



# Finer Grounds Bible Study

## Romans

### Lesson 5: Romans 3:1-18

I am a self-professed plan-aholic. I absolutely must have a plan for all things. I carry an old-school planner with me at all times, and only write in it using pencil to ensure that it stays completely up to date and accurate. On Sunday evenings my husband and I sit down and go through our schedules for the week so that we both know what is coming. Even on “days off” my brain automatically lays a plan for me: I’m going to exercise, then switch out the laundry, then make sure the family all has lunch, then set out something for supper, then read a while, then fold the laundry, on and on. As I go to bed at night my brain is automatically running through the next day to help me balance homeschool, clients, ministry, karate, soccer, CFYC, and helping my husband, because one of my greatest fears is forgetting something important due to failing to plan ahead.

That being said over the years I have had to develop a second, and somewhat contradictory, inclination: the ability to go with the flow. The nebulous idea of, “Let’s wing it, who knows what’s going to happen,” drives me nuts, however I’m totally fine if the plan changes. I can adjust pretty easily, as long as Plan A is replaced with a Plan B. Sometimes I will even come up with a vague Plan C-D just for kicks. The reason I’ve had to develop this second inclination is because of

the fact that, despite my absolute best efforts, my life absolutely never goes according to plan. In fact, this is the third day this week that my “plan” was to write this lesson.

One of the amazing things about our Creator is that He is absolutely the master planner. As we will see later in Romans 8:29 God has had one absolutely amazing master plan from the very beginning of time. One plan that took thousands of years and many stages to come to full fruition, but one plan all the same. As we begin Romans 3 Paul is explaining to the Jews that, while they had a very special place in this plan, due to man’s sinful nature the ultimate foundation of this plan is the righteousness of God Almighty.

**Read Romans 3:1-18 noting any key words in this passage and their connections to each other.**

---



---



---

**Read Romans 3:1-2**

Paul spent the majority of Romans 2 focusing on the hypocrisy of the idea that Jews would be saved simply because they had the law or were God’s chosen people. He pointed out their hypocrisy in claiming to be righteous while continuing to live in sin, while emphasizing that true obedience to



## Finer Grounds Bible Study

---

God comes from the heart, not a birth right. As we begin chapter 3 Paul is answering some questions that would naturally have come to mind for the Jewish reader.

Question #1 – What advantage has the Jew? Over the centuries the Jews had almost developed this mindset that they had a ticket straight to Heaven, simply because they were Jews. Paul has just spent 17 verses telling them that having the law alone is not enough. So why then did God give them the law in the first place? Why were they called His chosen people if they are just the same, just as sinful, as everyone else?

Question #2 – What is the value of circumcision? The Jews took great pride in their practice of circumcision. It was a physical reminder of their covenant with God and their separateness from the rest of the world. But Paul has just said that physical circumcision doesn't mean anything, it's all about circumcision of the heart.

Then in verse 2 Paul answers these questions, "the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God." The Jews were only looking at one small piece of the massive puzzle that was God's plan, but they believed they were looking at the big picture. They believed that they were God's plan, and Paul is telling them that while they were not the entirety of God's plan, they did have an important role to play because they were the ones entrusted with the oracles (or declarations) of God.

**As Christians we have also been entrusted with the oracles of God. Are we, like the Jews, simply viewing God's declarations as our stamped ticket to Heaven? Or are we proving our worthiness to be entrusted with God's words by taking them into our hearts and sharing them with a lost and dying world?**

---

---

---

### Read Romans 3:3-4

In these verses Paul reminds them that God's faithfulness is in no way dependent upon man. Whether or not we choose to believe and obey God does not change His ultimate faithfulness and righteousness. Even if every single human alive ignores God's teachings, that doesn't change the fact that they are the ultimate Truth. The word for God's faithfulness here is "pistis," which encompasses more than our English word for faith. This word also includes the idea of faithfulness, trustworthiness, loyalty, and belief in God (Truth for Today).

Here we also see the first of 10 occurrences of the phrase "by no means" found in Romans. Paul repeatedly uses this phrase to show the appalling nature of what has just been said. In his mind, it was completely abhorrent to even consider the idea that God's faithfulness is tied to man's.



# Finer Grounds Bible Study

It is also interesting to note Paul's quote from Psalm 51:4, which is David's lament after his sin with Bathsheba. David fully accepted God's judgment because he knew that God's judgment is always just. In the same way we must accept God's righteous judgment. It is for us to conform to His ways, not for Him to conform to ours.

**Are we today much different than those Paul was writing to? How easy is it to accept a teaching from Scripture that opposes what we believe? Does what seems "right" to us at times blind us from the truth of God's word?**

---

---

---

## Read Romans 3:5-8

This section lets us in on the convoluted thinking that Paul is trying to correct. In his class on Romans, Denny Petrillo broke it down for us in this way:

1. God is perfect/man is imperfect
2. Man's sin demonstrates (by contrast) God's righteousness/holiness, etc.
3. So, sin has a good result - our sin makes God look good
4. Therefore, sin is good
5. So if God is going to punish us for making Him look good, what kind of God does that make Him?

Paul specifically states that this is human, flawed thinking. In this text we also see the second use of the phrase, "by no means!" Paul

is completely appalled at the very idea that sin is glorifying to God. It is even worse for him because it appears that some were accusing Paul of teaching this very thing.

Once again, God had a plan in mind before He ever laid the foundations of the earth. As created human beings, we simply do not have the power or the ability to ruin or improve on God's perfect plan. He does not need us to "make Him look good," and it is certainly not acceptable to use this argument to try to justify our sin.

**Do we truly believe that God's judgment is righteous? Do we at times try to "sugar coat" His commands to make them more palatable, either for ourselves or those we are trying to teach?**

---

---

---

**Are there any sins in your life that you have been trying to justify? Take action today to rid your life of these**

---

---

---

## Read Romans 3:9-18

Verse 9 sums up everything Paul has been trying to convey: we are all equally sinful, both Jews and Greeks. Yes, the Jews had a special role in God's plan, yet they are still just as accountable for their sins as the Gentiles are. He is trying, once again, to help



## Finer Grounds Bible Study

them understand that God's plan is bigger than just saving the Jews.

Verses 10-18 are an interesting literary technique. This is called a florilegium, which is basically a collection of Old Testament passages that have been woven together for a specific purpose (Truth for Today). In fact Paul has two purposes here: to highlight the sinfulness of man and to underscore the righteous judgment of God because of our sin (Truth for Today.)

Each of the following verses demonstrates a different aspect of sin:

- 10-11 – No one is righteous, because no one is truly seeking after God.
- 12 – No one does good, no one can claim to be righteous on their own merit.
- 13-14 – The sinful nature of our speech.
- 15-16 – Man runs swiftly towards sin, towards ruin and harm.
- 17 – We cannot know peace while on our own living in sin.
- 18 – The root cause of it all, is not fearing God.

It is interesting to note that each of these examples come from Psalms, with the exception of verse 15 which comes from Proverbs and Isaiah. By beginning this section with, "as it is written," Paul is reminding his readers that what he is about to say is the authoritative word of God. Also,

by using the words "none" and "all" in his first quote, he is emphasizing the equality of all men in the eyes of God. We are all equally sinful, and therefore equally in need of salvation.

During the time of Paul, many of the Jews were indignant at the inclusion of Gentiles in the Lord's church. For generations they had been taught that they had a special place reserved in Heaven by nature of having been God's chosen people, and they did not understand how including Gentiles fit God's plan for them. Throughout this section Paul has encouraged them that yes, they had a special role to play, however it was one role in a plan so big that no one had been able to see it all until it was completed.

He is reminding them that, regardless of birth, man's nature is to run to sin. God's judgment, for both the Jews and the Gentiles, is just because we have all sinned. Just as in Paul's day, it is important for us to understand that we are all equally deserving of God's righteous judgment. Regardless of whether we were raised in the church, or have just come out of the world, we don't deserve Heaven. We can never be good enough, righteous enough, for God to owe us salvation.

This is exactly what makes God's plan so beautiful, amazing, and humbling. Before God even created us, He knew that we would fall. He knew that we would deserve death and judgment. Yet He loved us. Before He even created us, He loved us enough to go to



## Finer Grounds Bible Study

---

extreme lengths to give us the opportunity for a reward that He knew we wouldn't deserve. He was willing to suffer and die to give us the opportunity to be with Him in Heaven. God's plan was created around our human fallibility. Please join us in the coming lessons as we see God's amazing plan for us unfold.

**Do we allow ourselves to be cut to the heart by our sin as were those in Acts 2:37?**

---

---

---

**Are we humble enough to acknowledge our sins to others, and ask them to help hold us accountable?**

---

---

---

Spend some time in prayer, confessing your struggles and asking for God's forgiveness and help in overcoming. If needed, ask a trusted sister in Christ to help hold you accountable in overcoming your sin.

-----

*References:*

*Denny Petrillo's class on Romans: Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver.*

*Truth for Today Commentary on Romans by Paul Pollard, PhD.*