

## **Romans Series Slide**

I am now going to tell you about some items you have been misusing or not using to their full potential

**Asian Restaurant Take out Boxes**

**Car Head Rest (break window)**

**Stud Finder on a tape measure**

**Tic Tac box top...one at a time**

**Pasta measurer**

**Oven Drawer Warmer not for storage.**

And now- some warning labels that show dangerous misuse  
Warning labels- You know somebody made this mistake.

**1- Do not hold the wrong end of a chainsaw**

**2- Never use an open flame to check fuel level.**

**3- Hair Dryer- Do Not Use While Sleeping**

**4- Do Not Drive with Sun Shield in Place**

**5- Letter Opener: Use with Safety Goggles**

**6- Hilton Head Map: Not to be used for navigation**

**7- Do not Iron clothes on body**

**Title Slide “You’re Doin’ It Wrong: How the Gospel Brings Life to the Law”-  
Romans 3:1-22 (pg 1452)**

In Romans chapter 3- Paul is going to make the point that people have been misusing God’s law. So he’s going to do 2 things.

First, He’s going to answer some questions about the law and its relationship to the Jews. Things like- “If my oven drawer is for warming foods, but I’ve been using it to store pans- does that mean that I should just get rid of my oven drawer?” And Paul’s gonna be like, “Of course not!”

Then- He’s going to give some warning labels. “Guys, YOU CANNOT KEEP HOLDING THE LAW BY THE WRONG END.”

So let’s get into this passage a section at a time, and then I’m going to show you 2 ideas from this passage that radically changed my approach to the Bible and life... and I hope it will yours as well.

Remember when we left off in Chapter 2 last week, Paul had just written to the Jewish people in Rome that that they were no morally better than the Gentiles. He finished chapter 2 by saying to them that all their traditions and customs- their outward religious practices- don’t give them more favor with God.

Naturally- if you are Jewish person receiving this letter- you have LOTS of questions at this point. And Paul anticipates them now- so he brings them up and then answers them.

### **Romans 3:1-2**

**So what advantage does the Jew have? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? 2 Considerable in every way. First, they were entrusted with the very words of God.**

The first question Paul anticipates from the Jews is- “so-all the stuff God told us about being his chosen people- was he just blowing smoke? Did we never really have any favor from God?”

Paul answers- “Of course you did! You don’t think its awesome that God spoke to Moses. Revealed himself to and through the Hebrew people? You played a vital role in preserving and passing on the Revelation of God himself! That is an honor and a great benefit to be that up close and personal to God!”

### **v 3-4**

**3 What then? If some were unfaithful, will their unfaithfulness nullify God’s faithfulness? 4 Absolutely not! Let God be true, even though everyone is a liar, as it is written:**

**That you may be justified in your words**

**and triumph when you judge.**

So this next question is “So does this mean that since Israel broke their promises to God...that God is going to break his promises to save them?”

Paul answers- “Absolutely not! God keeps his promises even when everybody breaks theirs. God is going to preserve everyone who belongs to him.

In fact, this was all a part of God’s plan to open up salvation to the Gentiles too.”

### **v 5-8**

**5 But if our unrighteousness highlights God’s righteousness, what are we to say? I am using a human argument: Is God unrighteous to inflict wrath? 6 Absolutely not! Otherwise, how will God judge the world? 7 But if by my lie God’s truth abounds to his glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner? 8 And why not say, just as some people slanderously claim we say, “Let us do what is evil so that good may come”? Their condemnation is deserved!**

So in this set of questions- he is anticipating the Jews asking, “Well, if our sin, our disobedience to God’s law, if it helped make a better outcome where everyone could be saved- then how can God judge me for my sin? Shouldn’t he thank me for participating in his plan to save the world?”

Pauls answer is- no- sin always is deserving of judgment.

Think of it like this.

Imagine that you are pulled over for speeding. And while the officer is standing there getting your ticket ready- a car flies by you and goes flipping over into the ditch just ahead. The officer leaves your car- tells you to sit tight- and runs over and pulls the driver and 3 kids from the car to safety just before the other car explodes in a ball of fire.

After paramedics arrive to take care of the family, the officer comes back to your car and starts writing you your ticket.

You say, “Hang on. If it wouldn’t have been for me speeding- you would have never been here to save that family.”

The officer looks at you and says, “Sir or Ma’am, the good outcome of today’s events don’t nullify your guilt in this matter. You made the choice to speed. And yes, today- it turned out ok. But it was speeding in the first place that put that family in that wreck. So, you remain guilty. Here’s your ticket, have a nice day.”

Paul is saying- “ust because God has brought about a good outcome from your sin- doesn’t mean that you aren’t still responsible for it.”

**v9**

**9 What then? Are we any better off? Not at all! For we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin**

Now he circles back around to the Jews saying- So we are better than the gentiles then- right?

In other words- “well, we were speeding- but at least we didn’t get in a wreck. The Gentiles were speeding and wrecked the whole car.”

And he says- NO I already told you everybody is guilty of sin. And everyone’s just judgment is death.

Then he gives this lengthy quote- its a mashup or a remix of some Psalms, some verses from Ecclesiastes and from the prophet Isaiah.

Lets read it.

**v10-18**

**10 as it is written:**

**There is no one righteous, not even one.**

**11 There is no one who understands;**

**there is no one who seeks God.**

**12 All have turned away;**

**all alike have become worthless.**

**There is no one who does what is good,**

**not even one.**

**13 Their throat is an open grave;**

**they deceive with their tongues.**

**Vipers' venom is under their lips.**

**14 Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.**

**15 Their feet are swift to shed blood;**

**16 ruin and wretchedness are in their paths,**

**17 and the path of peace they have not known.**

**18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.**

This is a master list of the way sin corrupts us. Lets go through them one by one.

***(Slide note- I'd like the following to all be on one slide that begins as a top heading "Sin Corrupts..."***

**...our minds. "No one understands"- v 11**

Our sinful self-centeredness leads us to filter out a lot of reality. We deny the truth that we don't want to hear so that we don't have to change.

**...our motives. "No one seeks God"- v 11**

We hide from God, because we don't want accountability for our sin. So instead of taking the risk to look for God- we push him away...sometimes we even do that with our religion.

**...our wills. "All have turned away"- v12**

We aren't just innocently wandering from God. We have deliberately turned from him to our own law, our own rule, our own way. This is a quote from Isaiah 53 where he says "we have turned everyone to our own way". We want our RIGHT to be self-determined.

**...our tongues. "Their throats are open graves"- v 13**

To get what we want, we lie. We curse others with gossip or insults or slander. Its a very Halloween image- an open grave with rotting bodies in your mouth. Our sinful words are a sign of the inner decay in our heart.

**...our relationships. "Their feet are swift to shed blood, ruin and [misery] are in their paths" v 16**

Murder is the ultimate ending of a relationship...but lots of us ruin relationships and bring misery through our self-centered ways.

And then he finishes with an overarching reason for all of this.

**v 18**

We don't fear God.

Think of fear as a both awe and respect. Not necessarily as being afraid of God in a Halloween monster kind of way.

I think of it like this.

Fear or Awe includes both a sense of beauty that we are drawn to...and a sense of unworthiness that pushes us away.

So Fire and Grand Canyon.

On one hand- fire is very attractive. We need it. it warms us when its cold, cooks our food, heats our water...at the same time, we are careful around it. Because we know that our flesh is unworthy to fall into the fire. It will melt.

Or the Grand Canyon. People drive from hundreds of miles away to stand at the edge of the Grand Canyon...because its beautiful. At the same time...its incredibly dangerous. And anyone who doesn't take that danger seriously...who doesn't have the fear of the Grand Canyon in their eyes...and walks out on a ledge to take a selfie without paying attention...they are unworthy of the fall they take into the Colorado river. Their bodies cannot take that kind of impact.

This is the nature of Fear. Of Awe. It both draws us in...and tells us "Be Careful!"

Often- irreligion wants the beauty of God...without the danger.  
"Im spiritual, not religious". That translates- I'd like to keep the idea of god- I just don't want him to be a person to whom I'm accountable. I'll enjoy the universe and its beauty...but I don't need some old man breathing down my neck telling me a bunch of rules.

And religion- keeps the danger of God- and leaves the beauty behind.  
Religion often keeps you focused on checklists to keep up....or else God will be angry. He doesn't really have good things for you...and if he does, he is always threatening to take them away if you do something bad.

So irreligion is passing out matches to kids saying "Enjoy fire".

And Irreligion constructs a 5000 foot wall around the rim of the grand canyon to keep you safe while they say "DONT LOOK BEHIND THAT WALL. YOU'LL DIE IF YOU DO!"...but then nobody wants to go to the Grand Canyon anymore.

If you lose the beauty of God...you have lost the fear of God.  
If you lose the danger of God...you have lost the fear of God.

One more thing from these verses (DONT READ AGAIN)

**v 11b & 12b There is no one who seeks god....no one who does what is good**

These lines about "Nobody seeking god..." or "no one doing what is good"  
...you might be thinking...like I am...

"Wait a minute, I know plenty of people who have really tried hard to find God, but they keep coming up empty. They are on a legitimate pursuit of him, read every bit of the Bible."

Or

"I know plenty of non-christians or atheists who do genuinely good things."

So lets see what these verses are talking about.

First- No one seeks God.

Paul is not saying that people don't go on spiritual quests. What he is saying that no one prompted by their own sinful state WANTS to find the REAL God. They only want to find a god that agrees with them. Or a god they can bargain with to get blessings from. But nobody, without God's intervening grace, seeks God FOR HIM.

The "no one does good comment" can be understood like this.

First there is a difference in motive and form. Jesus brings this out with the religious leaders several times. He says- you are like whitewashed tombs. In other words, on the outside your actions look good (that's form), but they are motivated by selfishness.

So with God, if the form is right, but the motive is bad- it's tainted. It's not good.

But, I'll admit- while that applies to some good actions- it's not every good work. Is the person who risks his life to grab the kid out from the front of a speeding car- are they subconsciously trying to get attention. Probably not. They are probably doing something genuinely good in that moment.

That leads to second idea. That is that our rebellion against God- to live a life without his authority...with no fear of God- ends up tainting any genuinely good work we could produce.

Think of it like this.

Imagine you had a hunch your spouse was cheating on you. So you followed them to a hotel. And sure enough, you saw your spouse with another person check into a hotel room together. But you also noticed that the person your spouse was cheating on you with, gave a \$500 tip to the bellhop.

Now- that action, though, good and generous, is tainted. Because the ultimate aim of the person is for evil.

Scripture says that our good deeds are like filthy rags.

Again- that doesn't mean we don't do good deeds sometimes. It means in comparison to the adultery we commit against God by suppressing the truth and worshipping god replacements... that those good actions could never cancel out our sin against him.

and that leads us to

**v19-20**

**19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are subject to the law, so that every mouth may be shut and the whole world may become**

**subject to God's judgment. 20 For no one will be justified in his sight by the works of the law, because the knowledge of sin comes through the law.**

And now we come to the misuse of the law. The warning label.

Paul is saying here- "you've been holding the wrong end of the chainsaw. You've been getting a plate for your fried rice when all along you could've just folded down the sides. You've been guessing at how many spaghetti noodles go in a serving and where the studs are on your wall."

See the law is not a checklist that you keep. Its a benchmark you fail.

All along the law was supposed to show you God's character- his holiness- how different he is. Dangerous. And you're failure of it was supposed to expose your need for him. But you turned it into a religious check list. A way to gain God's favor.

The law exposes our need for a savior. It was never about us.

The law is like an X-ray machine. It can help you diagnose a broken bone- but can do absolutely nothing to fix it.

The law can show us our broken spiritual condition, but it cannot atone for our sin or forgive us.

This is the fundamental difference between Religion and the Gospel.

Religion says "I obey, therefore I am accepted".

The gospel- the good news that Jesus died for my sin, forgave me, then resurrected and promised to ultimately undo everything that is broken by sin...when I believe that I know "I am accepted, therefore I obey."

That is what is called Grace. You don't deserve to be accepted by God, but he gives you something wonderful you could never earn.

Amazing Grace.

Remember that line from the old hymn:

**"Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved  
How precious did that grace appear  
the hour I first believed."**



Gods underserved forgiveness and love of us- Grace- both strengthens our proper fear of God- Beauty and danger...while also relieving us of the feeling that God is just out to get us...and that there is no hope of forgiveness.

This is the difference in religion and the gospel. Religion gets rid of the RIGHT fear of GOD and replaces it with the WRONG fear of God. But the gospel brings the RIGHT FEAR of GOD while relieving us from the WRONG fear.

**Chart from Tim Keller (Pic On Screen)**

**Chart from Tim Keller (Pic On Screen)**

This is the difference in religion and the gospel.  
Thats what these last 2 verses are about.

**v 21-22**

**But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been revealed, attested by the Law and the Prophets. 22 The righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe**

Do you see what Paul does there? He doesn't get rid of the law and prophets or say they aren't important- he says instead that the righteousness- the holiness- the quality of God that brings FEAR- Beauty and danger- that has been revealed APART from the Law and prophets...but the LAW AND PROPHETS told you it was coming. They told you HE was coming. The entirety of the Old testament pointed to Jesus as the only one who could really live a perfect life.

All along- you were reading the old testament as a checklist- and it was pointing your sin so you would put your hope in a savior.

Tim Keller, who died a couple of months ago, had an incredible sermon that I listened to my first year of seminary. And it completely changed my life.

I had always approached the Bible as a do better, try harder, kind of book. And I thought Jesus was nowhere to be found in the OT. I remember the night I listened to this sermon on a CD in my car. I imagine some of you have heard it...but I bet there's some of you have never considered this.

He was making the point that we think the Bible as all about us. But its really all about Jesus...and that is what transforms us...This is the way he finishes that sermon.

**"Jesus is the true and better Adam who passed the test in the garden and whose obedience is credited to us.**

**Jesus is the true and better Abel who, though innocently slain, has blood now that cries out, not for our condemnation, but for acquittal.**

**Jesus is the true and better Abraham who answered the call of God to leave all the comfortable and familiar and go out into the void to create a new people of God.**

**Jesus is the true and better Isaac who was not just offered up by his father on the mount but was truly sacrificed for us. And when God said to Abraham, “Now I know you love me because you did not withhold your son, your only son whom you love from me,” now we can look at God taking his son up the mountain and sacrificing him and say, “Now we know that you love us because you did not withhold your son, your only son, whom you love from us.”**

**Jesus is the true and better Jacob who wrestled and took the blow of justice we deserved, so we, like Jacob, only receive the wounds of grace to wake us up and discipline us.**

**Jesus is the true and better Joseph who, at the right hand of the king, forgives those who betrayed and sold him and uses his new power to save them.**

**Jesus is the true and better Moses who stands in the gap between the people and the Lord and who mediates a new covenant.**

**Jesus is the true and better Rock of Moses who, struck with the rod of God’s justice, now gives us water in the desert.**

**Jesus is the true and better Job, the truly innocent sufferer, who then intercedes for and saves his stupid friends.**

**Jesus is the true and better David whose victory becomes his people’s victory, though they never lifted a stone to accomplish it themselves.**

**Jesus is the true and better Esther who didn’t just risk leaving an earthly palace but lost the ultimate and heavenly one, who didn’t just risk his life, but gave his life to save his people.**

**Jesus is the true and better Jonah who was cast out into the storm so that we could be brought in.**

**Jesus is the real Rock of Moses, the real Passover Lamb, innocent, perfect, helpless, slain so the angel of death will pass over us. He’s the true temple, the**

**true prophet, the true priest, the true king, the true sacrifice, the true lamb, the true light, the true bread.**

**The Bible's really not about you—it's about him."**

You've been holding the wrong end of a chainsaw.

Instead of thinking about the Bible as a list of things to get done so God loves you.

Let the Scripture show you what Christ has done in his love for you...and then let his love motivate you to obey him.

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