

The Book of Romans – Lesson 3

Romans 2:7-3:31

Last week we closed with Chapter 2, verses 1-6. There, Paul established that the root sin of the pagan Gentiles was rejection of God's revealed truth. He then accused the Jews of being guilty of the same thing. Paul was doubly concerned. He knew that because of God's patience they were only "storing up wrath -- for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment would be revealed." This wrath would be both national and personal. The nation and many of its people would be destroyed in 70 AD, twelve years from the date of Paul's letter. Then Paul continued:

Romans 2:7 *To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.*

Here Paul was referring to both Jews and Gentiles. If either sought honor, glory and immortality God would show them the truth.¹ We must understand that the "doing good" here was not referring to "human works." It was referring to believing the truth of the promise of God's gift of redemption and imputed righteousness. Jesus had made that clear when the Jews had asked Him what good works God sought.

John 6:28-29 "Then they asked him, 'What must we do to do the works God requires?' Jesus answered, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.'"

If either Jews or Gentiles were seeking the truth, God would reveal it to them. If they were true seekers of the truth they would respond to it with life-saving faith. God would deal with both Jews and Gentiles on the same ground. God is not a respecter of persons. This had been demonstrated to Peter as recorded in Acts 10 when the Roman Centurion Cornelius and his Gentile friends had all been given the same sign of acceptance by God as had the Jews at Pentecost:

Acts 10:34-35 "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, 'Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that fears him, and works righteousness, is accepted with him.'"

How were they to work righteousness? Paul made a point of demonstrating in Romans 4 that this had always been done the same way:

Romans 4:3 "What does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.'"

1 John 8:31-32 "To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'" Psalms 145:18 "The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth."

Romans 2:8 But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.

This verse helps make clear that those who are “doing good” are those who accept the truth and consequently follow “good.” It helps make the definition of “good” clear by defining the opposite of those who were “doing good.” The opposite of those who did good were those who rejected the truth. As a consequence they could only produce what the LORD sees as “evil.” What flowed from their lives could only be defined as “evil.” It was “evil” because of the evil consequences of their beliefs mainly to themselves. They were separating themselves from God forever. Ultimately those who reject God replace Him by worshipping self, even as Satan did (“I will make myself like the Most High.” Ezekiel 14:14). One uncomfortable fact brought out here is there is no middle ground. From the human perspective, the life of a Hitler or a Stalin, is clearly “evil.” But we would feel very uncomfortable calling “evil,” anyone who is kind and polite. However, from God’s standpoint anyone who rejects His truth is “evil.” Why? Not because they are destroying other peoples lives (some may even be great philanthropists). God calls those people “evil” because they are destroying themselves. That is an “evil” that the LORD cannot prevent ² if they willingly choose to reject God. God cannot overrule the decision made by one of His creatures to whom He has given free will.

Romans 2:9-11 There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism.

Salvation or condemnation is based on whether you seek and accept the truth of God, or you seek to worship your own truth. It is the same for everyone, Jew or Gentile.

Romans 2:12-13 All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

“All who sin apart from the law” here were the Gentiles that rejected God’s truth revealed by creation. “All who sin under the law” were the Jews that rejected God’s truth revealed by the

2 Some may ask why the LORD allows evils, like the Holocaust to exist. We know that the LORD could easily have stopped the worst evils perpetrated by Hitler by bringing his life to an early end. Instead, He allowed the social evil of that dictator flourish. One of the reasons for that is that part of His plan is to teach us by allowing us to live in a world that demonstrates the evil results of rejecting the LORD. This truth is irreplaceable while we are in the process of deciding for ourselves whether or not to seek the LORD.

Law. “The Law” here referred to the revelation from God of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament scriptures. That was how Paul always approached the Jews when he taught in their synagogues.³ Those Jews who obeyed the Law were those who obeyed the truth.

Romans 2:14-15 (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)

These two verses are parenthetical. Here Paul clarified that when he spoke of the Law, he was speaking of the wider Law, that was the whole Old Testament Scriptures. When the Gentiles obeyed the Church Age revelation of Jesus Christ in the flesh, they showed that they had fulfilled the true requirements of the Old Testament. That was to believe in God’s promised redemption and to love Him.⁴ This was so even though they did not have the advantage of being born Jewish and knowing the Old Testament from childhood. That struggle for faith was not on the outside, in the form of observing Jewish ritualism, but on the inside, in their conscience.

Romans 2:16 This will take place on the day when God will judge men’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

This verse completes the thought begun in verse 13: “it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.” It is then that God will look on the inward heart and not the outward appearance.

Romans 2:17-21a Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth -- you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself?

Here Paul really turned his guns on his own people. A prime purpose of the Law was to show us our own inadequacy to stand before God as righteous in ourselves. The second purpose was to show us our need for a savior. The Jewish religious establishment had perverted the Law into a system of rules for salvation. They supposed they knew the Law and were qualified to teach others. Paul pointed out that first they needed to learn what it really meant. Isaiah prophesied the same about the Jews in Isaiah:

3 See Acts 13:15-41 as an example.

4 Matthew 22:36-38, Deuteronomy 6:5 “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” Exodus 20:3 “You shall have no other gods before me.”

Isaiah 28:11b-13 “God will speak to this people, to whom he said, ‘This is the resting place, let the weary rest; and, ‘This is the place of repose’-- but they would not listen. So then, the word of the LORD to them will become: Do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule; a little here, a little there-- so that they will go and fall backward, be injured and snared and captured.”

Romans 2:21b-22 You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

This word translated “temple” can as easily be understood as speaking of the “Temple” in Jerusalem as to Pagan “Temples.” Since we have the testimony of Josephus that the High Priest Annas (Ananias), who was the most powerful religious leader in Jerusalem for almost 60 years, was notorious for stealing from the offerings in the Temple in Jerusalem, I have to believe it is to this stealing from the Temple that Paul was referring:

Flavius Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 19, Chapter 9, Paragraph 2. “But as for the high priest, Ananias, he increased in glory every day, and this to a great degree, and had obtained the favor and esteem of the citizens in a signal manner; for he was a great hoarder up of money: he therefore cultivated the friendship of Albinus, and of the high priest [Jesus], by making them presents; he also had servants who were very wicked, who joined themselves to the boldest sort of the people, and went to the thrashing-floors, and took away the tithes that belonged to the priests by violence, and did not refrain from beating such as would not give these tithes to them. So the other high priests acted in the like manner, as did those his servants, without any one being able to prohibit them; so that [some of the] priests, that of old were wont to be supported with those tithes, died for want of food.”

Romans 2:23-24 You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

The lives and history of the Jewish people should have been testimony enough that they were not able to stand before God on the basis of “keeping rules.” If the Jews were honest in seeking the truth of the Law, they would have seen that it condemned their sinful nature and behavior. The Jews had reason to be proud of the Law as the greatest system of ethics in the ancient world, by far. However, they refused to learn from its much greater lesson that all mankind is under sin and in need of a savior. Their own Prophet Isaiah, quoted here, testified as to the sinfulness of the Jews.⁵ Their Jewishness was of no value if they did not learn what their Law was telling them.

5 This was the testimony of Isaiah 52:5 “And now what do I have here?” declares the LORD. “For my people have been taken away for nothing, and those who rule them mock, “ declares the LORD. “And all day long my name is constantly blasphemed.

Romans 2:25 Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised.

Circumcision was important to the Jews only if they understood its significance as a statement of faith. That statement was that through the Jewish race God would fulfill His promise and send His Christ, the seed of Abraham, who would save both Jews and Gentiles. If they didn't understand that, circumcision was just a dead work.

Romans 2:26-27 If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.

Any Gentile who kept the Law's fundamental command, to "believe God" has demonstrated faith in God's covenant with Abraham.

Romans 2:28-29 A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

On the other hand, any Jew who was only physically Jewish was not really part of the covenant of which circumcision was the pledge.

Romans 3:1-2 What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.⁶

Although being a Jew was not an automatic pass to salvation (faith in God's promise was necessary), it did not mean that the Jews should not regard their heritage as a great blessing. It was through their race that God had chosen to reveal the truth, both in the written words of the scripture, and in the Living Word, Jesus Christ, who came through the Jews.

Romans 3:3-4a What if some did not have faith believe?

The "some" Paul was talking about here were those who were Jews by blood. He had just quoted Isaiah regarding their failures of the past:

Romans 2:24 "As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." (Isaiah 52:5)

⁶ *Psalms 147:19-20 "He has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel. He has done this for no other nation."*

He was also talking about those of Jewish blood of that generation. After the LORD had sent the Savior and Messiah for whom they had awaited two thousand years, they had rejected Him and caused Him to be crucified.

The Jews had thought that all of them were God's elect and inheritors of the promises to Israel. Paul had just told them it wasn't true. Something besides physical birth as a Jew was needed:

Romans 2:28-29 "A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code."

What it took to be a true "spiritual" Jew was faith in God's provision (circumcision of the heart). He was building toward Romans 4 where he would quote Genesis:

Genesis 15:6 "Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Romans 3:3b **Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? KJV**

I have substituted the KJV translation here because I think it is better. The Greek word translated "faithfulness" by the NIV is πίστις {pē'-stēs}. According to my Greek lexicon that should be translated "faith" as the KJV has it. The word "faith" refers to "what is believed" rather than the act of believing. The "faith of God" just refers to the "word of God."

This is saying that just because many of those that were Jews by birth had failed to acknowledge the truth handed down through the Holy Spirit from their own prophets, it did not affect the truth of those prophecies.

Romans 3:4a **Not at all!**

In the Greek this literally says a more emphatic "No, it can never be!"

Romans 3:4b **Let God be true, and every man a liar.**

One thing you can count on. The Word of God is always true. If human testimony seems to contradict it, then either the human testimony is wrong, or you don't understand what the Word of God has said. This last can be as a result of incomplete understanding or because of a bad translation of the original.

Romans 3:4b **As it is written: "So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge."**

Here Paul quoted part of a verse from Psalm 51. In the Psalm David was confessing his sins surrounding the Bathsheba affair. David was acknowledging that God was

justified in his judgment of David, the most celebrated King of Jewish history. By David's day it had become accepted practice that the King was a Law unto himself. In Psalms 51 David was acknowledging that this was wrong and that God's Law could not be superseded by the laws or teachings of men, even of kings.

We should not be surprised that the world is always seeking to contradict God. The fact is that the whole world is immersed in "the first lie" from Satan. Satan had accused God of lying to Adam, of having base motives in His lie and even of being afraid of Adam. Jesus had told the Pharisees who were considered the scriptural experts in the 1st Century:

John 8:44 "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

Only God is true and the whole world is lying in darkness. The true root sin is always against God's truth, the rest of sinful behavior always follows as a result! Even if every man (both Jew and Gentile) embraced Satan's lie,⁷ God's truth ⁸ would still be true. God's judgment was therefore always righteous. The failures and sins of the Jews only illuminated the righteousness of the LORD who reached out, past their sin and unbelief, to provide deliverance for His people. The reliability of His truth can never diminish!

Romans 3:5a **But if our (the Jews) unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say?**

Having proved the failure of the Jews through unrighteousness because of lack of faith, Paul now used a debater's technique to anticipate a possible response from the Jews. Since Paul was addressing the Jews here, he was probably adopting a popular Jewish argument in that day from those who had been influenced by the Essenes. From Josephus' description, the Essenes were somewhat similar in their views to hyper-Calvinists.⁹ As one of the three main sects of Jewish religious thought in that day, they believed that providence governed everything and that nothing was determined by the free will of men.¹⁰ If that were true, it could logically

⁷ Genesis 3:4-5 "'You will not surely die,' the serpent said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'"

⁸ Genesis 2:17 "You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it dying you will surely die."

⁹ Hyper-Calvinism holds to the doctrines of unconditional election, limited atonement, and irresistible grace.

¹⁰ Antiquities of the Jews by Flavius Josephus Book XIII, Chapter 5, Verse 9 – "the sect of the Essenes affirm, that fate governs all things, and that nothing befalls men but what is according to its determination."

be argued that since God determines everything without reference to free will He was the one who made a man either righteous or unrighteous. Furthermore, He only made the unrighteous to highlight the righteousness of God. Note that Paul says this is a viewpoint of men in the following verse!

Romans 3:5b That God is unjust in bringing his wrath (*national judgment of the Jews*) on us? (I am using a human argument.)

One of the things that it is important to understand in reading Romans is that Paul was aware of the disaster that was coming on the Jewish people in just a few years. The preaching of the Word to the Jews also must have warned of this disaster. Jesus Himself had foretold the coming total destruction of Jerusalem when “not one stone would be left upon another” (Matthew 24:2). Also Ezekiel 4:6-7 had prophesied that 40 years after the great sin of Judah (the Jews), that Jerusalem would undergo a great siege which would end in a great slaughter and exile (Ezekiel 5:1-4). That great sin of Judah was their rejection and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. That had happened on Passover in 30 AD. The great siege began on Passover 70 AD. Here, Paul was writing to the Jews of Rome in 58 AD.

In his argument, Paul was representing the Jews as objecting that it would be unfair of God (who supposedly only allowed unrighteousness to highlight His righteousness) to be angry with them for something they had no control over.

Romans 3:6-7 Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world?

Here Paul responded to the argument of the Jews that he had just represented. If their argument was true, God would be unjust in bringing wrath upon those He had made unrighteous. But it was not true! If God controlled all outcomes “how could God judge the world?” That is, how could He even judge the Gentile world, which the Jews were sure deserved judging! The Jews were sure they were elect and the Gentiles were lost by God’s sovereign will.

The idea that election was by birth was never taught in Old Testament scripture, although it was taught by the scribes and the Pharisees of Jesus’ day. They taught that if you were born a Jew, you were automatically going to heaven in some capacity because you had been previously elected by God to be born as one of God’s chosen people. For the most part, they believed that the Gentiles were all under God’s wrath from birth.

This is not unlike the view of Calvinists, except the Calvinists see themselves (not the Jews) as the elect. Paul had rightly argued that our righteous LORD could never condemn on such a basis.

Romans 3:7 **Someone might argue, “If my falsehood enhances God’s truthfulness and so increases his glory,¹¹ why am I still condemned as a sinner?”**

Here Paul referred back to the teaching of the Essenes in verse 5. If their teaching was true that man had no free will to believe or not believe, they might rightly argue that God would be unfair in judging them for merely existing in the world to increase God’s glory.

Romans 3:8 **Why not say--as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say—“Let us do evil that good may result”? Their condemnation is deserved.**

Paul said that would amount to encouraging evil. He made an aside that he had been falsely accused of teaching just that. That is “Let us do evil that good may result.” Paul would return to deal with that distortion of his teaching of grace versus the Law later, in Romans 6. This illustrated one of the most potent weapons against Christians even today. They not only have to defend what they are teaching, but what people falsely accuse them of teaching.

Romans 3:9 **What shall we conclude then? Are we (Jews) any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.**

Paul returned to the main point of this part of the Epistle. Although the Jews had the advantage of having the Word of God in the Old Testament, they were not any better than the Gentiles. Both Jews and Gentiles were under sin because they hadn’t understood or sought after God! As a result their minds and mouths spoke and thought the lies of Satan.

Romans 3:10a-18 **As it is written:**

In the subsequent verses Paul was both translating from the Hebrew into Greek and sometimes paraphrasing to emphasize the thought that he was trying to clarify.

Romans 3:10b-12 **“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”**

This paraphrased Psalms 14:1-3.

Romans 3:13a **“Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.”**

11 It is worth noting that nothing that sinful man does can increase the glory of God. We can acknowledge the glory of God, live in the light of it, but we can never increase it. The glory of God is like God himself, it is unchangeable. The only thing about it that changes is the level of its revelation.

This quoted Psalms 5:9.

Romans 3:13b **“The poison of vipers is on their lips.”**

This quoted Psalms 140:3b.

Romans 3:14 **“Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”**

This quoted Psalms 10:7.

Romans 3:15-17 **“Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know.”**

This paraphrased the thought of Isaiah 59:7-8 “Their feet rush into sin; they are swift to shed innocent blood. Their thoughts are evil thoughts; ruin and destruction mark their ways. The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths. They have turned them into crooked roads; no one who walks in them will know peace.”

Romans 3:18 **“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”**

This is from Psalms 36:1.

By these seven quotations from the Old Testament, Paul had underlined the point for the Jews. They were proud of memorizing their scriptures. The Jews often knew their scriptures; they just did not apply them to themselves.

Romans 3:19a **Now we know that whatever the law says,**

Note that what Paul calls “the Law” quoted just above is from Psalms and Isaiah not from the Mosaic Law. This broadens the definition of “the Law.”

Romans 3:19b **it says to those who are under the law (*the Jews*), so that every mouth (*both Jew and Gentile*) may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.**

The verses Paul had just quoted were from Psalms and Isaiah. They were speaking about the Jews. They showed that the Jews were accountable, and therefore the whole world was accountable to God.

Romans 3:20 **Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.**

Furthermore, they showed that because the world was already sinful they could not be justified by their works. When Paul spoke here of “observing the law” he was speaking of the formal outward ritualism that had become the Jewish religion.

In a truer sense, observing the Law (the true meaning of the Law and the Old Testament) would have included faith in the promised Redeemer. That is not what Paul meant here.

Romans 3:21a **But now a righteousness from God, apart *separate* from law, has been made known,**

The righteousness which had been promised by the Old Testament, and which Abraham had believed in, was that which would come through the coming Redeemer and Messiah. In Jesus Christ that Redeemer had been revealed.

The Greek word here is χωρίς {khō-rē's} which means “separate” or “apart.” It is derived from the Greek word χώρα {khō'-rā} which denotes “the space lying between two places or limits.” The sense in the phrase “separate from law” is that the Gospel stands on its own. Although it is testified to by the Law and the Prophets, its efficacy does not depend on them. The Gentiles, believing only in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, were just as saved as any Jew who believed with the benefit of the Old Testament. This **doesn't** mean that study of the Old Testament isn't needful for the growth of all believers.

Romans 3:21b **to which the Law and the Prophets testify.**

Among the Old Testament verses that promise that righteousness comes through faith are:

Isaiah 45:25 “But in the LORD all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult.”

Psalms 34:22 “The LORD redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him.”

Psalms 103:17 “But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children.”

Psalms 125:1 “Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever.”

Romans 3:22a **This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.**

Having given the Jews the bad news that they were born condemned just like the Gentiles, Paul turned to the good news. God's anciently promised gift had been given and it stood on its own,

both to Jews, who had the Law and the Prophets, and Gentiles, who only had the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:22b-24 **There is no difference, (*between Jews and Gentiles*) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.**

Both the Jews and the Gentiles were both sinners and both were justified in the same way.

Romans 3:25 **God ~~presented~~ foreordained him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.**

The Greek word here translated by the NIV as “presented” is προτίθημι {pro-tē'-thā-mē} which is constructed of two words, πρό {pro'} which means “before” and τίθημι {tē'-thā-mē} which means “ordained” or “set forth.” This is another word which expresses the concept of foreordination (predestination). It is **only Jesus Christ** who was foreordained or predestined. When we believe in Him we partake of **His** predestination.

Under the Old Testament system of sacrifices it was to be understood that the sacrifices of animals only stood for the true sacrificial atonement that was to come. Faith in the coming atonement was what saved Old Testament believers.

Romans 3:25b-26 **He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished -- he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.**

Paul showed that God had shown forbearance in leaving the sins between Adam's fall and Christ's death unpunished, but finally his justice was fulfilled when he judged Jesus Christ for all sins: past, present, and future. All the sins from Adam's first sin until the Cross were left unpunished awaiting the punishment of Christ for all sins: past, present, and future. The LORD presented a graphic picture of this when the children of Israel crossed the Jordan in Joshua 3:14 - 4:18. You can see it clearly in Joshua 3:16 where the waters (judgment) of the Jordan piled up from a place called “Adam” to the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant stood for Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection.

Romans 3:27a **Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded.**

Paul reminded the Jews that there was no cause for boasting and arrogance about being born a Jew since salvation was completely the work of Jesus Christ and the gift of God through faith for both Jews and Gentiles.

Romans 3:27b **By what law? of works? No: but by the law of faith. KJV**

I have substituted the literal translation of the KJV. Notice, that here faith is called a “law.” Salvation by faith had always been the teaching of the Law.

Romans 3:28 **For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law.**

The “works of law” here obviously referred to the Jewish system of works which was not a true reflection of God’s Law.

Romans 3:29a **Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too?**

Furthermore, the Jewish insistence in the 1st Century AD that the Gentiles had somehow been left out of God’s plan was ridiculous. Below are just two examples of many Old Testament prophecies to the contrary:

Genesis 22:17-18a “I (the LORD) will surely bless you and make your seed (Jesus Christ) as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your seed (Jesus Christ) will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your seed (Jesus Christ) all nations on earth will be blessed.

Isaiah 49:6 “It is too small a thing for you (Christ) to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.”

Romans 3:29b-30 **Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.**

Salvation was for both the Jew, who had believed in the promise of a savior implicit in circumcision, and the Gentile who had before him the promised savior. The Law of salvation was always a law of faith (as Paul will show further in Chapter 4).

Romans 3:31 **Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.**

The law was not made unimportant by faith in Christ. No! Rather the true law was made truly clear, as Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the Law of Moses and the Scriptures (but not Jewish tradition).¹² Also because of the finished work of Jesus Christ and the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we have a better chance of making the Laws of living truly functional.

12 I always get nervous when teachers (particularly Messianic Jews) begin dragging into their teaching Jewish tradition that is not supported by the Old Testament.