Paul’s Letter to the Romans

Chapter 3

 This continues on from the last chapter as Paul tries to point out to the Jewish Christians the attitudes they should be showing to the world and in not doing so, betrays their own heritage.

 A] Romans 3: 1 through 8; (read)

 1] "*What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?"*

 After Paul has been fully equating Jewish Christianity with Gentile Christianity, the question arose in his own mind, "what is the advantage to being a Jew if the two groups are now equal?" Is there no more a benefit of the circumcision in God's eyes? I believe Paul was anticipating this question from the Jewish readers of this letter. Aren’t they now equal in Christ?

 2] "*Much in every way! Chiefly, to them were committed the oracles of God."*

 Paul says the main reason would be, it was through the Jew that the Scriptures came. These very Scriptures that was the Bible back then for all believers. So the importance is, they were and are the keeper of God's total revelation to man and as such it was their expressed responsibility to tell God's truth. At the same time, as Dr. J. Vernon McGee pointed out, God was not done with the Jewish nation then and is STILL NOT done with them today. The Christian may have the New Testament today but the promises in the Tanakh are still valid today for the Jew.

 3] “*For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true, but every man a liar. As it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and may overcome when you are judged."(Psalms 51:4)*

 This is interesting, as Paul tells them, with the total of the Scripture right down to the prophesies, there are many Jews who do not believe, so does that make the relationship of God with the Jew null and void? Does that render God's oracle or Scripture null and void? Paul then answers his own questions, Certainly not. The statement in itself is false, and God is ever true to His Word. And then he quotes a Davidic Psalm, when Possibly, David was feeling wretched over his sin with Bathsheba.

 4] "*But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath, (I speak as a man) Certainly not, for then, how will God judge the world?"*

 According to some of the scholars, Paul is generalizing on a point already made and that was the 'unbelief'. Our sinfulness and God's resultant action or non-action only shows just how righteous and Holy God is. He does not act out in wrath, and Paul is explaining that he is posing these questions as any mere man would, not as Paul the Apostle. And his last point is, if God acted out to sin in wrath just think how he reacts regarding the whole world--- it would burn, don't you think? What this means is there are many Jews who do not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, but God is not going to judge them now, out of anger.

 5] "*For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His Glory why am I still judged as a sinner? And why not say, "Let us do evil that good may come"? As we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say, "Their condemnation is just."*

 This can get overcomplicated and a lot of ancient scholars seemed to make it so. (Even modern ones for that matter) Frankly, friends, WE can overcomplicate a statement or action, when a simple explanation will suffice. I’ve known folks who could complicate a nursery rhyme, trying to figure out what it was originally supposed to mean.

 Think of this, this way; a criminal comes to court and the judge weighs the evidence, finds him guilty, it is then to the judge's credit to act wisely in this manner, and moreso when he weighs in on the many cases that come before him, therefore the reasoning might be, it is to the criminal's behavior that elevates the judge, (Or makes the judge the more important?) so the criminal is doing the judge the favor, right? Paul is saying this is flawed thinking, the judge is elevated to his position because of who he is, not because of the criminal's actions.

 B] Romans 3: 9 through 20; (read)

 1] "*What then, are we better then they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin; as it is written, "There is none righteous, no not one,"(Psalm 14:1) (Paul's Paraphrase)*

 So after explaining the Jewish Christian relationship with God as well as the Gentile Christian and noting the final authority of God, Paul puts it back on the Jewish Christian, asking, "do you think you are better that the Gentile Christian simply because you have the ear of God?" Of course not, and why??? Because as Paul then states, through Psalm 14:1: There is NONE righteous, no, not one."

 In other words, Jew or Gentile we all sin, we all fall far short of our relationship with God, therefore we are in debt to God who paid for the forgiveness of our sins through Jesus on the Cross.

 Now he cites more old Testament verses to enforce the notion of sinful man.

 2] "*There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. (Psalm 14:2)*

 3] "*They have all turned aside they have together become unprofitable there is none who does good , no, not one." (Psalm 14:3)*

 4] "*Their throat is an open tomb, with their tongues they have practiced deceit. The poison of asps is under their lips." (Psalm 5:9 & 140:3)*

 5] "*Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."(Psalm 10:7)*

 6] "*Their feet are swift to shed blood;" (Isaiah 59:7)*

 7] "*Destruction and misery are in their ways" (Isaiah 59:7)*

 8] "*And the way of peace they have not known." (Isaiah 59: 7)*

 9] "*There is not fear of God before their eyes," (Psalm 36: 1)*

 Paul quotes the old scriptural texts which the Jewish readers should already know, to brush them up on the nature of man before God, which they probably have and which we also, tend to forget, while on this life's journey. Sometimes I find it prudent to go back and reread these and other texts in the Old Testament, as a reminder of God’s then relationship with His people, and which we should have even today. Friends, even today the Old Testament is still relevant.

 10] "*Now we know that whatever the Law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."*

 To begin with, what does 'law' do? it describes that which is wrong and unfit for practice in a society. Law does not convict, nor pass judgment, that is up to the judge and jury to convict and pass judgment according to the law. There is a penalty to be paid, and Paul is telling the Jews this because it IS THEIR LAW. Therefore, the culpability lies with them first. So how high minded should they be?

 11] "*Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."*

 Paul further explores his meaning by saying when you have the law, you know what is sin or what you are not supposed to do. In other words, those boundaries are set."

 C] Romans 3: 21 through 26; (read)

 So what Paul has done, is set up a preamble to the Jews in regards to the Righteousness of God apart from the Law. Now, he has first reminded them of the law and its meaning to them and how Man cannot ever live up to the ideals of the Law, but there is a new way.

 1] "*But now the righteousness of God apart from the Law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets."*

 Now let us look at this word, righteousness, for a minute. Righteous, meaning "that which meets the standards of what is just and right." In this case the noun or adjective which would be righteousness, by God's standards we have Jesus the Messiah who was prophesied in both the Law and the Prophets being revealed as His Righteousness.

 2] "*Even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference."*

 Meaning to all and on all who believe, J. Vernon McGee stated in his study on this letter, "Each of us is completely lost outside of Christ. Either you are absolutely saved in Christ or you are completely lost in Christ. There is no difference." What is the Righteousness of God? Just what I said in the previous verse: It is Jesus the Messiah. And only by faith can I come to Him who saves me. We getting this?

 3] "*For all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God, being justified freely by His Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood,"---*

 Another long sentence—but this is the sum and substance of the Christian.

 First, remember to whom Paul is writing this, still the Jewish Christian, and second, at the same time, to all Christians who struggle with doctrine. Or the understanding the importance of the Salvation message. Let’s take it one at a time:

a] "For all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God." Paul touched on this a few verses earlier as he cited some passages from Psalms and Isaiah about the depravity of man. We are sinners b] "Justification": def: To Justify is to is to pronounce free from blame or guilt. (Websters) So when I am justified: God has taken away my guilt for my many sins, "freely" which means He did it by His Grace or by His unmerited favor which I did not earn. He frees me from the sin in my life because He loves me that much. How does this happen? c] "redemption": to rescue or buy back; (Websters) which Jesus Christ did, through His death on the cross, we are redeemed (bought back) by the Blood of the Lamb, slain for the sins of the world. Ordained By God, how? d] "Propitiation": Atonement; when I ask forgiveness for an action, I ask in an attitude of atonement, meaning I recognize my wrong doing and promise I will never do it again. When I acted against my dad or mother I knew I was in for a spanking and I really promised them I would never do whatever it was I did hoping they might forego that dreaded spanking. Here I ask God for His forgiveness KNOWING that through Jesus death on the Cross my sin was forgiven, I have that assurance.

 But remember this friends, If I ask forgiveness and yet it is in word only and not in heart, I am not asking for 'forgiveness', 'but a stay in execution' so at that point what is there to forgive? If I didn't mean it, there is no atonement in my heart then there can be no rescue because in my heart I didn't need it, and therefore there was no need for me to be acquitted of anything. I STAY LOST.---Does this make sense?

 4] "(con't) *"---Through faith , to demonstrate His righteousness , because in His forbearance God passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus Christ."*

 All of this is by FAITH. Now we need to be careful here, what is faith?

 Faith: Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1) ((It would have been nice if Paul had included this definition here too)) This is actually a better definition than what you will find in Webster's dictionary.

 So it is BY FAITH that I come to the Father by the Son. God is righteous and He demonstrates this by sending of Himself (or Jesus) to mankind to die for mankind who had turned their collective backs on Him. This is Agape love. Just remember John 3:16 and this sums up what Paul is saying here.

 D] Romans 3: 27 through 31; (read)

 1] "*Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what Law? Of works? No by the law of faith."*

 Ahhh, I can see the minds of these Jewish Christians churning over their purported superiority in their Law, and Paul bringing a fresh approach to this puffed attitude. Because we are saved by Grace, and not by the law or by works, through Faith, in the atoning death of Jesus. It is as if we are repeating ourselves with these statements, but how hard is it to ponder these things and forever instill them in our hearts?

 2] “*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the Law."*

 There it is, again, ad infinitum, Faith brings us to the throne, not living by the Law of Moses. My guilt is taken away by the faith I have in the saving grace of Jesus. There is nothing physical I can do to be saved, good deeds, good behavior, nothing, brings me to the Throne, but faith.

 3] “*Or is He the God of the Jews only ? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles ? Yes of the Gentiles also-----"*

 This question now ends the superior attitude of the Jewish believers by instructing them that God is God of the Jew and the Gentile and there is really no distinction. One thing the Jews forget and actually mankind forgets is in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth with the sun, moon and the stars, along with the plants, animals and all mankind. It wasn't until Abram, that God did separate a people unto Himself, and with this, although mankind had turned away, that they were still His creation, and He was still their God.

 4] " *(con't)---since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith, and the uncircumcised through faith.*

 We must also remember, there is only one God. Too many folk today, who proclaim that they are Christian, feel the need to be all inclusive with the myriad of religions out there and this should not be. Just remember the first and second Commandments. "I am The Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 2) you shall have no other gods before me."

 5] "*Do we, then, make void the Law through faith? Certainly not! On the Contrary, we establish the Law."*

 What we have here is Paul realigning the priorities of the Jewish believers regarding their position on their Law which is the whole of the Mosaic Scripture as well as the writings and the Prophets, and Histories, and the new relationship of the Gentile Christians, who did not have the Law formally. First and foremost they ALL have faith. To believe without question that Jesus is Lord and Savior of their lives, and then for the Jew there is the Law, which was never negated to begin with.

 One of the main things to remember that for these early Christians, both Jew and Gentile, the Scripture WAS the Jewish Tanakh, and it was the basis for teaching the history and prophesies, as well establishing the rules for living which never changed under the banner of Salvation.

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