ROMANS 3

Every Mouth Closed, Then — But Now

God true, all guilty, and a righteousness given as a gift

> *"for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."*
> ROMANS 3:26

A SMITH FOR CHRIST STUDY · FOUR VOICES: GUZIK · SPROUL · SPURGEON · HENRY

Where Paul has brought us

1. Romans 3 closes the longest indictment in the Bible and opens its brightest verdict.

2. Paul answers in the style of a debate — the diatribe, where a teacher voices his opponent's objection and then answers it.

3. Then he calls witnesses. Verses 10–18 are a catena — a chain of Old Testament texts linked end to end — drawn from Psalms 14, 53, 5, 140, 10 and 36 and from Isaiah 59.



Let God Be Found True

Four objections answered — Israel's advantage, God's faithfulness, God's justice, and the slander against grace

ROMANS 3:4

May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, "THAT YOU MAY BE JUSTIFIED IN YOUR WORDS, AND PREVAIL WHEN YOU ARE JUDGED."

DAVID GUZIK

Israel were God's library-keepers; grace twisted into license is slander, justly condemned

R.C. SPROUL

No greater advantage than earshot of the Word; God is wrathful because He is righteous

C.H. SPURGEON

The gospel is no failure; truth is not settled by the vote of the whole race

MATTHEW HENRY

The Jews had the means of salvation, not the monopoly; sin is no better for God's using it

τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ

TA LOGIA TOU THEOU · "THE ORACLES OF GOD"

Logion is a divine utterance — not merely "words" but sayings that come from God's own mouth.

Every Mouth Closed

Jew and Greek all under sin — the Psalms and Isaiah called as witnesses, and the Law that only convicts

ROMANS 3:19

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

DAVID GUZIK

An X-ray from head to foot; the Law is the straight-edge showing how crooked we are

R.C. SPROUL

None seeks Christ until found by Him; the scariest charge is no fear of God

C.H. SPURGEON

The Law is a looking glass — it shows the spots but cannot wash them

MATTHEW HENRY

Habitual and actual sin alike; no fear of God is the root of all

ἠχρεώθησαν

ĒCHREŌTHĒSAN · "THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS"

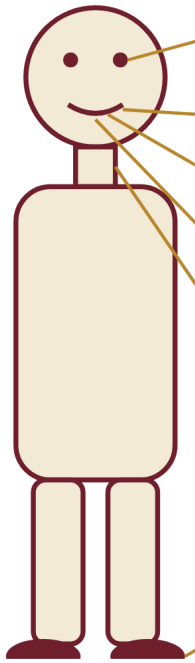
Achreioō appears only here in the New Testament — to make useless, unserviceable, spoiled.

The X-ray from head to foot (3:10–18)

VV. 10–12 · WHO WE ARE — Psalm 14:1–3 · 53:1–3 · cf. Ecclesiastes 7:20

None righteous · none understands · none seeks God · all turned aside · none does good

HEAD TO FOOT



EYES v. 18	"No fear of God before their eyes" — Psalm 36:1 · the root of all the rest
MOUTH v. 14	"Full of cursing and bitterness" — Psalm 10:7
LIPS v. 13	"The poison of asps is under their lips" — Psalm 140:3
TONGUE v. 13	"With their tongues they keep deceiving" — Psalm 5:9
THROAT v. 13	"Their throat is an open grave" — Psalm 5:9
FEET vv. 15–17	"Their feet are swift to shed blood" — Isaiah 59:7–8 · cf. Proverbs 1:16 · no path of peace

Paul's chain of texts first names what we are (vv. 10–12), then walks down the body — eyes, mouth, lips, tongue, throat, feet — and every witness he calls is from Israel's own Psalms and prophets.

But Now: The Righteousness of God

A righteousness given, not earned — justified as a gift, redeemed at a price, covered at the mercy seat

ROMANS 3:22

even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

DAVID GUZIK

The glorious transition; court, slave market, mercy seat — only God can be just and justifier

R.C. SPROUL

Justification is a legal declaration on an alien righteousness; keep propitiation and expiation

C.H. SPURGEON

Freely because Christ paid to the last farthing; justice satisfied cannot ask twice

MATTHEW HENRY

Faith is the hyssop, Christ's blood the sprinkling; the surety has paid the debt

δικαιούμενοι δωρεάν

DIKAIOUMENOI DŌREAN · "JUSTIFIED AS A GIFT"

Dikaioō is a courtroom verb — to declare righteous, to acquit — not to make someone righteous by slow improvement.

Three pictures of one salvation (3:24–25)

JUSTIFIED v. 24



The courtroom

dikaioō · G1344

The Judge declares
the guilty righteous

ANSWERS GUILT

"accountable to God" · 3:19

REDEMPTION v. 24



THE CHAIN BROKEN

The slave market

apolytrōsis · G629

A ransom paid,
the captive set free

ANSWERS BONDAGE

"all under sin" · 3:9

PROPITIATION v. 25



The mercy seat

hilastērion · G2435

Wrath satisfied by blood
sprinkled on the lid

ANSWERS WRATH

"the wrath of God" · 1:18

Paul puts the courtroom, the slave market and the tabernacle side by side: each picture answers a different part of the sinner's plight — guilt, bondage and wrath.

Boasting Excluded, the Law Established

Faith shuts the mouth of pride, makes one people of Jew and Gentile, and honors the Law it cannot break

ROMANS 3:27

Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.

DAVID GUZIK

Grace gives pride no place; with works barred out, faith alone is left

R.C. SPROUL

Faith alone, against faith-plus-merit; faith links you to Christ, and the Law drives you to Him

C.H. SPURGEON

No room for boasting when all is grace; the gospel vindicates the Law

MATTHEW HENRY

Faith is self-emptying and casts every crown before the throne; the Law put to its right use

ἡ καύχησις; ἐξεκλείσθη

HĒ KAUCHĒSIS; EXEKLEISTHĒ · "BOASTING? IT IS EXCLUDED"

Two words in Greek: "Where then the boasting? Shut out."

What to carry from this chapter

1

The Word is the first advantage.

Paul's answer to "what good is it to be a Jew?"

2

Unbelief cannot cancel God.

Israel's unbelief did not nullify God's faithfulness (v. 3).

3

Grace has always been slandered.

If anyone ever accuses you of preaching grace so freely that people will sin more, you are in Paul's company (v. 8).

4

The catena is Israel's own Scripture.

Every line of 3:10–18 is from the Psalms or Isaiah — and v. 19 reads it over "those who are under the Law."

More to carry

5

The root of sin is a missing fear.

Paul ends the head-to-foot X-ray at the eyes: “no fear of God” (v. 18).

6

The Law is a mirror, not a washbasin.

It shows the spots but cannot remove them (v. 20).

7

“But now” is the hinge of the letter.

Two words turn the courtroom from condemnation to acquittal (v. 21); the same “righteousness of God” that condemned is now given.

8

Justified means declared, not improved.

Dikaioō is a verdict. Sproul: an alien righteousness, Christ’s, credited to the one who believes — faith the instrument, not the merit.

Talk it through

1. Paul says the chief advantage of the Jew was the Word of God (v. 2). What advantages have you had with the Word, and what have you done with them?

2. Read the catena aloud (vv. 10–18). Which body part on the X-ray do you recognize in your own life before Christ — or this week?

3. Why does Paul aim the Psalms at "those who are under the Law" (v. 19) — the religious people? Where do church people most often exempt themselves?

4. Justified, redeemed, propitiated (vv. 24–25). Which of the three pictures speaks most to where you have been — guilt, bondage or wrath?

5. How can God be both "just and the justifier" (v. 26)? Explain it in a sentence you could say to a man who thinks he is too far gone.

CLOSING

Romans 3 leaves no man standing on his own feet — not the pagan, not the moral man, not the religious man — and then lifts every man who believes by a righteousness he did not earn. The mouth that was closed in guilt opens again, not to boast, but to say, "Christ is my righteousness."

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

Full Deep Dive, O·I·A study, reflection journal and film: see the Romans study page.