

Romans 3:1-20: The Wrath of God Against All Humankind

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Kirksville Cornerstone Church



Doctrine of Divine Revelation

- + How does God reveal himself?
- + General (Divine) Revelation:
 - + In Nature (externally)
 - + In Conscience (internally)
- + Special (Divine) Revelation:
 - + In the written *logos* (the Bible)
 - + In the living *logos* (Jesus Christ)
 - + In particular visions and dreams



Science as the study of general divine revelation...

- + Copernicus (1543) and the beginning of the scientific revolution.
- + Isaac Newton (*Principia Mathematica* 1687)
- + Galileo: observational astronomy.
- + Robert Boyle: the modern theory of intelligent design

- + "Natural Philosophers" (or scientists) began to observe/conceive of the laws of nature as impressed upon nature from a creator.

A Divorce of Religion and Science

- + Charles Darwin (1809-1882):
Biology/Theory of Evolution
- + Karl Marx (1818-1883): Sociology/Socialism
- + Sigmund Freud (1856-1939):
Psychology/Psychoanalysis
- + "Let God be true though everyone were a liar."



Chapters 1-3: The Wrath of God Against the Unrighteous

- + The unrighteousness of humankind in which “God gave them up” to the lusts of their hearts, to dishonorable passions, and to a debased mind (Romans 1:18-32).
- + The hypocrisy of moralizers (Romans 2:1-16).
- + The self-righteousness of Jewish people that boast of God’s law but break it (Romans 2:17-3:8)

Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

3 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.

Paul uses a Greek philosophical tool as an apology.

+The "diatribe":

+Paul seeks to persuade an audience by debating an imaginary opponent(s).

+Paul raises hypothetical questions and responds/refutes them.

Verses 1-2

- + **3** 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.
- + *Objection 1: Paul's teaching undermines God's covenant with Jews. What benefit is being a Jew if the law/circumcision do not protect against God's judgement?*
- + Paul's Response in verse 2: The Jews were the very custodians of God's Word revealed through the Old Testament. This bestows a privilege of responsibility... not security of salvation.

Verses 3-4

- +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."
- + *Objection 2: Paul's teaching nullifies the faithfulness of God. (Uses a play on the Greek word for faith: pistis, episteuthesan, epistesan, apistia)*
- + Paul's Response: An emphatic/violent response similar to "not on your life!" (*mē genoito*, "by no means!").

Verse 4

- + Paul's response: *Let God be true though every one were a liar,*
 - + **These two propositions are the primary axioms (self-evidently true) of Christian philosophy.
 - + Let God be true: accurate, exact, straight
 - + Everyone is a liar. References Psalm 116:11 "I said in my alarm, all mankind are liars."
- + as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged."
 - + Reference to Daniel in Psalm 51:4.

Verses 5-6

+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?

+ *Objection 3: Paul's teaching impugns God's justice.*

+ Paul's Response: Is Paul embarrassed by the objection and allows for a qualification (I speak in a human way)? Paul counters that God is the self-evidently the universal judge (Genesis 18:25).

Verses 7-8

+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.

+ *Objection 4: Paul's antinomian teaching falsely promotes God's glory. Grace releases Christians from following the law.*

+ Paul's response: This is self-evidently perverse and doesn't warrant a direct answer. "Their condemnation is just."
Utilitarianism is false: the ends *never* justify the means.

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.”

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

Verses 9-10

- +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; (Ecclesiastes 7:20)
- +Verses 9-20 provide a summary for the entirety of chapters 1-3:20.
- +All of humankind are guilty of sin and condemned before the righteousness of God.
- +This is not a contradiction of verse 2. Verse 2 refers to the benefit and responsibility of being a Jew. Verses 9-20 refer to the doctrine of *total depravity* of all of humankind.

Doctrine of Total Depravity

- + There is a total EXTENT of corruption in everyone (every part: mind, body, and spirit). This does NOT mean by depravity by total DEGREE (every thought, act, deed, etc.)
- + Everyone has a sin nature and therefore, if given enough time, will commit sin.
- + ¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— (Romans 5:12).

Doctrine of Total Depravity

- + “all of our righteous acts are like filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6).
- + “The heart is deceitful and desperately sick...” (Jeremiah 17:9).
- + “even when we were dead in our trespasses” (Ephesian 2:5).
- + “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death” (Proverbs 14:12).

Total Depravity: Two Views

+ **Non-Calvinist View:** All goodness and rightness are from God. All good and right acts by individuals are in Response to Divine Revelation (RDR's). God allows for a free-will response to his general and special revelation. Individuals come to faith in response to the grace of God's revelation. The purpose of all revelation is to bring individuals to faith in Christ. So... God loves the world and allows whosoever to respond to the Resurrection by faith (John 3:16).

Total Depravity: Two Views

- + **Calvinist View:** No one can respond to God (total inability). This equates spiritual death with physical death. God must regenerate someone before they can have faith. Regeneration is irresistible and therefore so is faith in Jesus. Since salvation is irresistible, there is no chance of apostasy (turning from God/losing faith).
- + Both views have implications on the doctrine of divine providence. Does God *causally determine* everything that happens? (More on this topic in chapter 9).

Verses 11-18

- + Common rabbinical practice of stringing passages together like pearls.
- +¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. (Psalm 53:2)
- +¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” (Psalm 14:1-3 and Psalm 53:1-3)
- + ¹³ “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” (Psalm 5:9) “The venom of asps is under their lips.” (Psalm 140:3)
- +¹⁴ “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” (Psalm 10:7)
- +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.” (Isaiah 59:7, Proverbs 1:16)
- +¹⁸ “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” (Psalm 36:1)

Verses 11-18

- +1. *The ungodliness of sin.* Sin is the revolt of self against God... the idolatry of self.. or sinful pride.
- +2. *The pervasiveness of sin.* Sin affects every part of our human being (our throats, tongues, lips, mouths, feet, etc.)
- +3. *The universality of sin.* Negatively... no one righteous, no one understands, no one does good. Positively... all have swerved, all have gone their own way. 2 x that "all have gone their own way," 4 x "no one," 2 x "not even one." NO ONE stands up to the test of the law of God.

Verse 19

- +¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.
- + Paul reminds Jews that the law applies to Gentile and Jew alike. His argument on the wrath of God against all humankind, both Jew and Gentile, culminates in Romans 3:20.

Verse 20

- +²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.
- + Paul states that the law serves to reveal the sinfulness of humankind.
- + “The principal point... of the law... is to make[humankind] not better but worse; that is to say, it sheweth unto them their sin, that by the knowledge thereof they may be humbled, terrified, bruised, and broken, and by this means may be driven to seek grace, and so come to that blessed Seed [Christ].” --Martin Luther 1531

Practical Applications

- + Let God be true though every one were a liar (Romans 3:4).
- + We should all have a respectful fear of God and his wrath (Ecclesiastes 12:13).
- + God is ever faithful, just, and holy through goodness and righteousness.
- + Everyone is totality depraved in extent of being, not in degree.
- + God uses divine revelation in nature, conscience, the Bible, and Jesus Christ to bring believers to saving faith in Jesus.

Romans 1-3:20

+ The only remedy for the wrath of God against the unrighteousness of Jew and Gentile alike is by “the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe” (Romans 3:22).



*Christ's Robe
of Righteousness*