

Romans Chapter Three

Addressing Potential Misconceptions (vv. 1-8)

Concerning the Jews (vv. 1-2)

VERSE 1 Then what advantage has the Jew (Τί οὖν τὸ περισσὸν τοῦ Ἰουδαίου [interrog.pro.nom.nt.s *tis* what? + conj *oun* + d.a.w/adj.nom.nt.s *perissous* advantage + d.a.w/noun adj.gen.m.s *Jew*])?

Or what is the benefit of circumcision (ἢ τίς ἡ ὠφέλεια τῆς περιτομῆς [conj *e* or + interrog.pro.nom.f.s *tis* + d.a.w/noun nom.f.s *opheleia* benefit + d.a.w/noun gen.f.s *peritome*])?

VERSE 2 Great in every respect (πολὺ κατὰ πάντα τρόπον. [adj.nom.nt.s *polus* much, great + prep *kata* + adj.acc.m.s *pas* every + noun acc.m.s *topos* way; “respect”]).

First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God (πρῶτον μὲν [γὰρ] ὅτι ἐπιστεύθησαν τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ [adv. *protos* first + part. *men* on the one hand + conj. *hoti* that + aor.pass.ind.3p. *pisteuo* here entrust + d.a.w/noun acc.nt.p. *logia* oracle; cp. Acts 7:38 + d.a.w/noun gen.m.s. *theos*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 1-2

1. Paul’ argument at the end of chapter 2 regarding the uselessness of the ritual of circumcision, absent circumcision of the heart, might appear to some as making the ritual of no value.
2. This inference might be drawn from Paul’s statement in 2:27 where those uncircumcised of the flesh (i.e., Gentiles) would be in a position to condemn the circumcised of the flesh (the Jew) that was in violation of the Law.
3. It might appear to some that circumcision created a disadvantage and a liability, rather than an advantage.
4. Verses 1-8 are devoted to refuting false inferences regarding God and His plan.
5. He opens with a pointed question: “What advantage then has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?”
6. His succinct answer: “Great in every respect.” (v. 2a).
7. Paul will not tolerate a depreciation of the institution of the ritual of circumcision which was instituted by God in Gen. 17.
8. The external ritual minus Spirit circumcision (salvation adjustment) was of no profit to the Jew in the age of Israel, who remained in a state of unbelief.

9. Just because a person submits to an external ritual, like water baptism, but who is unsaved, does not render the ritual invalid.
10. If Paul could say “Great in every respect” with respect to an institution that has been discontinued for the CA, then how much more the institutions of the present age ought to be esteemed (Lord’s Table, water baptism)?
11. “First of all” is not to be taken as a list of multiple items, rather is to be taken as that which was preeminent.
12. The Jews of the age of Israel were “entrusted with the oracles of God.”
13. This is a reference to the OT Scriptures from Genesis to Malachi.
14. The total deposit the Jews were entrusted with is 39 books which Paul designates as “the oracles of God.”
15. For Paul the written Word of God is God’s speech, and God’s speech is conceived of as existing in the form of a “trust” to Israel.
16. The divine oracle has a fixed and abiding form.
17. They all carry the authority of God as per “Thus says the LORD” (some 419x).
18. The prophets received these “oracles” from the mouth of God, and preserved them in written form under the doctrine of verbal plenary (full) inspiration (2 Pet. 1:21 “for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human volition, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”
19. So what above all else was the Jewish privilege?
20. It was their entrustment with the written WOG.

Jewish Unbelief Notwithstanding (vv. 3-4)

VERSE 3 What then (*interrog.pro.nom.nt.s tis what? + conj gar*)?

If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it

(*εἰ ἠπίστησάν τινες, μὴ ἡ ἀπιστία αὐτῶν τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ καταργήσει [conj ei if; 1st class + aor.act.ind.3p. apisteuo refuse to believe + pro.nom.m.p. tis some + neg me; goes with the verb nullify + noun nom.f.s. apistia unbelief + pro.gen.m.p. autos + d.a.w/noun acc.f.s. pistis faith; “faithfulness” + d.a.w/noun gen.m.s. theos + fut.act.ind.3s. katargeo nullify]*)?

VERSE 4 May it never be (*μὴ γένοιτο [neg me + aor.dep.opt.3s. ginomai]*; 10x in Romans:

3:6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7; 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11; and at Lk. 20:16; 1 Cor. 6:15; Gal. 2:17; 3:21; 6:14)!

Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written

(*γινέσθω δὲ ὁ θεὸς ἀληθής, πᾶς δὲ ἄνθρωπος ψεύστης, καθὼς γέγραπται, [pres.pass.imper.3s. ginomai + conj de + d.a.w/noun nom.m.s. theos + adj.nom.m.s. alethes true + adj.nom.m.s. pas + conj de + noun nom.m.s. anthropos + noun nom.m.s. pseustes liar + conj kathos +*

pf.pass.ind.3s. grapho]), **"THAT YOU MAY BE JUSTIFIED IN YOUR WORDS, AND PREVAIL WHEN YOU ARE JUDGED** [*Ὅπως ἂν δικαιωθῆς ἐν τοῖς λόγοις σου καὶ νικήσεις ἐν τῷ κρίνεσθαί σε* [*conj. opos that + part an + aor.pass.subj.2s. dikaioo justify, acquit + prep en + d.a.noun loc.m.p. logos word + pro.gen.m.s. su + conj kai + fut.act.ind.2s. nikao prevail + prep en + d.a.w/pres.act.infin. krino judge + pro.acc.m.s. su*])."

ANALYSIS: VERSES 3-4

1. The question "What then?" is provoked by the issue of the unbelief of "some" Jews with respect to the "oracles of God", which clearly anticipated a coming Savior, and what was required to make the salvation adjustment.
2. The negative volition of the chosen people did not in any fashion invalidate the Jewish privilege.
3. The second question in v. 3 has to do with the integrity ("faithfulness") of God.
4. We expect a negative answer.
5. And Paul supplies the answer with the formula: "May it never be!"
6. In its present form it indicates his abhorrence of the very suggestion.
7. The obvious and most reasonable view, in the foregoing question, is the unbelief of the Jews in Paul's day, exhibited by the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, and consequently, negative volition to the oracles of God that foretold His coming.
8. The basis for the understanding that the Jews of his day are in view is the context where Paul is addressing the unbelieving Jews (cf. 2:17ff.).
9. Paul is careful not to include all Jews in this category; he says, "If some did not believe."
10. The argument, thus far is: the negative volition of some Jews does not invalidate the privilege of the Jew in possession of the oracles of God over the Gentile.
11. But of even greater importance is that the unbelief of the Jews does not undermine God's integrity as seen in v. 3 (i.e. "faithfulness").
12. God is true to His word regardless of the negative volition of the many.
13. He in no way is influenced by human opinion and mass negative volition, even among the chosen race.
14. God is faithful to His spoken word no matter how many people reject it.
15. Putting forward the absurd suggestion (v. 3), Paul forcibly asserts for a second time the formula of disavowal: "May it never be!"
16. Then Paul says: "Rather, let God be found true, and every man a liar!"
17. By asserting the extreme case of universal negative volition it serves to highlight the fact that human consensus does not overturn God's faithfulness to His promises and His word.
18. Nothing extraneous to His person can negate His word or will.
19. The divine attributes of immutability, justice, veracity, and righteousness remain inviolate even if "every man is found a liar."
20. The citation of Ps. 51:4 in this connection presents some difficulty because of the different situation in which David spoke these words, and how they are used here.
21. The whole verse reads: "Against you, and You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight—that you are justified when You speak, and blameless when You judge."

22. All sin is directed against God even though others are sinned against.
23. Sin is a violation of God's +R.
24. Therefore, God's judgments upon men for their sins are always just/righteous.
25. People sin, and God responds with judgments that fit the offense.
26. This cycle of sin and wrath validates God's word as per: "THAT YOU MAY BE JUSTIFIED IN YOUR WORDS, AND PREVAIL WHEN YOU ARE JUDGE."
27. Sin against God is an occasion for the vindication and exhibition of divine justice.
28. Sin does not disestablish the character of God, just as unbelief of the many cannot void the truth of God.
29. In a world of sin and unbelief God will be "justified/vindicated" and He will "prevail" (omnipotence) in the fact of contradiction.
30. Again, far from distracting from the integrity of God, sin is an occasion to **promote** His faithfulness, when the appropriate judgment is rendered!