

# Journey Into Living God's Way

## LESSON 6 . . . How To Be Righteous Without Being Religious (Romans 3:1-31)

NOTES

**I**n our last lesson we discussed **the dangers of religion**. Now let's discover **how to be righteous without being religious**. Jesus didn't die on the cross so we could be religious; He died to make us righteous. In this passage, Paul presents **three** truths we must understand if we are **to be righteous without being religious**.

**First, there are consequences for our sins (3:1-8).**

After informing the Jews neither their race nor circumcision would save them (2:27-29), Paul anticipates what the Jews would ask, so he asks the question for them: *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?* (3:1). The Jews are God's chosen people, and if without Christ they are lost sinners, what *advantage* is there in being His chosen people? Paul answers: *Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God* (3:2). The phrase *oracles of God* refers to the Old Testament, which had been *committed* exclusively to the Jews and was an awesome privilege.

Now, Paul asks the ultimate question: *For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?* (3:3). In other words, does God cancel His promises when we are unfaithful to Him? Paul answers that question: *God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar* (3:4a). Even if every Jew were unfaithful, God would be faithful to His promise. In Genesis 18:18, what did God promise Abraham about his descendants?

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Because God's promise was through Abraham's seed, circumcision was the symbol and reminder of the covenant. The Jews turned their backs on God and on His only Son, who was the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. Even though God's chosen people were unfaithful, did God still keep His promise? Yes! God has blessed the world through Jesus Christ, the seed or descendant of Abraham. God's promises to us are not based on our performance. How does 2 Timothy 2:13a verify this fact?

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Next, Paul quotes part of David's prayer of confession after his sin with

Bathsheba in Psalm 51:4: *as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged* (3:4b). In other words, David is proof God remains faithful to His promises no matter how horribly we may sin. In fact, God's righteousness and faithfulness can be seen even more clearly when we sin.

Forgiveness is a good thing because it brings out God's faithfulness, so if God always forgives, Paul offers the logical conclusion: *Let us do evil, that good may come?* (3:8b). Why not just sin and then ask God for forgiveness? Because even though we can be forgiven of our sin, we still must live with the consequences. All sin leaves scars. How does David express the consequence of his sin in Psalm 51:3b?

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That means David would live with the memories of his sin for the rest of his life. If we confess our sin to God, He will always forgive us, but sin always leaves scars. I know many people who have been forgiven of past sins with alcohol, drugs, and sex, but are now living with the consequences and memories of their sin.

**To be righteous without being religious, we must first understand there are consequences for our sins.**

### **Second, everyone sins (3:9-20).**

The Jews felt spiritually safe since they were the descendants of Abraham. However, Paul shocks them when he writes: *both Jews and Gentiles . . . are all under sin* (3:9). The Jews were very religious and went to services every Saturday, kept the Law, and even tithed. To prove his point, Paul quotes from several Old Testament scriptures: *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one* (3:10, Psa. 14:3)). This means no amount of religion can make us *righteous* or right with God. Then Paul quotes, there is *none that seeketh after God* (3:11b). Many people who go to worship services every Sunday are not seeking God. They seek the things God offers—forgiveness, peace, joy, and to feel good about themselves—but they don't want to live God's way.

Many people today want to hear how God can make them financially rich through faith. As a result, much preaching today is nothing more than spiritualizing greed, and it attracts people who only want what God can do for them. Others seek a cure for their physical ailments, while still others seek something sensational. However, they are **not** seeking God. What did Jesus, who was God in flesh and blood, say in Luke 9:23?



People don't want to *deny* themselves; they want the self-centered gospel so prevalent in our culture. They want a gospel of getting, not giving.

Paul describes the behavior of sinners by quoting more of the Old Testament in Romans 3:12-18. He writes some *used deceit*, some are *full of cursing and bitterness*, others *are swift to shed blood*, and others have *no fear of God*. This means we sin in different ways and to different degrees. If sin were the color purple, we would all be different shades of purple. Some are worse sinners than others, so they would be a dark shade of purple, but all of us are sinners of various shades of purple.

Paul summarizes this passage: *Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law (the Jews): that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God (3:19)*. This means *all the world*, including the Jews, has been brought *before God* and found *guilty*; all are sinners. Paul continues: *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight (3:20a)*. The reason is simple: no one can observe the Law perfectly in every detail every day. Therefore, what is the result, according to James 2:10?

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In any country, if you break just one law, you are a criminal. Even though you obey every other law, you are still a law-breaker. It is the same with God's Law.

Paul continues: *for by the law is the knowledge of sin (3:20b)*. Some people think of the Law as a ladder to climb to heaven, but it's not. The Law is like a mirror to look in, so we can see ourselves as God sees us—sinners in need of a Savior. God's Law makes us conscious, or aware, of our sin so we can know we are sinners in need of a Savior. How does Galatians 3:24 express this truth?

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**To be righteous without being religious, we must understand there are consequences for our sins, everyone sins, and . . .**

### **Third, Jesus paid for all our sins (3:21-31).**

Up to this point Paul has been writing about the bad news. Now, Paul gives us the good news: *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all*

*them that believe* (3:21-22). We receive forgiveness of all our sins and are made righteous in God's sight through *faith* in Jesus Christ. The word translated *faith* (PISTIS, pis-tis) basically means to believe something to the degree it changes your life. So, this passage means you must believe in Jesus to the degree you commit your life to Him and live God's way. How does 2 Corinthians 5:17 explain this?

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Paul sums up what he has been saying: *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God* (3:23). The best person, no matter how hard he or she tries, will still *come short of the glory of God*. Some *come* closer than others, but all will *come short*.

For example, let's say my associate pastor Jeff McLemore and I go to the Grand Canyon where it is eight miles across, and I say to Jeff, "Let's see if we can jump across to the other side." So, I say to Jeff, "You go first." Jeff looks at how far he has to jump and then takes the best running position. He runs and makes a great jump at 22 feet and 8 inches and then one mile straight down.

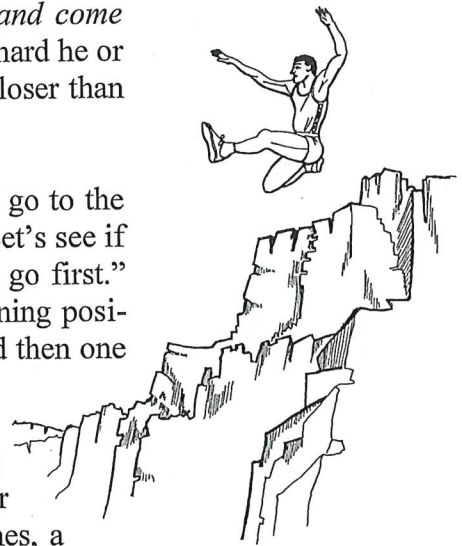
Now it's my turn. My humility almost prohibits me from telling you, but I was a great athlete in high school. I could jump higher than anyone in school. So, I run and jump 33 feet and 10 inches, a new world-record long jump (record is 29' 4.4"), and then one mile straight down. You see, it doesn't make any difference how far you can jump; you can't jump across the Grand Canyon. One may fall a long way short, and another not quite as short, but no one can jump it.

The same is true of falling *short of the glory of God*. Someone may say, "I'm as good as any person who goes to your church." That may be true, but God doesn't grade "on the curve"; He demands 100% righteousness. According to 2 Corinthians 5:21 how is this possible?

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Paul continues with one of the most important verses in the Bible: *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus* (3:24). Underline the words *justified* and *redemption*. The word *justified* means "to render or make righteous." This means God makes us righteous when we trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. The word translated *redemption* means "a ransom paid in full." Verse 25 tells us the *redemption* price was the *blood* of Jesus Christ.





Why does it take the *blood* of Jesus for God to make us righteous? Paul explains: *To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus* (3:26). This means God is *just* in that He did not just overlook our sin; He imposed the demands of the Law on His own Son instead of on you and me. What does the last sentence of Ezekiel 18:4 say about those who sin?

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This refers to spiritual death. Jesus died on the cross so we won't have to die for our sins. Because of the way we are made righteous, the Bible says: *Where is boasting then? It is excluded. . . . Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law* (Rom. 3:27-28). We can't boast because we are saved by God's grace and Christ's death, not because of anything we do.

In verses 29-30 Paul points out there is only *one God* of Jews and Gentiles, and all are made righteous the same way, through *faith* in Christ. There is no race, no religion, no church, or no denomination that will get us into heaven. Everyone who goes to heaven will be there solely because they are *justified by faith*.



Paul concludes: *Do we then make void the law through faith?* (3:31a). Does Christ's death on the cross wipe out *the law*? Paul answers: *God forbid: yea, we establish the law* (3:31b). Jesus and His death on the cross fulfilled the purpose of the Law. That's why Jesus said He did not *come to destroy the law, or the prophets* (Mt 5:17a). Then, what did He say in Matthew 5:17b?

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Christ didn't come to rescind the Law but to fulfill its demands for a sacrifice for our sins so we could be made righteous in God's sight. **To be righteous without being religious**, we must understand: **there are consequences for our sins, everyone sins, and Jesus paid for all our sins**. How would you sum up in one sentence what it means for you **to be righteous without being religious**?

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