

Romans 2:17-3:31 - The problem of the heart

Part 2

Read Romans 2:17-29

a. What have the Jews done?

b. Who is the true Jew?

The Problem with Everyone

Comment: Paul is working towards the conclusion of this section. Sure, he says, there are some advantages in being Jewish - after all, it was the Jews who were entrusted with the Scriptures, the very words of God.

Read Romans 3:1-8

The problem isn't so much with God's promises - it's with the unfaithfulness of the Jewish people. People may come up with all sorts of excuses, or reasons why it's unfair of God to blame us for our sin (3:5-7), but the fact is, our hearts lead us in exactly the direction we want to go. Jew and Gentile alike, we're sinful - and we deserve God's judgement. And yet as we're going to see, God treats us far better than we deserve.

Read Paul's summary in chapter 3:9-20.

What is his conclusion about sin?

What is his conclusion about the LAW? (ie the Old Testament scriptures?)

What should the law do for the people of Israel?

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What's the problem with the world(?), WE ARE! We're sinful. Doesn't matter whether you're a Jew, or whether you're in prison for a crime or whether you've never even had a parking ticket — our hearts lead us away from God our Creator. The fact is, every man, woman and child needs to hear the gospel that Paul introduced back in chapter 1. We all need to hear about Jesus, and accept the forgiveness he offers. Paul will speak more about this in the next section.

Is there any room in our Christian fellowship for smugness, or feelings of superiority? N/Y

Do you agree with Paul's assessment of human nature? Y/N

What can we do about it?

The Solution to the World's Problem is..., well FIRST THE BAD NEWS

Read back through 3:9-20. What conclusion has Paul come to about human beings?

NOW FOR THE GOOD NEWS... Read Romans 3:21-31

Wow! There are words in there to give you a headache! Difficult words. Here's a selection:

· Righteousness; Justified; Redemption; Sacrifice of Atonement; Forebearance

And the words are just a start. The really hard bit is figuring out what it means when you string them all together!

1. In among all the “big words” of verse 21 to 31, perhaps the most important word is one we all understand. It's the first word of verse 21, and it's worth writing down in big letters...

“ _ _ _ ”

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It's an important word, because it's a word that can change the whole direction of a conversation. It's an important word, because it marks a total turnaround from the worst of bad news to the best of good news. Mankind has rebelled against God, everyone is sinful, "BUT..." God has done something about it!

2. What has finally been made known? (v21) Where in Romans have you already come across this phrase?

Notice how Paul has built up to this point. Righteous means "in right standing with a Holy God." People are by nature unrighteous, and unable to be righteous. The only way for us to become righteous is for God to provide this righteousness for us.

3. Read Psalm 32:1 and 2, and Habakkuk 2:4. How do these Old Testament scriptures testify to the gospel in advance?

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4. Here are some definitions:

- Justified means "declared righteous", or made "right with God." In fact, in the original greek, 'justified' and 'righteous' share the same root word. Justified would be better translated as "righteousnessified" if there was any such word.
- Grace means "generosity" or "undeserved favour"
- Redemption means "buying back", as in redeeming from a pawnbroker
- Atonement means putting right or paying the price for a wrong.
- Forebearance simply means patience.

Read through verses 22 to 26, replacing these words with their definitions:

22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are _____ freely by his _____ through the _____ that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented him as a _____ through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his _____ he left the sins committed beforehand unpunished 26 he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just, and the one who _____ those who have faith in Christ Jesus.

5. Which parts of the section above do you find hardest to understand, and why?

6. What do you think Paul means when he says "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God?"

If you see evidence of this in everyday life, ...where?

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7. Did God forgive people who sinned in Old Testament times? Y/N

On what conditions?

Was this JUST? (Is it fair to simply turn a blind eye to sin?)

How does the death of Jesus demonstrate God's JUSTICE? (See v25,26)

8. Reading between the lines a little, what attitudes seem to be dividing the Jews and Gentiles in the church in Rome?

Using your imagination, what might be the situation that causes Paul to write as he does in verses 27 to 30 ?

Are we faced with similar situations, and if so, what is Paul's message for us?