul. 1) Every person has witnessed creation. The obvious existence of a Creator has been made plain to them (Romans 1:18-20). 2). Even after being wooed by God's Spirit, man rejected that Creator only to worship creation (Romans 1:25).

3) No one seeks to sincerely know the true God of the Bible, opting to know God as they prefer Him to be (Romans 3:10-18).

4) “Unfair” as it may seem, all stand guilty before a holy, just God who’s not obligated to “save” anyone. It’s said, “God doesn’t always do what He *pleases*, but He always does what’s *right*.” Unless we’re reborn spiritually, our destiny is hell, not heaven (Romans 3:23).

5) BUT God so loves us that He made a way for us to be right with Him forever. That way is to receive by faith His complete and permanent forgiveness, purchased by Jesus’ sacrificial death for us (Romans 3:24). As Jesus put it, “I am the *Way*, the *Truth* and the *Life*. No one comes to My Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

Teacher’s Pets? ***Romans 2:17-29***

As religious lawkeepers to a faretheewell, Jews assumed they were a shoo-in for heaven, but outsiders saw them as “hypocrites.” **BUT...**

"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Eternal life is *given* to those who trust Christ; those who reject Him suffer eternal separation from God (I John 5:11-12). At the final bar of justice, the Great White Throne, having rejected God, unbelievers will have *already* decided their fate (John 5:27; Acts 17:31; Revelation 20:11-15).

When believers come before the Judgment Seat of Christ, this "*bema*" seat is an *awards* ceremony where God honors what *He's* done *through* us, and graciously destroys our self-serving attempts to be "spiritual" (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Timothy 4:7-8).

DISCUSS: Describe any difference between being religious and being related to God through Jesus Christ.

Religions say, "If you try hard, you may be able to wiggle into heaven." The Bible says God's forgiveness is a GIFT of His grace, not a reward (Romans 11:6 NIV; Ephesians 2:8-10 NIV)! **Let's read the plumb line of Scripture, Romans 3:1-31.**

Then Why Be So Special? ***Romans 3:1-8***

God chose the Jews through whom His Son would come to earth. He gave them His message to guard: the Torah (first five books of the Old Testament written by Moses). He defined boundaries of the land which He gave them for eternity (Joshua 1:3-5 NIV). Still, Jews are subject to God's judgment and wrath. He sets absolute standards based on

His holy character, not on our notion of "fair play." God has the right to judge the world; after all, He created it.

DISCUSS: Pride is a universal enemy. How do you deal with it?

Did The Law Bomb? Romans 3:9-18

We're all without excuse before God, unable to be good enough or religious enough to save ourselves. That includes the *blatantly wicked*, the deluded *self-righteous*, the *unenlightened* who fail to *follow* the light they do have, and the *zealots* who don't *practice* what they preach. Did we leave out anybody!

God says not a single human sets out to put "the God who is" in charge of his life, or desires to walk in His ways. It never happens -- not until God puts the desire in our heart.

Our refusal to live God's way shows that we lack any reverence for Him that would restrain us (2 Peter 1:5-9 NIV). By standing in awe of Him we see ourselves as sinners, lost without Him.

God's law was not given to save us but to illustrate that we're unable to meet His standards. Only God can meet them for us, and He does so by simply "declaring" us to be "right" with Him through His Son. (Right is not something you *do*; it's what God says you *are*.)

Circumcision made 8-day-old boys heirs to God's promises to the Jews. Other religions use baptism, confirmation and church membership. The Bible tell us it's the cut of your heart, not of your manhood, that matters (2 Corinthians 3:6; John 3:1-21).

The Biggest But In The Bible Romans 3:21-31

"But" is a game-changer. Former Jesus-hater Paul has just spelled out the clearest explanation of our sin problem. How devastating if God were to leave us "The Way We Were." **BUT God**

In light of man's total failure to save himself, God offers His total solution! Every human craves a sense of worth, a purpose for living and a connection with the universe's highest Power.

This Good News is not a sacred document, not a religious system, not human intermediaries or traditions. This Good News is a Person whose death paid for all the sins of all people, satisfying God's requirement for someone to endure physical death in our place so that we won't have to endure spiritual death (i.e., eternal separation from God in hell's unquenchable flames).

Jesus took our sin to His grave and defeated death so that those who follow Him will defeat death also! Trusting in Christ is the only way by which God will declare you and me "not guilty" (Galatians 2:16). It's all God's doing. Otherwise it would not be by grace. Baptism, church membership or other good works are fine but don't replace being "born again" (John 3:3 Msg; Galatians 1:11-12; 2:6-9).

Before the cross God-worshippers had their sins *atoned for* annually, like term life insurance. The penalty for them was not fully paid until Jesus carried all sin to the cross (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Are you *sure* that heaven's your final home? When God declares you right with Him, you can take it to the bank. Heck, you can take it to the grave! The Bible is clear. At some point we must open our life to Christ intentionally, sincerely asking Him to be our Savior and Lord (John 1:12; Romans 10:9-10). If there were another way, the cross would've been unnecessary (John 14:6).

This Time It's Better To Receive

Our sin is not the issue; it's will we accept God's forgiveness? You can do that now. Just pray, "Father, I'm humbled that Your Son paid the death penalty for my sin. I receive Your pardon, trusting you, Jesus, to be my Lord and Savior. Yours is truly the face of grace and, in my case, mercy too. Thank You, Father. Amen."

His Deal

www.HisDeal.org

george@HisDeal.org

Copyright © 2019. George Toles. All Rights Reserved.