

30. The Book of Romans 3:1-2

Paul's Epistle to the Romans

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We are currently in the first section of Paul's epistle to the Romans—which is the most complete treatise on the Gospel of Jesus Christ you'll find anywhere in the Bible (1:16-17).

As we have said repeatedly, in this first section of the book (1:18-3:20—a section referred to as “Condemnation”) Paul is endeavoring to prove that the whole world apart from Jesus Christ is lost in sin, separated from God, and condemned to hell.

He does this systematically by first addressing:

- A. *The unrighteous heathen in 1:18-32.*
- B. *The self-righteous hypocrite (moralist) in 2:1-16.*
- C. *The ultra-religious Hebrew in 2:17-29*

As we have already seen, the Jews based their righteousness and salvation on 3 primary principles or grounds:

- I. Their heritage—they were descendants of Abraham.
- II. They had been given God's Law—which made them special in God's eyes and gave them special privileges—including and especially that it exempted them from judgment.
- III. They were circumcised—which brought them into the covenant God made with Israel which further exempted them from judgment.

These 3 things gave the Jews a tremendous feeling of security and safety from God's judgment. So, in this section Paul sets about to systematically destroy this false security which the Jews had wrapped themselves in, peeling off layer after layer of false righteousness and false security in verses 17-29 of chapter 2—until, as one author put it:

“His religious countrymen were left ‘naked’ before God, stripped bare of every vestige of religious hope. Demonstrating that they were no different than the Gentiles when it came to God's judgment.”

He does so by showing them that: their heritage can't save them (verses 17-20); that having the Law can't save them (verses 21-24); and that circumcision won't save them either (verses 25-29).

Now, Paul knew that this would immediately lead to a couple of questions from his Jewish audience—questions he anticipated and verbalizes for them in verse 1 of Chapter 3:

Romans 3:1–8 (NKJV)

¹ **What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?**

Paul's response was immediate and definitive:

Romans 3:2 (NKJV)

² **Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.**

The word '**oracles**' is the Greek word '*logia*'—a form of logos which is most commonly translated "**word**" in the New Testament (see John 1:1-3, 14).

B.B. Warfield, Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary from 1887-1921 after an exhaustive study of the words '*logia*' and '*logion*' concluded that they meant—not words in general but:

"The divinely authoritative communications from God Himself, before which men stand in awe and to which they bow in humility...It would seem clear again that there are no implications of brevity in the term—it means not short, pithy, pregnant sayings, but high, authoritative, sacred utterances...from God."

Romans 3:1-2 (NIV)

¹ What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? ² **Much in every way! First of all, the Jews have been entrusted with the very words of God.**

Romans 3:1-2 (NLT)

¹ Then what's the advantage of being a Jew? Is there any value in the ceremony of circumcision? ² **Yes, there are great benefits! First of all, the Jews were entrusted with the whole revelation of God.**

When we talk about revelations from God to us there are 2 kinds: 1) Natural; and 2) Special.

- *Natural* revelation is God's revelation of Himself in creation (Psalm 19:1-6).
- *Special* revelation is God's revelation of Himself in Scripture.

Natural revelation gives us knowledge about God in general (He exists, He is powerful, He loves beauty and color etc.).

Whereas with *special* revelation God gets '*up-close and personal*' with us by introducing Himself to us, telling us His name, what He loves and what He hates, how we can know Him personally etc.).

On Mt. Sinai God gave to His people special revelation in the form of His Law. As the Jews received it, revered it, and obeyed it—they prospered and were blessed as He promised they would in Deuteronomy 30:1-10. But as time wore on, the nation became increasingly more and more rebellious and sinful, and as God also promised—He removed His prosperity and blessings from them.

As their reverence for God's Word decreased—as they no longer embraced a high and lofty view of Scripture but instead held a very low view of Scripture the nation diminished more and more—and understand, that all of this happened while maintaining their religious fervor—

Isaiah 1:10–20 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Hear the word of the Lord, You rulers of Sodom; Give ear to the law of our God, You people of Gomorrah: ¹¹ “To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?” Says the Lord. “I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats. ¹² “When you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand, To trample My courts? ¹³ Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies— I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. ¹⁴ Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing *them*. ¹⁵ When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. ¹⁶ “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, ¹⁷ Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow. ¹⁸ “Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the Lord, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. ¹⁹ If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; ²⁰ But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword”; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Unfortunately, it was too little too late—and so after King Josiah was killed in battle the nation again ignored what God said to them and fell back into idolatry. This led to the Babylonian captivity which began in 606 BC and ended in 536 BC.

Two good things came from the Babylonian captivity—1) It broke them of their idolatry; and 2) It gave birth to synagogue worship—which focused on God’s Word. You see, while in captivity, for many, a renewed hunger for the Word of God began to grow—and grow dramatically. This was due in large part to them being far from Jerusalem and the Temple (which the Babylonians destroyed).

Without the Temple and its sacrificial system (religion)—their focus was redirected to the Scriptures—which they zealously began to read and study.

At this point you might be thinking—“*That was a good thing—right?!* ” and in many ways it was a good thing. But it led some of them into another error—instead of taking the Word of God *lightly* as their forefathers had done—they now began to take God’s Word *legalistically*. You see, the Pharisees got their start around this time—an ultra-conservative sect of Judaism that believed every word of the Law was inspired by God.

As such, they made the mistake of emphasizing the ‘*letter of the law*’ but often neglected the ‘*spirit of the law*.’ And as we’re going to see, this was something Paul had to constantly correct in his epistles when mentioning the Jews and how they mishandled God’s Law.

Romans 2:28–29 (NKJV)

²⁸ For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is not* from men but from God.

2 Corinthians 3:5–6 (NKJV)

⁵ Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God, ⁶ who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Sadly, in time, the Pharisees began to have more reverence for the rabbinical (man-made) traditions rather than God’s written Word—often negating or cancelling out altogether the Word of God by their traditions:

Matthew 15:3-6 (NKJV)

³ He answered and said to them, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? ⁴ For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ ⁵ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God”—⁶ then he need not honor his father or mother.’ Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.

Now, I bring all of this out because the different points of view and attitudes that the Jews had about God’s Word throughout the Old Testament period and even into Paul’s day—parallels quite a bit the points of view and attitudes that many religious church goers hold to today.

Let me just say that there are only 3 basic positions that a person can hold to with regard to the Bible:

1. *The Bible is the Word of God in its entirety, from cover to cover—inerrant and absolute in the truth it presents.*
2. *The Bible is a collection of ideas, stories, myths, and legends—the words of mere men which might inspire us at times but words that are not themselves inspired by God.*
3. *The Bible is a combination of the two.*

- **The first position** reflects the classic *evangelical* view of the Scriptures—a high view of Scripture.
- **The second position** reflects the classic *liberal* view of the Bible—a low view of Scripture.
- **The third position** is a hybrid of the two, and the one that modern evangelicalism is wrestling with more and more today—let’s call it a *compromised* view of Scripture.

Now, we could easily spend several weeks looking at each of these positions—but it’s not my intention to do a ‘deep-dive’ on this subject.

Let me just say that the *liberal* view will keep a person from God. The *compromised* view might lead a person to Christ but will never allow them to grow in Christ—it will stunt their spiritual development.

Only the classic *evangelical* position (a high view of Scripture) will allow a person to come to know Jesus, to grow in their faith and experience the victory, the fruitfulness and blessings that God desires to give them as a child of God.

It really troubles me that the number of people who claim to be born-again Christians, who come to church, hear the Word of God taught week after week but then make important decisions based on their *feelings* and not on what God has said in His Word.

Romans 3:1–2 (NKJV)

¹ **What advantage then has the Jew [or Christian], or what is the profit of circumcision [or water baptism]? ² Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.**

But the Jews back then and Christians today will only benefit from the Bible if they receive it as it is in truth—the inspired, living and powerful Word of God!

Why should we value the Word of God?—we should value it because of 4 primary reasons:

1. It is a Timeless Book

Psalm 119:89 (NKJV)

⁸⁹ Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.

Psalm 119:152 (NKJV)

¹⁵² Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever.

Psalm 119:160 (NKJV)

¹⁶⁰ The entirety of Your word *is* truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments *endures* forever.

Other books come and go—but the Word of God lasts forever:

Voltaire the famous French atheist who died in 1778 made an infamous prediction—he predicted that within 100 years of his death the Bible would disappear from the Earth.

Ironically, 50 years after his death the Geneva Bible Society bought his house and used his own printing press to produce thousands of Bibles for distribution—

1 Peter 1:24-25 (NKJV)

²⁴ ...*"All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away,* ²⁵ *But the word of the LORD endures forever..."*

H.L.Hastings—

"Infidels for eighteen hundred years have been refuting and overthrowing this Book and yet it stands today as solid as a rock. It's circulation increases and it is more loved and cherished and read today than ever before. Infidels with all their assaults make about as much impression on this book as a man with a tack hammer would on the Pyramids of Egypt. When the French monarch proposed the persecution of the Christians in his domain, an old statesman and warrior said to him, 'Sire, the Church of God is an anvil that has worn out many hammers.' So the hammers of infidels have been pecking away at this Book for ages, but the hammers are worn out and the anvil still endures. If this Book had not been the Book of God, men would have destroyed it long ago. Emperors and popes, kings and priests, princes and rulers have all tried their hand at it; they die and the Book still lives."

We should value God's Word because:

2. It is a Truthful Book

Psalm 119:142 (NKJV)

¹⁴² Your righteousness *is* an everlasting righteousness, And Your law *is* truth.

Psalm 119:151 (NKJV)

¹⁵¹ You *are* near, O LORD, And all Your commandments *are* truth.

Psalm 119:160 (NKJV)

¹⁶⁰ The entirety of Your word *is* truth...

John 17:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

Today the Word of God has come under attack like never before—from both inside and outside the church.

Many are attacking it through a direct frontal assault by simply denying it is actually the Word of God.

They say it's a collection of man-made myths, allegories, and moral principles all brought together under a single cover which we can learn from but not to be taken as inerrant, divine truth.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

We should also value the Bible because:

3. It is a Transforming Book

One of the most dramatic examples of the Bible's divine ability to transform lives involved the famous Mutiny on the Bounty:

"Most of us have heard the story of the Mutiny on the Bounty, but few of us have heard how the Bible played a very vital part in that historical event.

The Bounty was a British ship which set sail from England in 1787, bound for the South Seas. The idea was that those on board would spend some time among the islands, transplanting fruit-bearing and food-bearing trees, and doing other things to make some of the islands more habitable.

After ten months of voyage, the Bounty arrived safely at the island of Tahiti, and for six months the officers and the crew gave themselves to the duties placed upon them by their government.

When the special task was completed, however, and the order came to embark again, the sailors rebelled. They had formed strong attachments for the native girls, and the climate and the ease of the South Sea island life was much to their liking. The result was mutiny on the Bounty, and the sailors placed Captain Bligh and a few loyal men adrift in an open boat. Captain Bligh, in an almost miraculous fashion, survived the ordeal, was rescued, and eventually arrived home in London to tell his story. An expedition was launched to punish the mutineers, and in due time fourteen of them were captured and paid the penalty under British law.

But nine of the men had gone to another distant island called Pitcairn Island. There they formed a colony. Perhaps there has never been a more degraded and debauched social life than that of that colony. They learned to distill whiskey from a native plant, and the whiskey, as usual, along with other habits, led to their ruin.

Disease and murder took the lives of all the native men and all but one of the white men named Alexander Smith. He found himself the only man on an island, surrounded by a crowd of women and half-breed children. Alexander Smith found a Bible among the possessions of a dead sailor.

The Book was new to him. He had never read it before. He sat down and read it through. He believed it and he began to appropriate it. He wanted others to share in the benefits of this book, so he taught classes to the women and the children, as he read to them and taught them the Scriptures.

In 1808, 20 years after the mutiny on the Bounty, a ship from Boston discovered the community on Pitcairn Island. When the captain of the ship returned to America, he took news of the only mutineer to survive and of what he called, "The most perfect Christian society that he had ever seen."

A miniature Utopia was discovered. The people were living in decency, prosperity, harmony, and peace. There was nothing of crime, disease, immorality, insanity, or illiteracy. How was it accomplished? By the reading, the believing, and the appropriating of the truth of God!"

The Bible has power to transform lives if it is read and applied.

So, the Word of God should be valued because:

1. **It is a Timeless Book**
2. **It is a Truthful Book**
3. **It is a Transforming Book**

And so therefore—

4. **It is a Treasured Book**

Psalm 119:162 (NKJV)

¹⁶² I rejoice at Your word As one who finds great treasure.

Psalm 119:127 (NKJV)

¹²⁷ Therefore I love Your commandments more than gold, yes, than fine gold!

Romans 11:33 (NKJV)

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* His judgments and His ways past finding out!

The Word of God is *valuable*—but it will only benefit you if you *treasure* it; and it will only make your life rich if you *obey* it.

Vance Havner—

“I have read that years ago in that part of Africa where diamonds in the rough were plentiful, a traveler chanced on boys playing. Closer investigation revealed that they were playing marbles with diamonds!—God forgive us today that we handle His treasures as though they were trifles and the coinage of the eternal as though it were play money. It is no time to play marbles with diamonds!”

Let me end with a true story that comes from the life of Robert Dick Wilson—a man who truly treasured God’s Word.

“Robert Wilson was born in 1856—he graduated from Princeton University at the age of twenty and went on to earn a Ph.D.

He then did further post-graduate work in Germany for two years where he was exposed to the School of Higher Criticism. (Explain)

One day after a class where the Bible, and in particular the Old Testament, had been ridiculed as untrustworthy young Wilson, who was 25 years old at that time, knelt by his bed and prayed,

“Lord if You will give me another 45 years, I will devote the first 15 years to learning every language the Bible was written in. I will spend the next 15 years studying the O.T. itself, and the last 15 years I will spend presenting my findings for the truthfulness of Your Word”.

God answered Robert’s prayer and gave him another forty-nine years—during which he mastered forty-five languages!

He not only became an expert in Hebrew, and its kindred tongues—but he learned all the languages into which the Scriptures had been translated down to the year A.D. 600.

While he was still in college, he could read the N.T. in nine languages.

He had memorized the entire New Testament in Hebrew, along with portions of the Old Testament, and it is said that he could recite the New Testament in Hebrew from memory without missing so much as a syllable!

He studied the text of the O.T. looking at every consonant (the Hebrew O.T. has no vowels)—about 250 thousand of them.

He made a thorough scientific investigation of the Old Testament text, as compared to other writings of antiquity.

Dr. Wilson then spent his remaining years writing down and teaching the results of his long research.

He became the leading professor at Princeton Theological Seminary where he spent many years defending the Bible against all comers, as well as turning out students that had a strong foundation for their faith—who trusted and treasured the Word of God!

The story is told that at the end of one of his classes a student raised his hand and asked the old scholar, “*Dr. Wilson, what is the greatest truth you have ever learned in all your studies of the Bible?*”

With tears streaming down his face he said, “*The greatest truth I have ever learned is this—that Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so!*”

That is the greatest truth in the treasure trove of God’s Word—that God loves you!

You don’t have to be a brilliant theologian to understand that!

Read the Bible as God’s ‘love letter’ to you—and let the love of God for you be the core principle in your relationship with Him.

And then as you fall in love with Him more and more—take His love out to those you come in contact with in the lost and dying world around you!

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Want to know more? Click [here](#).

Reach out to us [here](#).