



Lesson 5 ~ Now for the Good News . . .

Romans 3:9-31

Discussion Starter

- If you had a message of good news for someone, how would you deliver it?

Introduction

What makes a story a *good* story? Is it not some unexpected ending that comes in the nick of time, with not a moment to spare? Someone arrives, some hidden information is found out, or some unexpected event suddenly changes everything, right when you thought you knew how the story would end!

In **Romans 3:9-20**, Paul concludes his charges against humanity - that we are all sinners, guilty and condemned before God and deserving of death. There seems to be no doubt how this story should end!

But then, at the last moment, when we feel hopeless and helpless, there is a sudden turn in the story. The words, "*But now* God has shown us a different way of being right in his sight," are like the arrival of *really good news* when all you have had for so long was really bad news. These words change everything as hope begins to build in our hearts. Maybe the story will have a happy ending after all!

Preparation

1. Before you read **Romans 3:9-31**, ask God to open your eyes so that you may see wonderful truths in his Word (**Psalm 119:18**). You may want to make the following prayer your own:

Triune God - Father, Son and Spirit,

I admit that I cannot understand the truth found in God's Word with only my mind.

I agree that spiritual truth has to be understood with my heart as well as my head.

So I ask You to give me spiritual understanding as I do this lesson.

*I pray that You would enable me to see, hear and understand,
with my spirit, all that You want to teach me.*

I ask this in the powerful name of Father, Son and Spirit.

Amen

2. Read **Romans 3:9-31** slowly and thoughtfully. As you read and reread, *underline or highlight* any verses, phrases or words that are meaningful to you. Put a *question mark* beside anything you don't understand. Put a ✓ beside anything you would like more information about.

You may also want to read the Scripture in another translation. The Scripture handouts for these lessons contain the *New International Version (NIV)* and the *New Living Translation (NLT)*. The questions are phrased to be answered from **either** of these versions. Other translations and paraphrases should only be used as supplementary texts to help your understanding.

3. Sum up the Scripture passage for this lesson in a short sentence, phrase or title.

Questions

Read **Romans 3: 9-20**.

Paul comes to the end of his lengthy argument about human sinfulness that he started in **Romans 1:18** and has continued into **Romans 3** (Lessons 2-4). He begins to wrap up his "case" by asking, "What shall we conclude then?"

1. According to **3:9**, how are Jews and Gentiles alike?
2. What is Paul implying about **us** and **sin** when he says that all are "*under*" sin? (Also see **Galatians 3:22**.)

- ♥ What evidence do you see that humanity and our world is "under" sin?
 - ♥ Does "Jews and Gentiles alike are under sin" mean all are as bad as they can be? Why or why not?
 - ♥ How would you explain the difference between these two statements: *We sin because we are sinners* and *We are sinners because we sin*. Are both these statements true? Why or why not?
3. To prove his point that all are *under sin*, Paul quotes from the Old Testament scriptures. In **3:10-12**, how many times, using what phrases, does Paul get across the point that all people are sinners?

- ♥ Why do you think Paul makes such a big deal (making his case over and over) that all are sinners and there is no one who is righteous before God?
4. List all the *body parts* you see in the quotations from the Old Testament (**3:13-18**).

What point is Paul making by skillfully piecing together these particular Old Testament scriptures that included different parts of the body?

- ♥ How do the quotations in **3:13-18** concur with Jesus' words in **Mark 7:18-23**?
 - ♥ How do you think God intended us to use each of the body parts that are mentioned in **3:13-18**?
 - ♥ Can you think of some reasons why Paul chooses to "prove his point" by quoting from the Old Testament and why he uses so many different quotations from scripture?
5. What does God's law reveal about humanity (**3:19**)? (See definition of "law" in **Lesson 3**.)
- ♥ How does God's law silence us or keep us from having excuses (**3:19**)?
 - ♥ For **what** are we accountable to God (**3:19 NIV**)? **Why** are we accountable to God?
6. According to **3:20**, what are two things we learn when we try to keep God's law?

How does trying to keep God's law help us realize these facts?

- ♥ What are some things you often find yourself doing to try and gain God's favor through performance?
- ♥ In **3:19-20**, Paul brings his case of "proving" all people are sinners to a close. If **Romans 1:18-3:20** were a court room drama and you were on the jury, would you say that Paul has proven his case beyond a reasonable doubt? Why or why not?

Read **Romans 3:21-26** in both the **NIV** and **NLT** versions.

- ♥ Considering the message so far in Romans, describe your reaction to what you read in **3:21-26**?

Romans 2:21-26 has been called by some Bible scholars "possibly the most important single paragraph ever written." In these verses, we are introduced to several *theological terms* whose meanings need to be understood in order for us to grasp the full significance of the *Gospel* – the *Good News* of Jesus Christ. Even though we will continue to define and unpack these terms as we work through *Romans*, we can begin to understand these concepts now by doing something as simple as comparing two *versions* or *translations* of the Bible. This is often a great way to begin examining and exploring a portion of scripture.

7. Define the terms or phrases listed below, found in the **NIV** translation, by writing how these terms and phrases are translated in the **NLT** version.

Verse	NIV Phrase or Word	NLT Version
3:21	<i>righteousness</i> from God	
3:22	<i>faith</i> in Jesus Christ	
3:23	fall short of the <i>glory of God</i>	
3:24	<i>justified</i>	
3:24	<i>grace</i>	
3:24	<i>redemption</i>	
3:25	<i>sacrifice of atonement</i>	
3:25	<i>faith in his blood</i>	

- ♥ Discuss in your small group *if* and *how* you found this exercise helpful.
- ♥ If other translations of the Bible are available, check to see how these phrases are translated in them.

Justification (3:24, 26) is a legal term belonging to courts of law. It is the opposite of *condemnation*, but different from being *forgiven* or *pardoned*. *Pardon* is negative, meaning the suspension of a penalty or debt. *Justification* is positive, meaning the **granting of a righteous status**. *Pardon* carries the idea of, "You may **go**; you have been freed from the penalty which your sins deserve. *Justification* carries the idea of, "You may **come**; you are welcome to all my love and presence." *Justification* is a gift from God that says punishment cannot be justly inflicted. *Justification* is not our movement toward God (religion), but his movement towards us (grace).

8. Even though we are sinners deserving of God's judgment, according to **3:24-25a**, how can we be *justified* (granted a righteous status before God)?

- ♥ What is the *source*, the *basis* and the *means* of **justification** (3:24-25a)?
 - ♥ Do you think people are more likely to turn to God out of fear of the consequences of sin or out of love for God? Why? When did you first become aware of your own sinfulness and your need for God? What motivated you to turn to God?
 - ♥ In his letter, Paul does not introduce *grace*, *justification* and *redemption* until he thoroughly discusses our sinful nature and God's judgment. How does having a greater appreciation for your sin give you a greater appreciation for God's gift of righteousness?
9. How does providing Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for our sins demonstrate the justice of God (3:25-26)?

- ♥ Why doesn't God simply declare people righteous without the need for Jesus to be put to death?
- ♥ Why would God offer his righteousness free to every person?
- ♥ What does it mean to believe and put your faith in Jesus Christ (3:25-26)?
- ♥ Why would some people object to the idea that God has offered his forgiveness and righteousness to every person, even the worst sinners?

Read **Romans 3:27-31**.

10. If you had to pick one verse from **3:27-31** to sum up the whole paragraph, which one would it be?
11. *Faith* (3:27, 28, 30, 31) means to *put your complete trust and confidence in something or someone*. If you are *justified* (made right with God) by *faith*, in what, exactly, are you putting your complete trust and confidence?

- ♥ When did you realize that your position before God was not based on works?
 - ♥ If it were up to you, would you rather be made right with God by *works* or by *faith*? Why?
12. What similarities do you see between **Romans 3:27-28** and **Ephesians 2:8-9**?

- ♥ What are we implying if we think we can **earn** our right standing before God through trying to keep God's law instead of accepting God's **gift** of righteousness through **faith** (**Galatians 2:21**)?
13. Read **Romans 3:28** and **31**. How does true faith **uphold** or **fulfill** the law (**Romans 8:3-4; 13:8-10**)?

Response

If you were a prisoner deserving of the death penalty, what would the word *justification* (3:24) mean to you? If you were a slave, what would the word *redemption* (3:24) mean to you? Have you accepted these gifts from God by faith? What difference have they made in your life? How will you show your gratitude?