

96-04-12a

Okay, well let's prepare ourselves for this look at God's Word this evening by going to the Lord in prayer. Father, we thank you as always for the fellowship that we enjoy because we have been entered into union with Christ. We thank you for the wonderful opportunity that it gives us to understand why we are here and what the purpose of our life is and to begin to learn how to use the resources that you have placed at our disposal and to fulfill the purpose for which you created us.

We thank you for the encouragement and the fellowship that we enjoy as believers who have come to an understanding of your Word through the faithfulness of men over the decades and over the centuries who have studied and presented your Word. And as we study this evening, we pray that God the Holy Spirit will be with us and lead us into the truth, help us to understand these things aright so that our souls will be built up and our minds will be transformed and we will be in a position to fulfill all of your will in our lives. We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.

We are continuing our study of one of the greatest books in the New Testament. I think whichever book you're studying at the time is the greatest book in the Bible. Romans has been the subject of such intense study over the centuries.

We were just talking before class tonight about just currently how many different people are studying Romans and so forth. It has so much great doctrinal truth and spiritual truth in it that pertains. Sometimes it's looked at as one of the more theological books and maybe more academic.

And we find a lot of principles and things that tell us about our salvation and about our relationship with God and so on. But it isn't always the first book that springs to our mind when we are thinking of practical truth. We tend to think of Ephesians or Corinthians or one of the ones that has a lot of application built into the book.

And this has theological argument. And so when we embark on a study of Romans, we tend to think, well, this is going to be an education. This is going to be a study in principles.

But one of the things that we've seen up to this point in our study is that Paul seems to always be writing with a view toward application. And especially in this book, writing to the Roman Christians, he is in fact engaging their minds about their daily life and about the philosophy behind what they do, what their thinking is on a day-to-day basis. Why do they do what they do? Why do they pursue the path in life that they pursue? Who are they trying to please? How are they pursuing righteousness? Who's measuring the righteousness? How is it obtained? And of course, the great issue in the early days of the church, the first few centuries, was driven by the Jewish Christians.

They were the first to hope in Christ, as Paul mentions it there in Ephesians. And so they set the

tone for early Christianity, and they carried over a lot of their thinking and their misapplication from the Old Testament. And so Paul spent a lot of his time counterbalancing that Jewish view of Christianity, that, well, this is a warmed-over Israelite life under God and before God through the Old Testament Scriptures and the Law of Moses in particular.

And that's what we find here in Romans. Now, I made reference to all the different studies, and almost anyone that you hear teach Romans finds in it a lot of salvation truth. The theological category is soteriology, salvation truth.

And the Bible has a lot to say about those things. And in our study of Romans, I would like to emphasize the fact that we are not throwing over or changing any of the understanding that we have about salvation, about the imputation of righteousness, about the work of Christ on the cross. All of those truths are intact and are supported numerous places in Scripture.

The thing we are doing in our study of Romans is refining our understanding of what this particular book has to say and these specific passages, what they focus on. Many times as you listen to people teach the Word of God, at least it's been my experience, that you sometimes hear someone teaching a wonderful truth. It's divine truth.

It's something you can take to the bank and live your Christian life by. But the passage that they get it from doesn't necessarily provide the best place to learn that truth. In some cases, we read in a truth that we know into a passage that's really talking about something else.

And I think that that has happened a lot in Romans. And what I'd like to do tonight is summarize and bring together the reasons that we are taking Romans the way we're taking it and we're understanding it the way that we are. Because it's important.

There's a great message in this book and it's something that's practical. Like all of Paul's writing, it's going to make a difference in the way we view our life, in the way we look at ourselves, in the way we anticipate Judgment Day and standing before Jesus Christ at the judgment seat of Christ. It should transform our minds and it should alter the thoughts and intents of our heart.

For it to do that, we have to be sure that we're understanding it correctly and that we're not misunderstanding it. So what I have done is developed a summary of the evidence of the book itself to substantiate, I guess, the position that we are taking or the understanding that we have gained thus far in our study of Romans that is talking about the Christian life and that specifically justification, as we find it in the first several chapters of Romans, is talking about justification or the declaration of righteousness, being declared righteous, being a good and faithful servant as a believer and that this is not primarily a discussion of how we obtain righteousness at the point of salvation, at the point of our faith in Christ. That rather than talking about positional truth, what happens when we express faith in Christ initially, this is talking about living truth, experiential truth, the things that pertain to our life as believers after we first come to Christ.

So that's a very substantial difference, isn't it? It completely changes the audience to whom these things apply and if this is in fact teaching us about our Christian life, it's much more of a practical discussion than it is a theological discussion. So without further ado, this is going to be a summary that is organized into points. I don't want to discourage you, but there are 15 in my notes, but we'll cover these and they are summary points with references.

So if you have writing materials, you may want to note these down because sooner or later you'll hear Romans, if you haven't already, taught from a different perspective and with a different emphasis and it will be helpful to be able to say, well, I know the reason we understood it the way we did at this point is because of these things. So here we go. Now, we had already established, and I'm not going to review, the audience for this letter.

It is pretty much an article of faith that the books of the Bible are written to believers. The carnal mind cannot understand the things of the spirit because they are spiritually discerned. And we know that the one spiritual truth that unbelievers can comprehend under the ministry of the Holy Spirit is their need for salvation.

Sin, righteousness, and judgment is something that the Holy Spirit communicates through the evidence that God has built into creation and the knowledge of Himself that He has placed in the heart of every man so that they are without excuse. And Paul referred to that in Romans chapter 1. And he talked about the realm of unbelievers and the things that they do in chapter 1. And he said they suppress the truth that God has revealed to them. Apart from the Scriptures, he makes no mention of the law of Moses or the existence of the nation of Israel or the traditions that were handed down from Adam and so forth.

He says these people are without excuse because God has revealed the truth of Himself to them. And they suppress that truth, and they exchange it for a lie, and they worship the creature instead of the Creator. So that is the content of the last half of chapter 1. Paul points that out, and on that nearly everyone will agree.

But then, and this is our first point, one of the reasons that we understand this first part of Romans as talking about believers is the way that chapter 2 starts. Because he's discussing the unbelievers in the third person. He says they suppress the truth and unrighteousness.

They engage in all of these wicked deeds. They exchange the truth of God for a lie. Paul has addressed the letter to a church, and he says, I greet you who are called to holiness, you who are the faithful in Christ Jesus, and so forth.

And he's an apostle talking to believers, and he discusses the unbelievers in the third person. Makes sense. They do these things.

Then in chapter 2, verse 1, he says you, and he switches to the second person. And that is an extremely important point that we've discussed before. So point one, the second person, or the

you, quote-unquote, in Romans chapter 2, verse 1, indicates a group distinct from those described in chapter 1, they and them.

And this is basically the same you that cropped up in chapter 1, verses 7 through 15 when Paul says, I am writing to you believers in Rome. So these things are addressed to believers. Our second observation is that the riches of God's kindness and forbearance and patience, this is coming from chapter 2, verse 4, he says that these people to whom he is addressing his argument, and he says you who judge are condemning yourself.

In verse 4 he says, do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to a change of mind, to you to metanoia, to repentance? Well, the riches of God's kindness and forbearance and patience belong to believers. The riches, and the vocabulary there is important. God has expressed His love for all the world by sending Christ to the cross, John 3.16. But the riches of God's goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, kindness, forbearance, and patience, however you want to translate those terms, these are things that are the particular gift to believers.

And so again, this you that's being spoken to are apparently believers. Our third observation is that the required action which is the issue in God's judgment of wrath, he's talking in chapter 2 and he says, we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things, and in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart, in chapter 2 verse 5, you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and judgment. Well, what is Paul trying to get to change by talking about this day of wrath and this judgment? What sort of behavior or what sort of attitude, what is the effect that he's trying to get by bringing this up when he's talking to these people in the second person here? The required action that is the issue here is change of mind, change of mind.

He says you need to change your mind about something, right? He talked about all of these terrible things in chapter 1, these things that are being done, and he says you who are judging those people are doing the same thing. You're doing the same thing and you need to change your mind about what you're doing. This is not the issue of faith in Christ.

If Paul were talking about salvation, wouldn't he be saying you need to recognize your sinfulness? Wouldn't Paul give the gospel here in chapter 2 and say, you are hopeless, helpless, and useless. You are under the power of sin and you need Christ. You need the work of Christ.

You need to express faith in him. But this isn't what Paul is bringing up. He's saying you need to change your mind about what you're doing.

And that is the issue. So our third point here is the required action that Paul is trying to encourage is a change of mind about works. Now we have a similar sort of argument in the book of Hebrews, don't we? Where in the end of chapter 5 and the beginning of chapter 6 in Hebrews, we have kind of a parallel idea.

You may remember that in that the author is starting to talk about the high priesthood of Jesus Christ, and he says we have many things to say about him, but it's hard to explain because you have become dull of hearing. And in Hebrews 5.12 he says, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God. You have come to need milk and not solid food.

Everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. Solid food belongs to those who are of full age, who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil. Therefore, in Hebrews 6.1, leaving the discussion of the elementary things of Christ, let us go on to maturity or completion or perfection.

Not laying again the foundation. And then he's going to give some things that are part of the foundation of the Christian life. These are things we learn after salvation, and the first one of them is change of mind away from dead works and faith toward God.

That is the first building block in the foundation. That's the first thing we need to teach new believers. If we have the opportunity, the privilege of sharing Christ with someone, and they express faith and they want to embark on the journey that all of us as believers are called to, the first thing we need to understand is that dead works aren't the way to grow and to please God.

It's faith. This is the argument in Romans chapter 3 and in chapter 4 Paul is going to make, and it's paralleled here in Romans. The first principle, the first thing to teach new believers, if we're going to have a basics study one of these days, the first thing we need to cover is the difference between dead works and faith.

And so this is what Paul brings up in chapter 2 of Romans. He says you're relying on works and you're not expressing faith, and this is a message for believers. Our fourth observation that gives us a clue that this is addressing itself to the Christian life, point four here, the wrath of God that's spoken of in Romans chapter 2 verse 5 accumulates.

It's like sand in an hourglass that rises and increases in quantity. Paul says, Do you not know that in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart, your failure to change your mind away from dead works, you are treasuring up for yourself wrath? Failure to acknowledge Jesus Christ and failure to express faith toward God in the salvation sense that we commonly think of it is an absolute, and there's an absolute penalty. There's an absolute wrath for that that isn't quantifiable.

I don't find any scripture for talking about hotter and cooler places in the lake of fire because the lake of fire is the penalty for rejecting Jesus Christ, and it's an absolute. You can't store up wrath in rejecting Christ. It's an absolute, but this is a wrath that is quantifiable.

It's measurable, and there are degrees of this. You can store up by continuing to be impenitent

and continuing to be hard of heart, and this is why John in his epistles talks about that there is a sin unto death, and there is sin that is not unto death. There are degrees of disobedience.

There are degrees of hardness and degrees on the other side of obedience and degrees of reward. So because we're talking about something that is measured in degrees, this again points us to the Christian life and not to salvation. So this wrath, our fourth point, accumulates by degrees.

This would not be the case where the issue is faith in Christ for salvation. Our fifth observation, this day of wrath that's spoken of in chapter 2, verse 5, some people say, well, there is no wrath for believers because once we're in Christ, nothing bad happens anymore. We're in Christ, and we've been excused from wrath.

We've been delivered from wrath, and so the fact that this is even talking about wrath must be referring to unbelievers. And that is one of the better arguments, I think, for the position that takes this as referring to salvation. However, if we read our Scriptures closely, we find that the judgment seat of Christ will be an occasion for wrath and judgment as well as for reward.

One of the first clues to that is the word, translated judgment seat, the word bema. And we know from history and the Greek culture that the bema was a seat upon which a judge sat, and he either accused or excused. He either found someone not guilty or guilty.

It wasn't only a place where people were acquitted. The bema was just like our courtroom today, and we don't have a courtroom where all of the verdicts are not guilty. And if this were going to simply be an awards banquet or an awards ceremony like we have at the end of a school year, it wouldn't be called a judgment seat.

It would be called an awards seat. We would be calling it the reward seat of Christ or the reward banquet of Christ. But it's called a judgment seat, a bema, because the evaluation will either be positive or negative.

We have numerous Scriptures to support this. I'll just give you a few. 2 Corinthians 5.10 is one of the clearest.

In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul says, we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well-pleasing to Him, to Jesus Christ. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that each one may receive the things done in the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Now, a lot of translations tie the whether good or bad to the phrase what he has done, that we're going to be judged according to what we have done, whether it was good or bad.

But a more natural translation of this, if you look at it back in the Greek, is that each one may receive good or evil based on the things that he has done in the body. And many translations will actually render it that way in English. But either way you take it, it's clear that both good and evil

are being considered at this judgment.

1 Corinthians 3.15, just a page over, expresses a similar thought, talking about the building on the foundation. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss. And this phrase, suffer loss, we tend to sort of gloss over and say, well, it's just the absence of rewards.

But in what other context can you think of suffering loss? Loss means you had something and now it's gone. And this has been explained away as, well, you had the potential for something, but it's kind of like saying, well, I lost in the lottery. Well, you can't lose what you never had.

And so the idea there is, at the least, that there's going to be a disappointment. There are believers who will suffer loss at this judgment. And we can consider it to be opportunities.

I think that it's probably something more. I think that there are some things that will cause great regret that would have been the case had we been faithful and had we been obedient. And this is an uncomfortable thought, and it's easy to see why we adjust our theology around it.

In the same way that we have adjusted our theology in other uncomfortable areas, infant salvation comes to mind. We find a convenient theology that leaves us free to not consider unpleasant ideas. In that particular area, of course, I think there is an alternative that doesn't require us to either consider babies to be condemned or to be automatically saved.

But you can see the trend in our theology. When we come up against something that we find unpleasant, and this is what has happened in the New Testament, many of the passages that talk about disobedient believers, we've conveniently assigned those passages and say that that's talking about unbelievers, and we're off the hook. It's unavailable to the Holy Spirit to convict us and to correct and instruct us.

And our correction passages go way down because we keep redirecting them toward unbelievers. But 2 Thessalonians 1.6 is another passage in this regard that talks about the possibility of something negative happening at the judgment seat. Paul is talking about believers who are afflicting their fellow believers.

This is a reference, as usual, to those who are inflicting a legalistic standard, who are demanding that people try to adhere to the law and so forth. Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 1.5, there's manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you also suffer. Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And this is a reference to two separate categories of people. There is vengeance on those who don't know God at all, i.e. unbelievers. There is also vengeance on those who do not obey the

gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And this is disobedient believers. And then he goes on to give the two categories of punishment. The former category, the unbelievers, in verse 9, these shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power when he comes in that day to be glorified in his saints and to be admired among all those who believe because our testimony to you was believed.

And without going into exegesis here, there is one punishment for the former category that involves everlasting destruction. And there is another category of loss that involves being separated from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. And this is what we have seen in other studies related to the outer darkness passages for believers.

This doesn't mean that there is terrible anguish and woe and torture for believers. What it means is that they suffer loss and they are excluded from the immediate presence of the Lord. Jesus referred to this in Revelation chapter 2 and 3 in the rewards category when he says there are some believers, overcomers, who will walk with him in white.

And by definition, there are going to be other believers who do not walk with him. They are going to be alive and resurrected and have wonderful blessings, but there are degrees of reward. And some believers will be closer to the immediate presence of the Lord than others.

And relatively speaking, the greater distance from the Lord is going to be darkness as opposed to light. And these are not popular concepts, but they are in the Scriptures and there isn't a valid way to take them and constantly explain them away as referring to unbelievers. So we know that the judgment seat of Christ will be an occasion for both reward and judgment, discipline, loss.

The one who is saved yet so as by fire in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, fire is not a pleasant thing and he himself will suffer loss and this will occur at the judgment seat of Christ. So that's our fifth observation. We have to acclimatize ourselves and recognize what Scripture teaches, that we endanger our future in the millennial kingdom at a minimum through rank disobedience and unfaithfulness as believers and we can suffer loss.

Our sixth observation here has a couple of points and again we're tracking more or less through Romans. In Romans chapter 2 verse 7, Paul is talking about this judgment seat of Christ for believers and he says in verse 6 of chapter 2 that God will render to each one according to his deeds eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality. Now the only way to take this in a salvation sense is to believe in salvation by works because this is patient continuance in well-doing.

The reward for that is eternal life and many have stumbled over this passage and have decided that there must be salvation by works and it's unfortunate. It's a misapprehension failing to observe the context. This is the eternal life package.

This is the inheritance of the saints. This is the reward that comes to us through Jesus Christ that is potential for us as believers and our life as believers, we are called to holiness. We are called to patient continuance in well-doing.

That's never associated with salvation. We don't have to patiently continue in well-doing to earn salvation. But it is our calling after salvation and this is perhaps the strongest and clearest indicator in the passage that we're talking about believers, reward and discipline at the judgment seat.

So as our sixth point, the judgment has both rewards and punishment. 2.7 talks about eternal life and the parallels here in this passage. Eternal life is a synonym or a term to describe glory, honor and the imperishable things, that which does not perish.

Jesus spoke of this when he was teaching believers principles of life before God and he talked about laying up treasure in heaven. Once again, the idea of accumulation of treasure parallels that of accumulation of wrath and accumulating that which is imperishable and seeking that which is imperishable rather than that which is perishable. So glory, honor, the imperishables and peace are mentioned both in verse 7 and in verse 10 as the goal, that which is sought.

For those who by patience and well-doing seek them, they will be granted. Now this is not the case at the great white throne judgment. There is no mention of glory, honor, imperishable things or peace being granted at the great white throne judgment of Revelation 20, which is the unbelievers judgment.

So it renders it impossible that this passage could be describing the great white throne. In an effort to maintain consistency and interpret this section of Romans as talking about salvation, people have to say that this statement by Paul is a pure hypothetical, that it's an impossibility that he introduces. But the rationale for that makes no sense to me.

The second part of this sixth observation is that there is discipline associated with this judgment. Notice it never says destruction. It never talks about destruction or eternal separation or any of the things that are a part of the great white throne judgment.

Those who suffer loss at this judgment in verse 8 for example, those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth. Notice the basis for the judgment is selfishness, self-seeking, failing to obey the truth. They obey unrighteousness.

There is indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. There's not destruction, there's not eternal damnation in the lake of fire. These are mental attitudes, tribulation and anguish, indignation and being upset.

This is a part, God's indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish on every soul of man who does evil. This is a works-based judgment. And once again, we must see this in terms of

judgment on believers because we know the criteria throughout the Scriptures for the lake of fire judgment is failure to believe in Jesus Christ in this age.

You might also notice that the person spoken of here is said to be factious or divisive also. And this is a big problem in the church, people who are divisive and factious. And Paul writes against divisions in Corinthians.

He says, I hear that there are divisions among you. And throughout the pastoral epistles, he talks about those who teach false doctrine and divide the body and lead people astray and take captive silly women and so forth. And factiousness is a strong basis for judgment for believers.

It has no application. How can you be divisive as an unbeliever? Are you going to divide unbelievers? It has no application. So once again, this is a part of our evidence in 2, 8 and 9. These who are self-seeking, in other words, in verse 8, or factious, divisive, they seek their own and not the welfare of others.

This is the antithesis of love, which is the command for believers. Okay, our seventh observation. Paul uses the phrase in 2, 10, Glory, honor, peace, everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

And this phrase, the Jew first and also the Greek, is always a reference to the body of believers. Now, this is sort of assuming our conclusion a little bit here. But I think you'll find when we encounter this phrase, the Jew first and also the Greek, that this is a reference to believers.

Now, one of the reasons that this is the case is we occasionally see Paul talk about three categories, Jews, Greeks and barbarians. He doesn't mention the barbarians here. And the reason is that the gospel hasn't spread far enough at this point to include the barbarians.

The church started out being entirely Jewish. Paul, as the apostle born out of time, has been the apostle to the Gentiles, primarily in the Greek world, Asia Minor. And the places to which he has traveled, this is the Greek empire, the Greek-speaking world.

And we haven't even addressed the Chinese who are alive over in China at this time and so forth. They haven't been evangelized. This will happen in the later centuries of the church.

So right now, there are two categories of people in the church, and that's Jews and Greeks. And that's as far as the gospel has spread. In other contexts, we find references to the great unwashed masses of pagans.

But the Jew first in the Greek is a reference to the body of believers. This was the great subject of contention in the early church with the Gentiles viewed by the Jews as second-class citizens. It completely dumbfounded the Jews that God gave the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles when they believed in Christ.

And so this was the contention. And this is the issue that Paul is using to make his point, that Jewish believers can't look down their nose at the Greek believers and vice versa. So Jew versus Greek here is an issue in the church.

Other places where we find this phrase outside of Romans, Ephesians chapter 1, verses 12 and 13. Ephesians chapter 1, verse 12. Paul in verse 11 says, In Him, Christ, we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ, the Jewish believers on the day of Pentecost and so forth, should be to the praise of His glory.

In Him you also, you Laodiceans, you people in the Gentile regions, in Him you also trusted after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance and so forth. And so we find this same contrast being brought out by Paul in Ephesians 1, 12 and 13, also in chapter 2, verses 14 through 22. One of the great passages here in Ephesians, Paul says, Jesus Christ, He Himself is our peace, who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross.

And this is talking about the difference between Jews and Gentiles, if you look at the first part of Ephesians 2. It says, Remember you who were once Gentiles in the flesh were called uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, Ephesians 2.11. So this whole idea of Jews and Gentiles being one and that they can't throw rocks at one another is what's at stake here in Romans. So that's our seventh observation. Point eight, being a doer of the law, this is in Romans 2.13, being a doer of the law results in being declared righteous.

As many as have sinned outside the law will perish outside the law. It is not the hearers of the law who are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. Once again, this is a judgment on believers.

Do you obey the truth? Are you a doer of the law in the true sense? Paul is going to go to great lengths here to distinguish what it means to be a true doer of the law, just as James does in his epistle. Being a doer of the law results in being declared righteous in Romans 2.13. This is clearly a judgment for believers. Talking about the Gentiles, as he continues on through this, he says that their conscience will either accuse or excuse them on that day of judgment.

There's nothing at the great white throne judgment that talks about people's conscience excusing them, is there? There is no excuse at the great white throne, and there is no reward at the great white throne. That is strictly a judgment of condemnation. But at this day of judgment that's spoken of in Romans 2.13-16 here, these Gentiles who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bears witness, and their thoughts either accuse or excuse them on that

day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

I don't see any possible way that this can be a reference to any judgment other than the judgment seat of Christ. On what other day can someone stand and have their conscience excuse them? There is no conscience excusing at the great white throne. So again, we're looking at believers in the context of the judgment seat of Christ.

For passages that discuss conscience, as the renewing of the mind through the work of the Spirit and the Word of God, which again is the province strictly of believers. We won't look these up, but you can see this in Romans 13.5, talking about obedience to avoid wrath and for conscience sake as a believer. You also find this in 1 Corinthians 8, verses 7-13, and 1 Corinthians 10, verses 23-32.

There's a great study that can be done just on the concept of conscience. And this is something that's developed in a believer after salvation as a ministry of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. And you've got to be a believer essentially to have a conscience of this nature, of the scriptural nature.

So that's another clue that points us in this direction and leads us to this understanding that we've taken here in Romans. In Romans 2, verses 17-24, we have this boastful hypocrite, this one who calls himself a Jew, rests in the law, makes his boast in God, knows God's will, approves the things that are excellent, is instructed out of the law, is confident that he's a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, and so forth. If we summarize this, we can just say the boastful hypocrite.

The boastful hypocrite of chapter 2, verses 17-24, boasts of a relationship to God. This is specifically in verses 17 and 18. He boasts that he has a relationship with God.

This is a picture of the religious or legalistic believer, isn't it? We don't find unbelievers who don't believe in God boasting of a relationship with God. They're just contradictory. So that's another clue.

Our tenth observation, our tenth point. Circumcision, as we have noted in our study, this is the subject of discussion in Romans 2, verses 25-29. Circumcision was a covenant of obedience for believers.

Circumcision is a covenant of obedience for believers. It was never viewed as a means of salvation, it is a covenant of obedience. There's a fascinating study that can be done there if you go back to Genesis 17 where the right of circumcision is instituted and God says if someone fails to obey with regard to circumcision, he is to be cut off from his people.

And that is a penalty. That is suffering loss. That is a judgment on someone who disobeys this covenant of circumcision.

There's something of a garbled passage that's kind of difficult to make out, but apparently there was some issue regarding circumcision with Moses' sons and an exchange that took place between Moses and his wife regarding circumcision. And apparently there was a judgment on Moses himself that was turned aside at the last moment because Moses had failed to be obedient in the area of circumcision. And we see a parallel here in the life of a believer that disobedience results in a penalty type judgment.

The illustration of circumcision that Paul uses here, this is in the province of believers. This is a covenant of obedience. Our 11th observation, point 11, the reward of the spiritually circumcised.

This again is in Romans chapter 2 in the last section of the chapter there. The reward of the spiritually circumcised is praise. The fruit or the result of achieving this spiritual circumcision is praise.

We find this in 2.29. He is a Jew who is one inwardly. Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not from men, but from God. Those who glory in their physical circumcision seek praise from men.

Those who are spiritually circumcised get their praise from God. So the issue in God's eyes here is praise. And this again tells us that we're talking about believers.

Eternal deliverance from the lake of fire isn't the reward of being spiritually circumcised here. It's praise. We would have to say that there is a boast in faith, if this is talking about salvation, and we run completely counter to Ephesians 2.8 and 9, don't we? We are saved by grace through faith that is not of ourselves.

It is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. And receiving praise from God for expressing salvation faith would be inconsistent. We don't get praised for doing what we are expected to do, which is to express faith in Jesus Christ.

That's expected. There is wrath for failing to respond to God's offer of salvation. But in this case, this is something different because we are looking for praise from God.

So again, point 11, the reward of the spiritually circumcised, i.e., those who manifest the obedience of faith, is praise, not eternal deliverance from the lake of fire. They get praise from God. External religion seeks praise from men.

And a great passage in this regard is Philippians 3, verses 2-11. And we want to take a look at that because this is a great clarifying passage in this regard. Philippians 3, verses 2-11.

Paul says, Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation. He's talking about people that emphasize circumcision. We are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, who rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.

Though I also might have confidence in the flesh, if anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so. I was circumcised the eighth day, stock of Israel, tribe of Benjamin, Hebrew of the Hebrews, concerning the law of Pharisee, concerning zeal, persecuting the church, concerning righteousness, which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gained to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

Now, ask yourself, is Paul talking about his salvation here or is he talking about his life as a believer? Yet indeed, I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish that I may gain Christ. Now, does our salvation depend on counting all things rubbish and losing everything or is it our standing before God at the judgment seat of Christ that depends on these things? Does salvation involve suffering the loss of all things and counting them rubbish so that we may gain Christ? That's not the case, is it? Philippians chapter 3, especially here in verses 8 and 9, Paul is talking about his life of faith. He counts these things as rubbish that he may gain Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.

This is clearly experiential righteousness, isn't it? He's talking about righteousness that God credits him because of his priorities, because of what he has chosen to pursue in life, the things that he has let go of so that he might pursue the things of Christ. This is not talking about salvation. This is talking about the pursuit of the more excellent things, laying aside every weight, the sin that so easily besets us, running with patience the race that is set before us.

So this is a great illuminating passage on what Paul is arguing here in Romans chapter 2. Clearly again, the reward of the spiritually circumcised, like Paul is talking about in Philippians 3, is praise from God. So then the Jewish Christian is going to raise an objection and say, well, what's the point of, why did God institute the law and Israel as his people? And what's the point of being Jewish? What's the plus? Do I have any advantage at all in being Jewish? And this is in chapter 3, verse 1. And Paul says, well, the great plus of being Jewish is you possess the oracles of God. You've been entrusted with the word of God.

And that's a great plus. This isn't a responsibility, by the way, given to unbelievers. And so again, when we're talking about the Jew and one who boasts in the law and all of the things we saw in chapter 2, these unbelieving Jews haven't been entrusted with the word of God, the oracles of God.

That is the trust given to believers. So here in this context, Jew, what advantage or what plus is there in being a Jew is talking about a Jewish believer. God doesn't entrust His word to unbelievers.

And there certainly have been unbelieving Jews. But being entrusted with the oracles of God is a responsibility given to believers. And you can compare verse 3 of chapter 3 of Romans with

Galatians 2.17. Romans 3.3 here says, what if some did not believe? Meaning, you have a Jewish believer, they've been entrusted with the word of God and they don't make it the object of their faith.

Will their lack of faith make the faithfulness of God without effect? And there's a play here on the verb pistuo, which means to trust or to entrust in the passive. And in verse 2 here, he says they have been entrusted. This is a passive of pistuo.

They've been entrusted with the word of God, the oracles of God, the truth of God. What if they didn't express faith in it, these believers? We remember the argument in Hebrews where the promise of God was not mixed with faith in them that heard it and they died in the wilderness and there yet remains a rest for the people of God. This is the discussion that we have here.

What if some of these Jewish believers entrusted with the word didn't make it the object of their faith? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God, the trust of God, without effect? Certainly not. And that's what launches the argument of chapter 3. And Galatians 2.17 parallels this argument. Paul says there, If while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are found to be sinners, is Christ a minister of sin? Once again, Paul's making the same point.

If we, we Jewish men who have Jewish believers who know that you're not justified by works but by faith in Jesus Christ, we believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by faith and not by works. If we are seeking to be justified in Christ, we are Jewish believers, and yet we are found to be sinners, we're found to fall short. His argument in Galatians 2.17 is we Jews who are seeking to be justified in Christ, if we are found to be sinners, is Christ a minister of sin? Is there something wrong with the principle of faith in Christ as a lifestyle because we fail, because we fall short in this regard? Certainly not.

If I build again those things which I destroyed, if I go back to the law and try to build up the law and a system of works and try to justify myself that way, that's what makes me a transgressor in Galatians 2.18. We saw this in our study of Galatians not long ago. Again, our point here is all of these things are in the realm of the life of a believer. It's inescapable that Paul is talking to believers about the Christian life, parallels his argument to believers in other books, in Philippians, in Galatians, in Thessalonians, in Corinthians.

So his conclusion is in chapter 3 that Jews and Greeks alike are under sin and therefore accountable as believers to God. We have a calling, which is since we have been raised with Christ to live as Christ lives, to abandon sin and to pursue righteousness. That's our calling.

That's our reason for being as believers is to live in the light of what happened, to live in our union with Christ, to change our mind away from dead works and live by faith toward God, faith specifically in Jesus Christ. That's the mission. That's the calling.

That's the purpose after salvation. And that's what's at issue here. And so he's saying we are

under sin and therefore accountable to God for what we do about that.

And so he argues that the law speaks to believers. What the law says, it says to those who are under the law. And we've reviewed the fact that the law was given to Jewish believers.

The law wasn't a tool of evangelism. It was a tool of teaching believers. And so, once again, in appealing to the law and to what the law teaches and to whom the law speaks, Paul addresses himself to the realm of believers.

Two more points to go. Our 14th observation. The law, what did the law do? The law was given to believers.

The picture there in the Old Testament, Israel comes out of Egypt, out of bondage, under the blood of the Passover lamb. And they go into the wilderness and they are called to righteousness by God. And the law is the standard.

And they hear it on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, the blessings and the curses, by the way, for those believers. If you do well, you will be justified. If you disobey, you will be disciplined.

And Israel suffered great loss. And, of course, they are a picture. All of these things were written for our instruction, Paul says, upon whom the end of the ages have come.

And we can't accept a theology or a view of the Christian life that says there is a median happy ground and we just go up from there and there is no downside, there is no discipline, there is no loss, there is no judgment, based on that parallel. When we see the believer in the Old Testament, there are blessings and there are curses. There is reward for obedience and there is discipline for disobedience.

And even the New Testament tells us that whom the Lord loves He chastens and He scourges or skins alive with a whip, as it has been translated, every son whom He receives. And to subtract that from the judgment seat of Christ is to eliminate an important source of our motivation as believers to be obedient. So the law in the Old Testament underlines sin in the life of a believer.

The law pointed out uncleanness. If you have any mission, if you bleed, if you touch something dead, you're defiled and you've got to do something about it. That was the law.

If you fail to be obedient in this area, there is a penalty, there is a consequence. And this was for believers. This is for the nation of Israel, God's chosen people.

The law underlines sin in the life of believers. That was its purpose. And so Paul argues that what the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law.

The law says you believers are still sinful, you still need cleansing, you've got to bring a sacrifice, you've got to be purified. This was a message to believers after they had been delivered, after

they had been declared to be the people of God and entered into covenant union with Him. The law told them you're still falling short, you're not qualified for my presence, you need a sacrifice, you need expiation, you need washing, you need cleansing.

So the purpose of the law, one of its major purposes was to underline the fact that believers are still under sin. Just being declared the children of God and being given the promises and being marched toward the Holy Land doesn't get sin out of your life. There's still a sin problem.

And so when Paul argues and he says what the law says, it says to those who are under the law, in chapter 3 verse 19, the consequence of that is every mouth will be stopped and all the world will become guilty before God. But if believers still have a sin problem, how much more so unbelievers? All the world is guilty when believers are demonstrated to still have sin. It's not God that's unfaithful, Paul has argued both here and in Galatians, it's us even after we're saved.

This is in chapter 3 verses 19 and 20. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight for by the law is the knowledge of sin. The law was not a system whereby you could be declared righteous.

The law was a system that showed us that we were still sinful even after salvation in the Old Testament days. So the law was never designed to be a system whereby one could stand before God and be declared righteous. That's never the promise in the Old Testament.

He doesn't say keep all of these commands and never miss and you will be declared righteous before me. In fact, God says the law is showing you that you can't keep the law, that you can't adhere to the righteous standard. By the law comes the knowledge of sin.

No flesh will be justified by the law, just quite the contrary. By the law is the knowledge of sin. So we've got that point, Paul says.

We've been clearly taught that we are sinful and anybody that tries to take the law and turn it into a system of righteousness is missing the point. The law proves the negative. We need something that infuses us with righteousness and that's what he starts talking about in 321.

Now the righteousness of God, apart from the law, is revealed. It was witnessed by the law and the prophets that the just shall live by his faith. This is the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all who are believers.

Believers can be declared righteous before God not by keeping the law, which demonstrates how sinful we are, but by living the life of faith. That's where the declaration of righteousness comes from. So the issue here is not salvation.

The issue is how can you stand before God and be declared righteous? You can't stand and say, like the rich young man did before Jesus Christ, I've kept the entire law from my youth. Jesus said, well, if you want to be a follower of me, then sell all you have and give it to the poor and

demonstrated that there was still sin in his heart. There was still selfish ambition in his heart.

There was still faith in riches rather than faith in God. And with that one simple declaration, as the man walked away sorrowing, Jesus pointed out that it isn't being able to say, I've kept the law from my youth that makes one righteous before God. This man said he kept the law from his youth and he stood before God in the person of Jesus Christ and walked away sorrowing because his faith was in his wealth.

And righteousness comes by faith. By the law comes the knowledge of sin. And that's Paul's point here in chapter 3. And he's talking about believers.

He's talking about how can you stand and be declared a good and faithful servant before the Master. So our final 15th point here, under the law, God's righteousness was manifested and man's sinfulness was manifested. The law brought out the righteousness of God.

God was closeted in the Holy of Holies, walled off and sealed from the sinfulness and the imperfection of man. The only approach to God was through blood. And it declared the righteousness of God and the sinfulness of man.

That's what the law did. The law never declared the righteousness of man, did it? It always declared our sin. It declared the righteousness of God.

And that's why this wonderful pivotal verse here in chapter 3, now the righteousness of God is being witnessed and revealed apart from the law. There's a new way to declare the righteousness of God and it's not the law which constantly points out our sin. Now the righteousness of God is revealed through faith in Jesus Christ.

We can have the righteousness of God revealed in our lives as believers rather than in distinction to our lives as sinners that the law points out. And so this is the great crux of the argument and it's so applicable to us as believers because every day we're reminded that we're not trying to declare ourselves righteous before God by what we do. It's what God does in us.

That's where the righteousness of God comes from. When we start looking at our works and our deeds, it's only going to prove our sinfulness because we're all under sin and we are falling short of the glory of God constantly. So any system of Christianity or spirituality or religion that concentrates on what we do is going to do what the law did.

In focusing on our actions, it's going to point out our sinfulness in contradistinction to God's righteousness. But we've been granted the privilege of living under a new system that makes a different point. It doesn't change the fact that we're sinful.

We know that. We've got the law to prove that. But now there's a new system that shows the righteousness of God in a new light and it's the righteousness of God through faith that displays

the righteousness of God in us rather than separate from us.

Everyone sins. Everyone has sinned. And Romans 3.23, we perhaps need a little bit of additional amplification there which we'll pick up after the break.

But this is the great turning point. And so in our 15 points here, it's critical to see that Paul is making a point to believers about what God is up to in our lives. What is God wanting to prove? This is not the age where God is wanting to accomplish great things in our actions.

God used our actions to show our sinfulness through the law. In this age, God wants to use our faith to demonstrate His righteousness in us and through us. And in expressing faith in Him, we are declared to be righteous with the righteousness of God because His righteousness is now shining through us rather than our sinfulness under the law.

And that's the great opportunity that we have if we're not distracted. If someone doesn't deflect us into some system of works which is only going to demonstrate our sin, we have the opportunity to show forth the righteousness of God through faith and in so doing to have that righteousness of God accounted to us. And this is what we're going to see as we continue our study in chapter 4 tonight.

Paul is going to point to Abraham and show that before the law ever came in, God made this point. So that's where we'll pick up. We'll stop here and take a break.

And when we resume, we'll build on this foundation that we have established and see what Paul is telling us through Abraham in chapter 4.