

Romans 5 - To Whom Much is Given

We are continuing to work our way through the book of Romans as we move on to the next part of chapters two and three. These chapters deal with the universal guilt of man as part of how the gospel is applied to our lives. None of us can claim innocence. There are no valid excuses. The need for salvation is universal, encompassing every individual.

In chapter one we considered the scenario of those who haven't encountered the gospel, possibly residing in outback areas like jungles, rainforests, deserts, or tundra. Even amidst nature, God's divine power and glory are evident, leaving no room for excuses. This applies chiefly to uncivilized individuals, those without established societal norms and laws. It covers the most extreme case for the man who lives in isolation, wandering in the wilderness. The source of the uncivilized man's sense of the law is nature which convicts him of his sin.

In chapter 2, man moves very quickly to a civilized status when he forms a social group and creates a code of conduct. He lives within civilizations governed by laws they've established.

Even though they do not have the 10 commandments of Moses from the mouth of God, the only way there is any sense of goodness is because the civilized man's code of conduct reflects the righteousness of God. The source of civilized man's sense of righteousness is the conscience which convicts them of their sin. The mere existence of laws signifies an inherent understanding of the Lawgiver, demonstrating the knowledge of God. This addresses the notion of goodness without God. While doing good is plausible, claiming that you are good lacks a rational basis without acknowledging a divine standard.

Proclaiming a law by a vote becomes complex when we consider the variability and potential of contradictory laws. Similarly, relying solely on courts for judgments proves problematic due to *their* potential inconsistencies. Moreover,

leaning on personal feelings as a moral compass raises issues. For instance, if we consider Hitler, he upheld his own moral code, which starkly contrasted with what most people would consider normal. Personal moral compasses can lead to divergent and even troubling perspectives.

Goodness inherently requires a theistic framework, grounded in God's inherent goodness. The very concept of goodness loses meaning without this foundation. The atheist's assertion of goodness becomes meaningless.

Now we move to the case of the super-civilized, which would be God's people. In this case, it is a reference to the Jews. By *super*, I mean that the source of civilization is from *above*. Unlike the others, his sense of the righteousness of God is from the law that comes from above.

Even though this next section applied to the Jews who were given the Law, I want to apply it more broadly to those who are religious and can justifiably claim that their moral code comes by revelation in the Word of God. The reason the Jews were identified here is because it was by them that the Law came. It is *then* applied by extension to all who claim they are good because they follow the 10 Commandments. I will refer to the Jews, then, as representative of and including all who claim righteousness by the Law.

1. The religious advantage -

As Paul set up his argument for the Jews, he identified a number of things that were an advantage to those who had the Law.

Rom 2:17-20 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,

18And knowest *his* will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;

19And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a

light of them which are in darkness,

20An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

- He finds rest in the law and relief from the judgment of God.

The Law provided sacrifices that dealt with sin, even though those sacrifices were only a type that is a picture of the infinite sacrifice that Christ would make.

- He could boast in knowing the one true God.

Sometimes people think we are boastful by saying our religion is superior to others as if anyone's "truth" was as valid as anyone else's "truth." When Major League Baseball pitcher Dizzy Dean was criticized for bragging he said, "It ain't boasting if you can do it." The idea that speaking confidently about your abilities is not considered bragging if you can actually back up your claims with your actions or achievements. When it comes to the Christian faith, it *really is* the one true faith, and that claim can be backed up and demonstrated!

- He can know God's will.

There are a number of ways to try to determine God's will, but the first and absolutely reliable way are the things God clearly reveals in His Word. A popular saying is "God said it, I believe it, and that settles it!" This has been properly corrected to "God said it and *that* settles it!"

- He has approved God's Law.

This could sound like someone has to let God know whether He is right or not. What it really means is that we can examine God's Word and have proved it to ourselves.

1Thess 5:21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

- He has a significant mission.

There is no mission greater than bringing the spiritually blind to glory. This is followed up with bringing them to spiritual maturity.

When we jump ahead to Romans 3:1 there is yet another advantage that the religious person has.

Rom 3:1-2 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there* of circumcision?

2Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

What the Jew received was the *oracles* of God. This refers to the Word of God that was given to them by revelation. The uncivilized man knows that God exists by the *general* revelation of what he sees. The civilized man has his imperfect *conscience* demonstrated by the laws that he uses. The Jew, however, had absolute truth by *specific* revelation. He had *rational* proof for the existence of God and His promises.

If someone were to try to invent a new religion as a hoax, there would be certain tell-tale signs. He wouldn't be able to merely declare that he is god who should be obeyed and trusted. He would have to establish his credentials. He could fake some miracles to try to establish his superior credibility. This is actually done, but that is only part of what you have to do more to create a whole new religion. He might claim inheriting authority from a string of apostles before him. He might add on a new revelation from God or some spirit being. One of the problems of a new revelation is that it could be doubted because he manufactured it by himself. There are ways to test such writing. One book that was written this way uses words that didn't exist in the time frame that it claims to have been written. It claims to be written in a text that exists nowhere in history. Early in the history of the church there were books rejected because although they claimed to be written by an apostle, for example, they present fantasy and borrow from true

books in order to give the appearance of authenticity. When someone presents a new translation or a new source, their faults are easy to find because it is really hard to fake authenticity.

This is the beautiful thing about the oracles of God given to the Jews. The miracles it records are impossible to fake, like getting the creation of life right, the parting of the red sea, the prophecies of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ. The language is consistent. It couldn't have been written by one man, no one man could be such a genius to produce it. If it could be written by a committee, we would never expect such diversity of style and writer's background to write with such unanimity of message and mission. If it were humanly likely that they could, the next hurdle to overcome would be to gather the men together because they wrote over the course of a couple thousand years with no way to meet with each other. To make the Bible even more verifiable, if the writers were very scheming in what they wrote, they wrote verifying details that they could not have been conscious of to be deliberate to include. They wrote with such power and under such inspiration that you can unfold and discover truths for your entire life and you will not exhaust the depth of meaning contained in the Bible. In short, you can discover quickly the faults of the fictions of man, but the Bible is incomparable!

Uncivilized man has nature, civilized man has conscience, but those who would serve in the kingdom of God have the Bible. If those who claim to serve God have not properly received the Word of God then they are judged and their guilt is exponentially greater. It reminds me of the Rice and Chessboard story.

There lived a wise man who served the king. The king was pleased with the wise man's services and asked him what reward he would like in return. The wise man, being clever, made an unusual request.

He said to the king, "Your Majesty, I would like to be rewarded with grains of rice. On the first square of the

chessboard, please place one grain of rice. On the second square, place two grains. On the third square, double it again to four grains. Keep doubling the amount of rice for each successive square until you've covered all 64 squares of the chessboard."

The king, thinking that the wise man's request sounded modest, agreed without much thought. He instructed his treasurer to fulfill the request. At first the request was easy to fulfill. At such exponential rate of increase as that, it would actually take over 737,000 years at *today's* rate of rice production to fulfill the wise man's request.

When we think of the odds of the possibility for the Bible to be written, the guilt we would bear for the rejection of what God has given us is exponentially greater than not just all the rice in china, but all the rice in the world, not just for this year, not just for the next 737,000 years, but far beyond that because it would reach into eternity in the pits of Hell and the Lake of Fire. This is because we have exponentially more in God's Word than civilized or uncivilized man has.

Luke 12:48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

I assure you that the numbers I have given you are not just made up...how much of chance do you want to take rejecting God's Word???

2. The religious failure -

In the light of the blessings of God's Word that the Jews had, Paul's next questions point out the concern that would worry an honest and self-aware person.

Rom 2:21-22 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest

thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

22Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?

This is a tact that people should take when evaluating themselves. When they consider the 10 Commandments, a person who was honest with themselves would recognize that they are in trouble. It is fascinating to watch one of the Ray Comfort videos as he presents the commandments to people. There are many who initially think they are commandment-keepers. After some discussion with Bro. Comfort they will actually be honest to admit that they are sinners when they examine their lives.

But could things be worse for the man who thinks he is religious? Of, course! Those who pride themselves in the Law and sin not only affect others, but it becomes the occasion for others to excuse themselves from the judgment of God. Our inch becomes their mile.

Rom 2:23-24 Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?

24For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

Jewish circumcision was the sign of the covenant relationship that had been established with Abraham and then affirmed in the Law. It was the byword that spoke of reverence for God and His Law. But does the performance of ritual have any significance for one who is not eligible? If a Satanist is baptized in church, does he find acceptance with God? Paul makes the point that circumcision means nothing without the proper heart attitude.

Rom 2:28-29 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is

outward in the flesh:

29But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

This is not a new concept, but had been taught in numerous ways in the Old Testament.

Jer 9:26 Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all *that are* in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all *these* nations *are* uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel *are* uncircumcised in the heart.

Lev 26:40-42 If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me;

41And *that* I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity:

42Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

All the religious works of man, no matter how much in agreement they are with the Word of God are nothing if the heart is not right.

3. The final judgment -

This becomes the final proof of guilt for sin and that we need Jesus Christ.

Rom 3:9-18 What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both

Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

10As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

11There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. **[Without God's providence of His Word and witness, we would not seek Him at all]**

12They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. **[It does not say "none that doeth *any* good," but our general character is that we do not produce righteousness.]**

13Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips:

14Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness:

15Their feet *are* swift to shed blood:

16Destruction and misery *are* in their ways:

17And the way of peace have they not known:

18There is no fear of God before their eyes. **[Even if there *is* any good at all, we should not get prideful. Paul lays out a very damning indictment against the sinful character of man!]**

This paints a pretty bleak picture. Is there any hope in the Law? No, and Yes.

Rom 3:19-23 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. **[There is no hope of salvation in the Law. It condemns all of mankind. If there is no hope of salvation in the Law, what is it good for?]**

20Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the

law *is* the knowledge of sin. [The purpose of the Law is not to make one righteous, but to prove to us that we are sinners.]

...

23For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

This is a pretty bleak picture, but I said that there *is* hope in the Law. It is contained in the verses I just skipped.

Rom 3:21-25 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

22Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

23For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

24Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

25Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

The Law never goes away, it just gets fulfilled. We are going to begin to look at this more intensely in the next chapters, but I couldn't just leave us hanging on the precipice of judgment, staring into the abyss without hope. The Scripture declares plainly that our righteousness does not come by the Law, but by the One (Jesus Christ) Who met the demands of the Law taking our judgment, being the propitiation for our sin.

The conclusion is that Jesus died for you. If you are not saved, then you need to turn to Christ, admit that you are a sinner and understand that you have no hope in your own righteousness under the Law. You need to trust in Him that His death on the cross and His blood is

the only payment for you and your sin. Then you need to ask Him forgive you and save you, making you a child of God forever.

Those who are saved already can rejoice in this, but the contemplation of our sin before the Law can be depressing even though we know we are saved. The next chapters in Romans will address the joy of our salvation, the frustrations of our struggles, and the joy of the glory of God. But even now, we should be moved to consider how our failings, though they cannot destroy our relationship with God as His children, can be a stumbling block for others to come to Christ. Many Christians think they can't go out and witness for Christ. The fact of the matter is that all Christians are a witness testifying of the power of Christ and salvation. We are either testifying positively by the life we live and the decisions we make or we are testifying negatively, becoming the excuse for someone to ignore and reject Christ. Either way we are testifying. What is your testimony? What decision do you have to make?

1. The religious advantage - Rom 2:17-20, 1Thess 5:21, Rom 3:1-2, Luke 12:48
2. The religious failure - Rom 2:21-29. Jer 9:26, Lev 26:40-42
3. The final judgment - Rom 3:9-25