Now, people must try to be good and keep God's law, not because they fear God's punishment, but because they feel that they must strive to deserve that amazing love. They strive for goodness, not because they are afraid of God, but because they love Him. They know now that sin is not so much breaking God's law as it is breaking God's heart, and, therefore, it is doubly terrible.

William Barclay

ROMANS CHAPTER THREE

Prayer Study #443

First Love Ministries, Inc. of Perry, Georgia USA

3 *Then what advantage remains to the Jew? [How is he favored?] Or what is the value or benefit of circumcision?*
2 *Much in every way. To begin with, to the Jews were entrusted the oracles (the brief communications, the intentions, the utterances) of God.*
3 *What if some did not believe and were without faith? Does their lack of faith and their faithlessness nullify and make ineffective and void the faithfulness of God and His fidelity [to His Word]?*
4 *By no means! Let God be found true though every human being is false and a liar, as it is written, That You may be justified and shown to be upright in what You say, and prevail when You are judged [by sinful men].*
5 *But if our unrighteousness thus establishes and exhibits the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unjust and wrong to inflict His wrath upon us [Jews]? I speak in a [purely] human way.*
6 *By no means! Otherwise, how could God judge the world?*
7 *But [you say] if through my falsehood God's integrity is magnified and advertised and abounds to His glory, why am I still being judged as a sinner?*
8 *And why should we not do evil that good may come? — as some slanderously charge us with teaching. Such [false teaching] is justly condemned by them.*

The advantages the Jews had are they had the Word of God. The value of circumcision was that it was the sign and seal of the Abrahamic covenant, putting the Jews in covenant relationship with God. Paul believed that the Jews were in a special position in relation to God. The Jews also believed this. The difference between Paul and the other Jews, however, is Paul believed that their special position was one of special responsibility, not special privilege. For Paul, this meant that the Jews were to live a special life of obedience to God's Word, a life of faith, not based on external obedience to the law. Paul emphasizes that the unbelief of the Jews or even all mankind does not change the faithfulness or the truth of God. He refutes their argument that the more they sinned, the more God showed His grace so they should sin more to see more of God's grace. They were saying that the more they sinned brought more glory to God or "let us

do evil that the goodness of God may come." These were all false accusations against the message that Paul was preaching. Once people sin, they try to justify their sin instead of responding in humility and confession and repentance.

9 *Well then, are we [Jews] superior and better off than they? No, not at all. We have already charged that all men, both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles), are under sin [held down by and subject to its power and control].*
10 *As it is written, None is righteous, just, and truthful and upright and conscientious, no, not one.*
11 *No one understands [no one intelligently discerns or comprehends]; no one seeks out God.*
12 *All have turned aside; together they have gone wrong and have become unprofitable and worthless; no one does right, not even one!*
13 *Their throat is a yawning grave; they use their tongues to deceive (to mislead and to deal treacherously). The venom of asps is beneath their lips.*
14 *Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.*
15 *Their feet are swift to shed blood.*
16 *Destruction [as it dashes them to pieces] and misery mark their ways.*
17 *And they have no experience of the way of peace [they know nothing about peace, for a peaceful way they do not even recognize].*
18 *There is no [reverential] fear of God before their eyes.*

Jews and Gentiles alike, as long as they have not received Christ, are under the dominion of sin. Without Christ men and women are under the control of sin and helpless to escape it. Not one person is righteous. As Isaiah wrote, in Isaiah 64:4a, *"But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags…"*

In Verses 10-18, Paul is doing what Jewish Rabbis regularly did. He is stringing together a collection of Old Testament verses (Psalm 14:1-3, Psalm 5:9, Psalm 140:3, Psalm 10:7, Isaiah 59:7-8, and Psalm 36:1). It was called a *charaz,* which literally means *stringing pearls.* Paul is addressing three things in these verses: character which is indifferent and crooked; a tongue which is destructive and deceitful; and a conduct, which is oppressive and unsatisfied. Paul never underrates the destruction of human sin, but he also never underrates the power of Jesus Christ. No one is too bad to be saved.

19 *Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that [the murmurs and excuses of] every mouth may be hushed, and all the world may be held accountable to God.*
20 *For no person will be justified (made righteous, acquitted, and judged acceptable) in His sight by observing the works prescribed by the Law. For [the real function of] the*

Law is to make men recognize and be conscious of sin [not mere perception, but an acquaintance with sin which works toward repentance, faith, and holy character].
21 *But now the righteousness of God has been revealed independently and altogether apart from the Law, although actually it is attested by the Law and the Prophets,*
22 *Namely, the righteousness of God which comes by believing with personal trust and confident reliance on Jesus Christ (the Messiah). [And it is meant] for all who believe. For there is no distinction,*
23 *Since all have sinned and are falling short of the honor and glory, which God bestows and receives.*
24 *[All] are justified and made upright and in right standing with God, freely and gratuitously by His grace (His unmerited favor and mercy), through the redemption which is [provided] in Christ Jesus,*
25 *Whom God put forward [before the eyes of all] as a mercy seat and propitiation by His blood [the cleansing and life-giving sacrifice of atonement and reconciliation, to be received] through faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over and ignored former sins without punishment.*
26 *It was to demonstrate and prove at the present time (in the now season) that He Himself is righteous and that He justifies and accepts as righteous him who has [true] faith in Jesus.*
27 *Then what became of [our]pride and [our] boasting? It is excluded (banished, ruled put entirely). On what principle? [On the principle] of doing good deeds? No, but on the principle of faith.*
28 *For we hold that a man is justified and made upright by faith independent of and distinctly apart from good deeds (works of the Law). [The observance of the Law has nothing to do with justification.]*

The purpose of the law is to show our sinfulness. No one could truly keep all of the law. Yet the Jews believed that they could come into right relationship with God by meticulously keeping the law. The way to God is not through the law or works but through grace and faith. We are totally guilty before God, but God in His amazing love and mercy provided a way of escape: *the blood of Jesus Christ.* Thus, the ungodly can become made innocent and justified by the blood of the Lamb. God justifies believers, making them just as if they had never sinned, through the blood. This was a new doctrine that was abhorrent to the Jews. They believed to treat bad people as if they were good was the sign of a wicked judge (Proverbs 17:15).

Barclay says this about justification: "[Jesus] came to tell us that God loves us, bad as we are. He came to tell us that, although we are sinners, we are still dear to God. When we discover that and believe it, it changes our whole relationship to God. We are conscious of our sin, but we are no longer in terror and no longer estranged. Penitent and broken-hearted we come to God, like sorry children coming to their father and mother,

and we know that the God we come to is love."

Under the Jewish system, when someone sinned and thus was in wrong relationship with God, a sacrifice had to offered for that person to get back in right relationship. People, however, knew in their hearts that an earthly sacrifice could not make things right, and the Old Testament has several scriptures dealing with this thought, such as Psalm 51:16: *For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt-offering, you would not be pleased.* Paul tells the Jews that God ransomed, redeemed, and liberated us from sin by accepting the sacrificial blood of Jesus alone.

Again, I quote Barclay, to close out this section: "Paul is insisting that nothing we can ever do can win for us the forgiveness of God; only what God has done for us can win that; therefore the way to a right relationship with God lies not in a frenzied, desperate, doomed attempt to win acquittal by our own performance; It lies in the humble, penitent acceptance of the love and the grace which God offers us in Jesus Christ."

29 *Or is God merely [the God] of Jews? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,*
30 *Since it is one and the same God Who will justify the circumcised by faith [which germinated from Abraham] and the uncircumcised through their [newly acquired] faith. [For it is the same trusting faith in both cases, a firmly relying faith in Jesus Christ].*
31 *Do we then by [this] faith make the Law of no effect, overthrow it or make it a dead letter? Certainly not! On the contrary, we confirm and establish and uphold the Law.*

Every Jewish synagogue service begins with Deuteronomy 6:4: "*Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord."* Since there is one Lord, there is not one God for the Jews and one for the Gentiles. The way to Him is thus the same for everyone, and it is not by keeping the law but by accepting Christ, by faith. Before the atoning death of Jesus on the cross, people were justified by faith. Now they are justified by faith in the blood of Christ. Now people strive to keep the commandments not because of the fear of punishment but because of their love for God.