

KINGDOM.

LESSON 10

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray for God's guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Commit your group and this lesson about preaching God's kingdom to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) <i>[QUIET TIMES]</i> 1 SAMUEL 15 -18
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Take turns and **share (or read)** from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your personal times with God out of the assigned Bible passages (1 Samuel chapters 15, 16, 17 and 18). Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) <i>[KEY VERSES IN ROMANS]</i> (4) ROMANS 2:15
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Review two by two.

(4) Romans 2:15. Since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

4	BIBLE STUDY (85 minutes) <i>[THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS]</i> ROMANS 3:1-20
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Introduce. Make use of the five steps method of Bible study to study Romans 3:1-20 together.

In Romans 1:18-32, Paul shows that the Gentiles are experiencing God's wrath and that they need God's righteousness. In Romans 2:1-29 he shows that also the Jews are storing up God's wrath for themselves and that they also need God's righteousness. In Romans 3:1-20, he refutes the Jewish objections against his arguments and confirms his teaching that no Gentile or Jew is righteous in God's eyes. This he proofs from the Bible.

STEP 1. READ.	GOD'S WORD
Read. LET US READ Romans 3:1-20 together. Let us take turns to read one verse each until we have completed the reading.	

STEP 2. DISCOVER.	OBSERVATIONS
Consider. WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU? Or WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE TOUCHES YOUR MIND OR HEART? Record. Discover one or two truths that you understand. Think about them and write your thoughts in your notebook. Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, take turns to share). Let us take turns to share with one another what each of us has discovered. (Remember: In every small group, the group members will share different things)	

3:1-8

Discovery 1. Paul refutes the Jewish objections against his arguments that both Gentiles and Jews stand condemned before God.

Wherever Christians proclaim the truth, opponents of Christians will produce objections in order to try to prove the Christians wrong. Thus, the unbelieving Jews opposed the proclamation of the gospel by Paul and tried to discredit him in the eyes of the world. They opposed Paul just as they had previously opposed the prophets during the Old Testament time and Jesus Christ during the New Testament time.

The overwhelming opinion of the Jews was that God had chosen the Jews as his people since the time of Abraham. They believed that if the Jews retained their relationship to God by keeping the law and especially by physical circumcision, they would never be condemned as the Gentiles would" (Matthew 3:9; John 8:33)! The Jews supposed that the eternal kingdom of God would be given only to the Jews in the whole world. They also supposed that the kingdom of God would be given to them, no matter how sinful and disobedient to God they may have been!

Jesus already refuted the views of the Jews in Matthew 8:11-12, where he said, "Many will come from the east and the west and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of

the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8:11-12; cf. 21:42-44).

The apostle Paul also refuted this view of the Jews in Romans 2:5, where he said, “Because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgement will be revealed.”

The Jews objected vehemently to Paul’s argument in Romans chapter 2 that the Jews would be condemned (doomed) *together* with the Gentiles in the final judgement day (Matthew 25:31-46). The Jews had two main objections.

- Their first objection was that God had given the Jews certain advantages or privileges, which he had not given to the Gentiles. According to the Jews, these advantages or privileges guaranteed that the Jews would always be God’s people with the duty to keep the covenant (the law) and would never be rejected by God.
- The second objection of the Jews was that God was under obligation to keep his covenant promise to the Jews faithfully, regardless how unfaithful the Jews might be.

But the Holy Spirit gave Paul wisdom how to refute these objections of the unbelieving Jews. It is encouraging to know that his opponents could not stand up against the wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke (Matthew 10:17-20; Acts 6:9-10)!

3:9-20

Discovery 2. Paul proves from the Old Testament the doctrine that both Gentiles and Jews stand condemned (doomed) before God.

After refuting the false arguments of the Jews, Paul concludes his argument from Romans 1:18 to 3:8 by saying that with respect to justification, no Jew had any greater advantage or privilege than a Gentile. No human being has any greater advantage than another human being. All people are under the power, the pollution and the guilt of sin, and therefore are justly exposed to God’s condemnation (doom) (3:9).

In Romans 3:10-18, Paul proves the doctrine of the universality of sin by the testimony of the Bible. He quotes several known passages from the Old Testament to prove to the Jews that their own Holy Scriptures condemn them. The objections of the Jews are silenced by the authoritative words of God in the Bible!

Paul concludes that the specific revelation of God in the Bible addresses everyone who is familiar with that revelation. It silences every mouth which makes objections against its sinfulness. On the final judgement day all people will stand before God’s judgement throne and they will be judged according to their works. God will hold them accountable for their thoughts, motives, attitudes, plans, relationships and actions. God will not declare one single person righteous on the basis of observing the law! The law simply cannot justify or save one single person! Instead, the law makes people aware that they are sinners and in need of God’s righteousness. The law makes people aware that they need a Saviour!

STEP 3. QUESTION.

EXPLANATIONS

Consider. WHICH QUESTION ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS PASSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK TO THIS GROUP?

Let us try to understand all the truths in Romans 3:1-20 and ask questions about the things we still do not understand.

Record. Formulate your question as clearly as possible. Then write your question in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, let each person first share his question.)

Discuss. (Then, choose a few of these questions and try to answer them by discussing them together in your group.)

(The following are examples of questions the students might ask and some notes about the discussion of the questions.)

3:1-2

Question 1. Why can God’s privileges that he gave to Israel not be a guarantee that the Jews will be justified?

Notes.

In Romans chapter 2, Paul concluded that the Jews, like the Gentiles, would not escape God’s judgement. They would be condemned, not on the basis of their privileges, but on the basis of their own works and in accordance with how much they know of God’s revelation.

The Jews objected that Paul’s conclusion is inconsistent with the acknowledged privileges or advantages of the physical or national nation of Israel (the Jewish nation). The Jews were of the opinion that all the advantages God had given to them were a proof that God had accepted them and would never reject them.

Paul admitted that the Jews had received great advantages (Romans 9:4-5; Ephesians 2:11-12). One of their greatest advantages was that they had been entrusted with the very words of God (Romans 3:2). These words of God were subsequently recorded to form the book of the Law and the Prophets (that is, the Old Testament. cf. Luke 24:25-27,44-45; John 5:45-47) (Romans 3:21).

However, Paul maintains that all these advantages of the Jews do not guarantee their justification or salvation! For example, the very book of the Law and Prophets condemn all people, including Jews, to be unrighteous (Romans 3:10-18)! Therefore, the Jews are also unrighteous and will not be justified by their privileges and advantages! Not a single privilege will protect them from God's wrath on the final judgement day.

Later, Paul proclaimed that all people, Jews and Gentiles, *can* only be justified by their faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22)!

3:3-4

Question 2. Why can God's faithfulness not guarantee that the Jews will be justified?

Notes.

The Jews objected that Paul's conclusion is inconsistent with God's faithfulness to his covenant promise to Israel. The Jews held the opinion that God would remain faithful to his promises, *even when the Israelites would become unfaithful to God*. They falsely believed that God's faithfulness to his promises guaranteed their justification, regardless how great their unfaithfulness towards God might be.

Paul maintains that God's faithfulness stands unassailable. God's faithfulness towards Israel and his promises to Israel may not be called into question!

However, Israel's unfaithfulness towards God (their unbelief and disobedience) may be called into question! Israel's unfaithfulness is evident in their not fulfilling the conditions (consisting of faith and obedience) (Hebrews 4:1-2,6) attached to God's covenant promise. For example, in the very book of the Law and Prophets the greatest king of the Jewish nation, king David, admitted that he himself was completely unrighteous. He condemned himself as an evildoer, but still acknowledged that God was completely righteous (Psalm 51:4-6)! This example in the Old Testament proves that God is always righteous, but the Jews are not righteous. God's covenant promise to the people of Israel had two conditions: they had to believe and obey. God would remain faithful to his covenant promise as long as Israel adhered to the conditions attached to the covenant promise. But when the Jews neglected their responsibility to keep the conditions attached to the covenant promise, God was under no obligation to keep his covenant promise.

3:5-8

Question 3. Why can God's righteousness not guarantee that the Jews will be justified?

Notes.

The Jews expected exemption from God's righteous judgement on the final judgement day on the basis of a false argument. They argued that their own unrighteousness revealed (brought into the light) more clearly God's righteousness. They argued that the greater the contrast between God's righteousness and their own unrighteousness, the brighter would God's righteous character shine and the easier people would be able to see how great God's righteousness was! Their typical human argument was that if the falsehood and unrighteousness of the Jews enhanced the truthfulness and righteousness of God and brought greater glory to God, then God would be unjust if he condemned the Jews for their unrighteousness!

Paul says that this kind of reasoning is not only very wicked, but also completely untenable. This kind of reasoning is very wicked, because it makes God equally unrighteous as the unrighteous Jews. If God would not condemn and punish the wickedness of the Jews, he would be unrighteous and unable to judge the Jews!

Also the wicked Gentiles could use the same argument and God would not be able to judge the Gentiles. Consequently, God would not be able to judge anyone in the world! This argument of the Jews would promote the immoral teaching, namely, that "the more evil people do, the more good would come out of it!" Or "the more people sin, the more they would glorify God." How would God still be able to judge sinners?

Paul's teaching that people are saved by grace through faith and not by their works of the law does not mean that people are saved in spite of the fact that they continue in godlessness, wickedness and lawlessness. Jews who argue that they are saved in spite of their godlessness, wickedness and lawlessness deserve God's complete condemnation (doom). "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness" (Isaiah 5:20). All human or religious teachings that lead to immoral behaviour are false teachings!

3:9-18

Question 4. How does Paul prove his doctrine that both Gentiles and Jews stand condemned before God?

Notes.

- (1) The Bible is the final authority for doctrine (what a Christian must believe) and for life (how a Christian must behave).

Paul's argument in Romans 1:18 to 3:8 made the charge that Jews and Gentiles are alike under sin. With respect to justification, no Jew had any greater advantage or privilege than a Gentile!

Paul proves this teaching by quoting several passages from the Bible. This shows that the opinion (belief or conviction) of the Jews is never more important than what the Bible says about the matter! The Bible is the final authority for Christian doctrine (what Christians believe) and Christian life (how Christians behave)! No one less than God himself proclaims the universality of sin: all people without any kind of distinction are under the power, the pollution, the guilt and the condemnation (doom) of sin. Paul quotes several known passages from the Old Testament to prove to the Jews that their own Holy Scriptures condemns them!

(2) The Bible proves the universality of unrighteousness.

These are quotations from Psalm 14:1-3 and Psalm 53:1-3. "Not even one person is righteous in himself". Without the revelation in the Bible "no one has a right understanding" of God's truths or of his own deplorable condition. "No one seeks God", that is, no one obeys, serves or worships God by his own nature, power or wisdom. Natural man turns away from the God of the Bible and avoids the right way that leads to God. "Everyone has become worthless", meaning, everyone has become morally depraved (corrupt). There is "not even one person in the world who does good" in the sense that God would accept his goodness (cf. Luke 18:19). No person's alleged good works (Isaiah 64:6) are sufficient to take away God's righteous anger against his sin. All so-called "righteous deeds" of natural man or "religious man" are like "filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6); they are quite insufficient to remove God's righteous indignation against sin. On the final judgement day, the religious works of the religious man and the good works of the natural man will not be able to tip the scales in his favour! Thus, the Bible proves that the spiritual and moral depravity of people is universal.

(3) The Bible proves the wickedness of speech.

These are quotations from Psalm 5:9, 10:7 and 140:3. There are always some people who object. They maintain that they are not sinners and not immoral or depraved. They argue that, because they do not kill, commit adultery or steal, they are not sinners! However, Paul illustrates the sinfulness of every individual by the sins of the tongue. All people, including the so-called good and decent people, commit sins with their tongue. The words coming out of people's mouths are like the offensive smell coming out of a grave or the bite of a poisonous viper. They lie and cheat, gossip, curse, express bitterness and fight with words. This all shows what is hidden in their hearts and proves their moral depravity (Matthew 12:33-37; 15:18-19)!

Judging non-Christians remains a sin (Matthew 7:1-2; 1 Corinthians 5:12-13) at all times. Judging Christians, except in the case of obvious sin (Luke 17:3-4; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 1 Timothy 5:20), is also sin!

(4) The Bible proves the wickedness of acts (deeds).

These are quotations from Isaiah 59:7-8. "Their feet are swift to shed blood" means that people commit murder on the slightest provocation! "Ruin and misery marks the way" of the people on earth. The people on earth continually invent reasons to make war, even so-called holy wars, but all their wars are for unjust reasons! The result of all wars is senseless destruction and unimaginable distress. By nature or by themselves, the people on earth "do not know the way of peace". That is, they have not "come to know" the way of peace, because violence almost continually prevails among them. Thus, especially the prevalence of violence and wars among the nations and various factions on earth prove that the whole human race is spiritually and morally depraved!

(5) The Bible proves the prevalence of godlessness.

This is a quotation from Psalm 36:1. "There is no fear of God before their eyes". The word "fear" means reverence, trust and dread. By nature people on earth do *not have awe (reverence)* before God and they also do *not trust* God. They do not dread God's judgement. They act as if there is no God. They live as if they never have to give an account to God of how they live. Thus, the disrespect of people towards the living God proves that spiritual depravity is universal. Both the Old and New Testaments teach the universal depravity of man.

3:19-20

Question 5. What is the final conclusion of Paul's argument that both Gentiles and Jews stand condemned before God?

Notes.

(1) The different meanings of the word law".

Paul teaches that the righteousness of God is established without the works of the law, but the law nevertheless testifies to this righteousness. Here is a clear example how easily Paul changes from one meaning of the law to another meaning of the law. The letter to the Romans cannot be understood without clearly distinguishing between the different meanings of the word "law" in this letter. In one sense, the law pronounces the opposite of God's justification, and in another sense it proclaims God's justification. The context determines the precise meaning of the word "law".

"Whatever the law (1st meaning: God's Holy Book, the Torah, the Old Testament Scriptures)(Romans 3:19a) says, it says to those who are (literally) "included in" (Greek: en) the law (2nd meaning: God's holy and righteous requirement)(Romans 3:19b), so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God". Paul speaks about the people "included in" (Greek: en) the law (Romans 3:12,19) (that is, included in God's demand that all people should be righteous), and not about people "under" (Greek: hupo) the law (3rd meaning: people trying to keep the moral, ceremonial and civil laws and the man-made laws they added to God's law) (Romans 6:14) (that is, people who try to be justified by keeping the moral, ceremonial and civil laws of God).

(2) No one is outside God's law and therefore not beyond God's judgement and condemnation.

On the basis of three arguments:

- The godlessness and wickedness of the Gentiles (described in Romans 1:18-32)
- the lawlessness, unfaithfulness, unrighteousness and falsehood of the Jews (described in Romans 2:21 to 3:8)
- and the testimony of the Bible (quoted in Romans 3:10-18)

Paul makes the following conclusion: "All people in the world are included in God's law" or righteous requirement (God's righteous or just demand) namely that all people must be 100% holy and righteous before God and that all sins of people must be 100% condemned and punished. God's "law" in this sense (God's requirement) affects all people in the world in every nation, in every culture and throughout human history.

God's "law" or righteous requirement is the following: God requires that all (100%) of sins of people must be punished, that all (100%) people must be justified and sanctified before they are acceptable to God. In order to be accepted by God, people must have a new state (that is, be righteous and holy in God's eyes) and have a new life-style (that is, live righteously and holy). People must be forgiven and able to live the new life! People must meet God's righteous requirement, regardless whether they are Gentiles that only possess the general revelation of God (Romans 1:19-20; 2:14-15) or whether they are Jews that also possess the special revelation of God (Romans 2:18)! Those who are outside God's special revelation (originally the Gentiles) are not outside the sphere of God's righteous requirement (Romans 1:19-20; Romans 2:14-15). Therefore they are also not beyond judgement and condemnation (doom) of which the Old Testament speaks.

God's "law" or "righteous requirement" for God's judgement (and punishment) on the one hand and for God's salvation (justification and sanctification) on the other hand consists of God's prohibitions and commandments in the Bible, like for example, the Ten Commandments and other moral commandments (Romans 2:15; 3:20,21a).

Because it is clear that not a single person in the world can meet God's righteous requirement), it is also clear that all people stand under God's righteous judgement! Not a single person can open his mouth and come with an argument why God must declare him righteous and accept him into Paradise (heaven)! Not a single person can defend his own unrighteousness!

(3) No one can keep the law perfectly and therefore no one will be justified by trying to keep the law.

Every mouth in the history of this world is silenced, "because" (not "therefore") "no one (no flesh) will be declared righteous in God's sight by observing "the law" (the moral, ceremonial and civil laws) (Romans 3:20ab)"! The future tense expresses that this fact is an absolute certainty: everyone in the world will have to give an account to God of their relationship to the God of the Bible and their life and works (deeds). No one in the world will be justified or saved by his own effort or by his own works of the law. Even if he keeps some of the laws, he never keeps all the laws – and God requires nothing less than 100% perfection (Galatians 3:10)! In order to be declared righteous in God's eyes by observing the law (the teachings and moral laws of the Bible), a person must never have committed one single sin or transgression (James 2:10) and he must always have lived an absolute perfect life before God (Isaiah 64:6)! It is therefore very clear that the works of the law cannot and will not justify a single person in the history of this world!

Romans 3:19b says that the "law" in this sense acts like a judge. It silences every argument against the God of the Bible and his revelation in the Bible and makes people responsible to give an account to the God of the Bible.

Romans 3:20b says that the "law" in this sense acts like a mirror. It shows people how God sees them. It shows them how sinful they really are. And it makes them conscious that they are depraved.

And Romans 3:21a says that the "law" in this sense cannot act like a saviour. It cannot and does not reveal a way of justifying or saving people in God's sight. It cannot and does not reveal a way of salvation (justification and sanctification).

The righteousness of God that *can* and *will* justify believers in Christ is a righteousness that is completely apart from trying to attain God's required righteousness that is expressed in the moral commandments in the Bible.

Paul concludes that the purpose of the "law" was never to justify or save people. The moral law revealed that God is holy and righteous, that people must likewise be holy and righteous in order to become the people of God and that all unholiness and unrighteousness will be punished. The ceremonial law revealed how the people of God must approach, worship and serve God. The "law" makes a person conscious of what is sin and that he is a sinner, a person that is separated from God, being self-sufficient and living independent from God, missing God's goal for his life! Because not a single person in the world can keep God's "laws" or requirements perfectly, these "laws" on the one hand drive people to despair and then on the other hand drive them to Jesus Christ, who is the only One who can justify or save them (Galatians 3:21-25).

STEP 4. APPLY.

APPLICATIONS

Consider. WHICH TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE ARE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS TODAY?

Share and record. Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of possible applications from Romans 3:1-20.

Consider. WHICH POSSIBLE APPLICATION DOES GOD WANT YOU TO TURN INTO A PERSONAL APPLICATION?

Record. Write this personal application down in your notebook. Feel free to share your personal application.

(Remember that people in every group will apply different truths or even make different applications of the same truth. The following is a list of possible applications.)

1. Examples of possible applications from Romans 3:1-20.

- 3:1. My advantages cannot justify me in God’s eyes and my disadvantages cannot disqualify me for salvation. Only God can justify by grace and through faith.
- 3:2. Possessing a Bible is a great advantage!. Read and study it!
- 3.3. God will always remain faithful, even if I am unfaithful (2 Timothy 2:13). He remains faithful to his promise of salvation *and he remains faithful to his threat of judgement!* When I am unfaithful, he will certainly remain faithful to his judgement and condemn my unfaithfulness!
Determine to be like God. Be faithful!
- 3:4. God always speaks the truth (Numbers 23:19). Trust God’s words in the Bible.
- 3:5-8. Beware of false arguments.
- 3:9. Never think that your own race, culture, language or history is better than that of others (Galatians 3:28)
- 3:10-12. Be deeply convinced that by God’s standards the natural man is spiritually and morally depraved.
- 3:13-14. Watch the words coming out of your mouth (Psalm 141:3; Matthew 12:36; 15:18-20).
- 3:15-17. Never get involved in the fights and wars of man (James 4:1-2).
- 3:18. Always return to a personal and intimate relationship with the living God.
- 3:19. Don’t try to justify yourself in God’s eyes.
- 3:20. Use the teachings and moral laws in the Bible as a mirror to see yourself as God sees you.

2. Examples of personal applications from Romans 3:1-20.

To say, “Let us do evil that good may come out of it” (3:8) is immoral and therefore a false teaching. As a teacher, I want to be very careful never to teach a doctrine that is immoral in its tendency or in conflict with the principles of morals in the Bible. As a teacher of God’s Word, I want to handle the Word of God correctly (2 Timothy 2:15).

I want to use quotations from Bible passages to prove to people that everyone is by nature a sinner and depraved in his nature. Even the so-called “good” people in the eyes of other people, need God’s righteousness.

STEP 5. PRAY.

RESPONSE

LET US TAKE TURNS TO PRAY ABOUT ONE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US in Romans 3:1-20. (Respond in your prayer to what you have learned during this Bible study. Practise to pray only in one or two sentences. Remember that people in every group will pray about different issues.)

5

PRAYER (8 minutes)

[INTERCESSION]
PRAY FOR OTHERS

Continue to pray in groups of two’s or three’s. Pray with one another for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6

PREPARATION (2 minutes)

[ASSIGNMENT]
FOR NEXT LESSON

(*Group leader.* Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. Commitment. Be committed to make disciples, build the Church and preach the kingdom.
2. Preach, teach or study Romans 3:1-20 with another person or group of people.
3. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time from half a chapter of 2 Samuel 2, 5, 6 en 7 each day.
Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. Memorisation. (5) Romans 3:28. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. Teaching. Prepare the parable of “the hidden treasure” in Matthew 13:44 and the parable of “the pearl of great value” in Matthew 13:45-46. Make use of the six guidelines for interpreting parables.
6. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
7. Update your notebook on preaching God’s kingdom. Include your notes on quiet time, your memorisation notes, your Bible study notes and this preparation.