

Romans, Part 1, Lesson  
Griffin's Notes

Romans 3: 1-21—Does the Jew have an advantage over the Gentile? Paul says, “Yes,” and “no.”

“Yes” if he takes advantage of what God has shown/given him.

“No” if he doesn’t. And if he doesn’t, his condemnation will be greater because he knows what Gentiles do not.

V. 1-8—Paul is *not* talking down Judaism; he’s explaining the privilege they have as Jews and along with that privilege comes responsibility.

Paul was constantly under attack; he was accused of being against Jews. He tried to help them understand that their Judaism would not be their ticket to heaven. Only faith in Jesus Christ would get them into heaven—Romans 9:3.

Being a Jew an advantage because of what God had revealed to them—they knew things the Gentiles world (then) would never know.

Begin a Jew a disadvantage—review chapter 2—they were too proud in their Judaism.

Acts 21:17-29

The believing Jews still wanted to see the Law kept and thought that Paul was teaching against Moses. They didn’t know that Paul was teaching grace—he was explaining how the Law pointed to its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. You don’t need to be circumcised of the flesh—Christ will circumcise you of the heart. This reasoning sounded to legalistic Jews that Paul was knocking all things Jewish.

Almost same thing going on in Galatians 2:15-16 (Galatians is a “mini” Romans). The background is Acts 15 ff. The law has *never* made anyone righteous—the Law condemns men and shows them to be unrighteous. They didn’t understand that, so they constantly accused Paul of talking against the Law and of being a Jew.

Go back to Romans 2:29—it’s a matter of the heart! “Circumcision is that which is of the heart, not by the letter.” Circumcision was performed on the organ of the male that passes the seed—life and reproduction come from that. It symbolized a father passing life to his children and for the Jew passing the knowledge that God is the One true God and we must obey Him. Circumcision is about a mindset that was to be passed from generation to generation. But, they (Jews) used it as a boastful thing. They relied on the name “Jew.” It was an external sign of and internal singularity of devotion to Yahweh—or at least that’s how God intended it to be used.

Beginning in Chapter 3 of Romans, Paul was trying to explain how Jews could be God’s people yet still need the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

1. They were entrusted with the oracles of God (“Oracles”—*logian*—Word)
  - Had the true words of God—what God had given the prophets

- Had an advantage about Jesus—knew more than Gentiles—333 OT prophecies
- Paul trying to show these pompous, obstinate, stiff-necked Jews who were hiding behind their religion and the Law that what they are doing is tragic—they had the privilege of having had the message of the Messiah—the promise of a new covenant, but they took and treated it as though nothing
- Had lost the Law—they never respected the Law—(see Ezra and Nehemiah where when Ezra, a scribe, found the law and began to read it, the people stood for hours to hear it!) The scribes were charged with writing and keeping up with the law; the Pharisees were professional scribes who interpreted the Law and taught it to their disciples. They became the police force and the reason the Law got out of kilter—they never respected it; did not want it; wanted own **tradition** of elders. They took 10 laws and made into 613 commandments and used as means of power. Why Jesus was so hard on them—Luke 24 on road to Emmaus—“O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the Prophets have spoken!” The OT was **all** about Jesus!
- Didn’t even care for what God had revealed to them—what should have been their advantage, they turned into a disadvantage.

If not going to listen to it, i.e., the Law, have respect for it, adhere to it, love and meditate on it, it’s not going to do you a bit of good! Mark 7:1-8. Religion v. relationship—Paul will pick this idea back up in Romans. God is not finished with Israel yet, but He has put them on the shelf because of the disrespect they have for what He has offered them so carefully.

## 2. They also had the true faithfulness of God

- Their history shows they knew His faithfulness—from Scripture and own experiences
- God, just because some Jews not believe, is not going to be found unfaithful to a promised He made to Abraham of a nation and to protect that nation—Genesis 12:2 and Genesis 17—**it’s an everlasting covenant!**
- Christians are now the spiritual Israel—Paul tells us that in Romans and Galatians 3:10-14; 19-25
- The Law stands. It is holy and righteous and good. There is nothing wrong with the Law. It is God’s standard, yet it condemns us. Man cannot obey it because of our sin nature.
- They thought this unconditional, everlasting covenant made with Abraham meant that *every* Jew would inherit the kingdom of God automatically and unconditionally—they missed the point. Galatians 3:7-8—**all** nations blessed through that Seed.
- God has not finished with that flesh and blood nation called Israel. He made a promised to the nation and they know it, but nowhere is it found that *every* Jew will automatically, unconditionally come into the kingdom.

- Has to happen because of Jesus Christ—comes as a result of repentance and faith. Jews need it just as much as Gentiles—Psalm 51:4
- 3. They knew the righteousness of God (because of His oracles)
  - They knew His absolute, right conduct
  - V. 5—Paul anticipates the argument of the antinomians
    - Two groups Paul was up against:
      - legalists—said saved by grace but kept by law
      - antinomian—people against the law—lived licentiously; sin no big deal; said “if we’re unrighteous, which Law shows we are, then our unrighteousness points to the righteousness of God, so He ought to love that. The more we’re shown to be sinners, the more He’s shown to be righteous. So, why would He show wrath upon us if we’re ‘doing Him a favor?’”
  - Paul says, “What? That’s some kind of logic you’re using by saying, ‘because we have sinned, then by my lie, the truth of God abounds.’” That was stupid, perverted, twisted logic, and the Jews knew better—if they argued that way, then “their condemnation is just”—v. 8.

### **One application for this lesson:**

**When we know something about God, then it’s only an advantage if we respond to it. That’s why Precept is serious business—we’ve learned *so much!* All that knowledge is of no advantage if it makes us proud; it’s of no advantage if we hide behind it and condemn others with it; it’s of no advantage if we don’t live it ourselves. It is to our advantage if we surrender and respond. It is to our advantage if it leads us to Jesus.**

#### The Law

- No one is justified by keeping the Law—Galatians 2:15
- It closes every mouth/all the world accountable to God—Rom. 3:19; Gal. 3:22
- It gives knowledge of sin—Romans 3:20
- The Law is holy and spiritual/The commandment is holy and righteous—Rom. 7:12
- It defines sin—Gal. 3:19 (“Why the Law then?”)
- It is a tutor to lead to Christ—Gal. 3:24