

Review: *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

NOTE: As today's lesson begins, "Paul continues his diatribe with an imaginary debate partner who speaks on the part of traditional Judaism. Paul has been building to verses 9-20 since 1:18. It is the rhetorical finale of the first part of Romans, which has sought to demonstrate that rebellion against God is the common fault of all humanity. Despite their advantages, the Jews are trapped in the same predicament as the rest of the fallen world. They are as much in need of a savior as everyone else." *Hahn and Mitch*

DAY ONE

Read Romans 3:9-14

1. In Romans 3:2 Paul said that the Jews had the advantage of possessing the "oracles" (prophecies or revelations) of God. As today's lesson begins, in verse 9 he says that the Jews are no better off than anyone else. According to the end of verse 9, why does he claim this is so?

2. Next Paul refers to verses from various scripture passages, among them, the citations listed below. Select one to record and comment on how it supports Paul's message:

Psalm 14:1-3

Psalm 53:1-3

Isaiah 59:7-8

3. Paul continues to support his position that no one is "righteous". In verses 10-12 what five things does Paul indicate about all people when quoting from the Psalms?

4. In verses 13-14 Paul is making the point that sin has spread throughout the body of mankind, but also throughout the body of man. In your own words, identify the sins he could be describing

5. For what reason(s) do you think Paul cited so many Old Testament verses in this section?

THINK: As our Commentary says, “The Law of Moses should have helped the Jews avoid sin, but since no one could keep the law, it only makes them more aware of how far they were from God,” thus the question the Jews again ask, “Are we any better off?” and Paul says, “No, not at all.” Be sure to read Msgr. Mikesch’s Commentary regarding the two words which will help us understand the distinction Paul is making between “opportunity” and “judgment.”

6. CONNECTION: Today’s lesson stresses that all people are subject to sin and builds Paul’s case toward the need for salvation. Paul is reminding the Jews that, “With great privilege comes great responsibility.” Do you ever think of your faith as a privilege? If so, can you apply this thought to your privilege and responsibilities as a Christian? Record some thoughts to share with your group.

Read Luke 12:48. Let these thoughts lead you to write a prayer of gratitude for and recommitment to your faith.

DAY TWO

Read Romans 3:15-18

7. In verses 15-18 Paul continues quoting Old Testament verses to point out to his fellow Jews their lack of righteousness. Verse 15 says, “Their feet are swift to shed blood.” What do you think the psalmist and Paul meant by this?

NOTE: Paul’s linkage of six or seven quotations from the Old Testament is referred to as a Scriptural *catena* (Latin for “chain”).

8. From verses 16 and 17, what will those who follow the path of “bloodshed” encounter?

9. Verse 17 speaks of the sinner who has never known peace. In your own words, describe how sin affects our peace.

10a. In verse 18 Paul sums up the reason for all the sins of man. What is it?

b. Where do you see an example of this in today’s society?

11. As we have studied, fear of the Lord most often does not refer to fright or dread of God, but to awe and respect for God. Choose and record one of the following verses regarding the fear of God.

Deuteronomy 6:24

Proverbs 9:10

Luke 1:50

12. CONNECTION: In this passage of Romans, the people who are causing harm to others do not have “the fear of God before their eyes.” God loves us and desires what’s best for us. Our best comes when we obey God’s commands and respect God’s laws. When we fail to keep God “before our eyes” we choose a way that veers from peace and may cause problems for ourselves and others. In addition to prayer, what other actions can you take to keep your eyes on God and walk in the way of peace?

Read and record Psalms 119:18. Let thoughts of the peace that comes from keeping your eyes focused on God lead you into prayer.

DAY THREE

Read Romans 3:19-20

NOTE: In today’s study Paul speaks of the law, and while none of the citations that he included in the first verses were from the Torah (the five books of Moses, or the Pentateuch); thus, by “law” he is referring in a broad sense to Israel’s scriptures. *Hahn*

13. In verse 19, to whom does the law speak, and to what group do you think Paul is referring?

14. According to verse 19 what are the purposes of the law?

15. For what reason does Msgr. Mikesch, in our Commentary, indicate that the Jews are subject to the law?

16. Paul says that “every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God”. What do you think Paul is saying by describing being unable to speak before the judgment of God?

17. Although the law does not give us salvation, it does fulfill a very important purpose. Use your own words to state the purpose of the law given in the last part of verse 20.

THINK: Verse 20 has been understood in different ways by ancient and modern scholars. Life within the framework of the Mosaic law (also life within the framework of conscience) does not lead to righteousness, for the simple reason that the law prescribes what is right without empowering people to do it. Lacking the power, we do not consistently obey God. *Perrotta* Paul is building a great case for God's justice and mercy!

18. CONNECTION: Jesus gave us the power to overcome sin by teaching us to obey God's will. The gift of the Holy Spirit is available to believers to help us follow the Lord's way. In John 14:15-16 we are told, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever." In what way has the Holy Spirit revealed some truth to you that has illuminated some part of your life or helped you to avoid sin?

We often think of saying an Act of Contrition only after the Sacrament of Penance, but it can be a wonderful prayer in the evening when we review our day. Take a few moments today to examine your conscience and pray for forgiveness.

DAY FOUR
Read Romans 3:21-23

19. With today's study we see that Paul is setting a new tone. Even the words "But now," Msgr. Mikesch tells us, indicate a major transition is about to take place. According to verse 21, the darkness and gloom of the wrath of God that was feared by those under the law is replaced. What is now disclosed instead?

20. Paul says that the new covenant between God and humanity does not depend upon the old. How would you explain the relationship or connection Paul makes between God's righteousness under the new covenant and the law and the prophets of the old covenant at the end of verse 21?

21. In Mosaic Law the emphasis was on what humanity could do for God. How would you describe the emphasis of the new relationship?

22. According to verse 22 how do we become recipients of the righteousness of God and who can receive this gift?

23. Record verse 23, in which Paul states a somewhat disturbing truth.

NOTE: In regard to the statement “all have sinned,” not all without exception, but all without distinction (Jews and Gentiles alike). “That there are exceptions is clear: Jesus was sinless, children below the age of reason do not willfully commit sin; and tradition holds that Mary, by the grace of God, lived her entire life unstained by sin.” *Ignatius Study Bible*

24. CONNECTION: In today’s lesson Paul states “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” We may think of ourselves as good people, but we may also conveniently forget that any sin is sin in the eyes of God. As Cardinal Martini said, “Daily circumstances, without our realizing it, lead us to continual stages of slight animosity, bad moods, negative judgments, or irritations that we perhaps hardly pay attention to, and that, little by little, become large knots.” These “knots” are the daily sins that can entangle us. How do you go about untying your “knots” and drawing closer to God?

Read and record Psalm 145:8, and let these thoughts help you untie today’s “knots.”

DAY FIVE

Read Romans 3:24-26

25. The word redemption indicates a ransom price paid for the release of captives. Complete verse 24 which tells us how all are justified and by whom:

they are now justified by

through the redemption

26. Refer to our Commentary and briefly summarize Msgr. Mikesch’s comments regarding how we should understand Jesus’ “sacrifice of atonement by his blood” for us.

NOTE: In the Catechism of the Catholic Church (*CCC 604*) we are told “By giving up his own Son for our sins, God manifests that his plan for us is one of benevolent love.” In Israelite religious thinking, blood equaled life. Jesus, in other words, brought us atonement by giving up his life willingly. *Perrotta* (see also Leviticus 17:11)

27. What does Paul say is the key to our justification and redemption?

28. Explain in your own words how God's righteousness is shown according to the end of verse 25.

29. In verse 26 Paul says that the gift of Jesus accomplishes two things. What are these?

30. CONNECTION: Salvation is a gift. We do nothing to earn it. We don't deserve it. We are saved through faith in the person of Jesus and what he accomplished for us in his death and Resurrection. In Old Testament times, the Jews tried to obey the law because they were afraid of God's punishment. In the New Testament, Jesus died in love to save all of humanity from the consequences of sin so that we could be reconnected to the Father. What can we do as Christians to encourage others to believe in Christ?

"Heavenly Father, thank you for this life. Thank you for our friends and families, our work, our homes, and the Church. Help us to encourage each other and to nurture this community. Grant us the grace to create Holy Moments every day, even when we're tired and overwhelmed and just don't feel like it. Help us become the-best-version-of-ourselves and embrace the joy you made us for. And help us understand and love our faith more and more every day. We ask this all in your name. Amen." *Dynamic Catholic- Matthew Kelly*

DAY SIX

Read Romans 3:27-28

31. In verse 27, Paul returns to a dialogue with the Jewish reader. Paul imagines the reader asking if there is room for boasting. What reason for boasting does Paul exclude?

32. In verse 28 Paul states, for his Christian readers, the basic premises of his gospel message. Record this verse.

33. In chapters 2 and 3 Paul presented a very dark image of humanity's stance before God. After reading verse 28 and the previous verses, what impact might verses 27-28 have had on these early believers?

34. Why do you think both faith and works “prescribed by the law” are important?

NOTE: Faith is a gift of grace that moves us toward God. It leads to justification because it leads to Baptism...Catholic theology holds that faith does not act alone in this process but reaches out with hope for divine mercy and love for the Lord. Faith manifests itself in the lives of believers through obedience, love, and good works. *Ignatius Study Bible*

35. CONNECTION: Paul stresses here the nature of faith as a “gift” from God. That gift of faith leads us to obedience to God’s commandments (works as prescribed by the law). Faith, as Hahn and Mitch say, “is what reaches out to God and accepts the gift of righteousness that is offered in Jesus...something that acts in love and obedience to the gospel. It is exercised when we entrust ourselves to God...and consent to live as God requires.” Consider how the law (principle) of faith leads us to recognize our sins so we can correct our course to live as God wants us to, with faith in Christ and hope in salvation. How might this apply to your life?

Read and record Ephesians 2:8-9 and with thoughts of God’s generosity write a prayer.

Read pages 22-26 in the Commentary by Rev. Msgr. Gregory R. Mikesch, M.Div., M.A. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, Catholic Edition. Copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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