

The Good News

Week 5 - Romans 3:1-18

Objectives:

- To gaze at the beauty of God's character
- To view God's faithfulness/righteousness in light of human unfaithfulness/unrighteousness
- To explore the depth of our need for the gospel and its goodness

After reading Romans 1 and 2, we might be left asking this question: is the situation hopeless? Is human unfaithfulness a reflection of God's ability to make and keep promises? In this first section of Romans 3, Paul assures us that God is different from us and his character is not diminished by our sin. On the contrary, it is His character that makes the gospel reliable and beautiful – truly Good News!

? Tell about someone who is dear to you. What is this person like? How did you get to know them?

A Faithful God

Read Romans 3:1-8 ESV:

¹ Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? ² Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. ³ What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? ⁴ By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged."

⁵ But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) ⁶ By no means! For then how could God judge the world? ⁷ But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? ⁸ And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

? After reading this passage, what attributes of God stand out to you? How are these characteristics meaningful to you?

? How does beholding the character of God impact you?

? At the beginning of this passage, Paul anticipates a question his readers might be asking at this point in the letter. What advantage is there in being a Jew – is there any at all? His clear response is “much in every way.” They were entrusted with the very words of God! What a treasure! And God was faithful to reveal himself to Israel, even in the midst of their deep unfaithfulness. How does this encourage us today, as the Church and as individual believers?

? In the second part of the passage, Paul anticipates another question for us: if our unrighteousness highlights God’s righteousness, is it unfair for him to judge us for our sin and disobedience? Paul’s answer is once again clear. “Their condemnation is just.” There is tension here! How does God’s character motivate us toward living in obedience to him?

? As fallen people, we are unable to meet God’s standard of righteousness. If unrighteousness highlights God’s righteousness, do you think it is unfair for him to judge sin and disobedience? Why or why not?

Paul makes use of an ancient literary device called a **diatribe** throughout this passage. In a diatribe, writers use a fictional dialogue between themselves and the proponent of another viewpoint to instruct and persuade their audience.

An Unfaithful People

Read Romans 3:9-18 ESV:

⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰ as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” ¹³ “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” ¹⁴ “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” ¹⁵ “Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery, ¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known.” ¹⁸ “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

? At first glance, Romans 3:9-18 seems to contradict Romans 3:1-8. Paul now claims that Jews have no advantage – how can this be, if he just said they had much as stewards of the very words of God?

? List the descriptions of all human beings' behavior in this passage. What do you notice about this list? How does this list compare with the characteristics of God that you came up with earlier?

God's Characteristics	People's Behavior

? Paul is speaking primarily to those who already follow Christ, reminding them that they do not deserve–nor are they entitled to–God's grace in the gospel, no matter who they are or what credentials they possess. What response is Paul calling us toward by reminding us of this? How does this draw you to deeper worship?

? How does beholding God's infinite goodness in light of the reality of our need give us a better understanding of the gospel as "good news?"

New Life in the Spirit

Praise God, our unrighteousness and hopeless state is not the end of the story God is writing! As Christ-followers, our faith regenerates us to new life, being indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The result is a completely changed life, resulting in good fruit.

Read Galatians 5:22-24 ESV:

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

? Compare the description of fruit of the Spirit in the life of a believer with the description of the fruit of human nature in Romans 3:10-18. How does this drastic change come about? Why is this good news?

Fruit of the Spirit in the Life of a Believer	Fruit of Human Nature

? How can we as the Church encourage one another to continue walking in the fruit of the Spirit, resisting our fleshly urges and the temptation to return to our sin?

For Discussion and Accountability

? Have you ever withheld the gospel from someone because you felt they did not deserve it?

? How can we encourage one another to resist the temptation to know the gospel but live as if we did not, or twist it to elevate ourselves above others?