

Romans Part 5 (3:1 - 3:8)

--INTRO:

--Paul begins ch.3 by answering objections that he knew religious leaders would raise after reading ch. 2

--the religious leaders "suppressed the truth" (Romans 1: 18) by refusing to see the truth... they would twist what Paul taught and then condemn their own twisted interpretation and accuse Paul of teaching their twisted interpretation

--Paul was well acquainted with such objections from the religious leaders. Even shortly after writing Romans a Jewish mob tried to kill Paul because of their misunderstanding of his teachings...

--Acts 21:27-32: "Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, 28 crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place... 30 And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut. 31 Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul..."

--Romans 3:1-2: "What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? 2 Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God."

--Paul starts with the rhetorical question in Romans 3:1-2 as a follow up to what he wrote in Romans 2:28-29: "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit..."

--the religious leaders accused Paul of forsaking the ceremonial laws of Israel. In reality what Paul taught is that the ceremonial law served the great purpose of pointing us to Christ, but now that Christ had died and rose from the grave it had become obsolete...

--Galatians 3:24-25: "the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after faith has come, **we are no longer under a tutor.**"

--Hebrews 8:13: "In that He says, 'A new covenant,' [*reference to Jeremiah 31:31*] **He has made the first obsolete...**"

--Hebrews 8:5: "[*the priests*] **serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things**, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

--Hebrews 10:11-18: "And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, 13 from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. 14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. 15 But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before [*through the Old Testament prophets*], 16 'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,' 17 then He adds, 'Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.' [*reference to Jeremiah 31:33-34*] 18 Now where there is remission of these, **there is no longer an offering for sin.**"

--the religious leaders wrote off the long awaited fulfillment of the ceremonial law as a sect and used the shadow of the ceremonial law to promote their corrupt religion

--Acts 24:1-7: "Now after five days [*after Paul was arrested because of the Jewish mob that tried to kill him...*] Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator named Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul. 2 And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying: "Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to this

nation by your foresight, 3 we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. 4 Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us. 5 **For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.** 6 He even tried to profane the temple [*during the incident they were referring to he was actually going out of his way to honor the ceremonial law so as not to offend any Jews, but again they twisted his words and actions to fit their sinister agenda*], and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law. 7 But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took him out of our hands..."

--Acts 26:22-23: [*later at his defense before King Agrippa he said*] "Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, **saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come** — 23 that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."

--as Paul affirms in Romans 3:2, far from being meaningless, the ceremonial law was of great profit and advantage for Israel. In fulfilling her God-given purpose of being stewards of the ceremonial and moral law, Israel experienced God's supernatural provision like no other nation, **but she also experiencing God's discipline like no other nation...**

--Deuteronomy 11:26-28: "**Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse:** 27 the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you today; 28 and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known."

--Jeremiah 32:22-23: Jeremiah prayed to the Lord, "You have given them this land, of which You swore to their fathers to give them — **"a land flowing with milk and honey."** 23 And they came in and took possession of it, but they have not obeyed Your voice or walked in Your law. **They have done nothing of all that You commanded them to do; therefore You have caused all this calamity to come upon them.**

--Romans 3:3: For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?"

--the NIV reads, "What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness?"

--here Paul presents the rhetorical argument that if God promised salvation to every Jew, as the religious leaders taught, then if not all Jews are saved, as Paul taught, God is not faithful to keep His promises...

--Romans 3:4a: in reply to the question of whether or not this is true Paul writes, "Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true and every man a liar [everyone who misinterprets God's Word]"

--the religious leaders made the mistake of applying to individuals the unconditional promises that He gave Israel as a nation

--Israel as a nation rejected Christ in disbelief similar to how they rejected the Promise Land in disbelief when God first brought them to it...

--in spite of Israel's unbelief, God promised that Israel as a nation would eventually occupy the Promise Land. An entire generation died in the wilderness and never entered the Promise Land, but Israel as a nation eventually did, as God promised.

--just as God chastened Israel in the wilderness for 40 years to bring them to the point where they would enter the Promise Land, so God has chastened Israel for over 2000 years and will continue to chasten them until they turn to Christ...

--the book of Hebrews compares Israel's unbelief in the Promise Land to their unbelief in Christ:

--Hebrews 3:12-4:3: "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; 13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, 15 while it is said: **'Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion [during the wilderness**

wandering].' 16 For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? 17 Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. 4:1 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. 2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. 3 For we who have believed do enter that rest..."

--Romans 3:4b: "As it is written: 'That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged.'"

--in *The Living Bible* translation this passage reads: "God's words will always prove true and right, no matter who questions them"

--even though most people in the wilderness didn't believe Israel could drive out the Canaanites, they eventually did; and for most of modern history, even though it seemed impossible that the Jewish race would survive, they have survived; and even though it seemed impossible that they could become a sovereign nation again, in 1948 they did just that; and even though it seems impossible that Israel as a nation will embrace Christ, they eventually will.

--Romans 3:5-8: But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath?(I speak as a man.) 6 Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world? 7 For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner? 8 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."

--in these verses Paul further addresses the twisted interpretation the religious leaders gave his teaching. They interpreted his teaching about God's unconditional promises to Israel as a nation to mean that *Israel's sin is good because Israel's sin shows God's faithfulness in spite of their sin; therefore, if sin is good, then God is unjust for judging sin.*

--*The Living Bible* translation brings out the meaning in this passage more clearly: "'But,' some say, 'our breaking faith with God is good, our sins serve a good purpose, for people will notice how good God is when they see how bad we are. Is it fair, then, for him to punish us when our sins are helping him?' (That is the way some people talk.) 6 God forbid! Then what kind of God would he be, to overlook sin? How could he ever condemn anyone? 7 For he could not judge and condemn me as a sinner if my dishonesty brought him glory by pointing up his honesty in contrast to my lies. 8 If you follow through with that idea you come to this: the worse we are, the better God likes it! But the damnation of those who say such things is just. Yet some claim that this is what I preach!"

--devotional point related to theme of Israel experiencing greater blessing because of their special role in the Old Testament and also being held to a higher standard and therefore experiencing greater discipline...

--Christians also have a special role with great blessing and also discipline from God... and often the unsaved seem to prosper and be more "blessed" while Christians are held back and go through trials because God chastens those He loves in order to make them more like Christ. True riches are the inner qualities that result from sanctification!

--Hebrews 12:6-11: "**For whom the LORD loves He chastens...**' 7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now **no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness** to those who have been trained by it."

--also see 1 Peter 4:12-19