

# A Sprint Through Romans

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## The Final Summary

- ★ Hitting the Ground in Places; Pausing Occasionally

# *Sprinting Through Romans*

## *Historical Errors in Reading Romans*

- Attempting to abstract the timeless theology of Romans
  - ❖ Christians have repeatedly broken off fellowship with other Christians over the interpretation of some aspects of this letter. A couple of examples
    - a) the question of election / predestination versus free will,
    - b) the extent to which human beings are “depraved,”
    - c) the nature of “saving” faith, and,
    - d) so on.
- A tragic irony emerges when we consider that in Romans we have Paul’s fullest treatment of the way God has brought together people of different cultural and religious backgrounds and practice into the one body of the church
- The irony is further seen in the fact that Paul devotes several chapters to practical advice on how to preserve the unity of the Churches in Rome - which were made up of Jews and Gentiles who had been converted to Christ - through skills in managing their differences while living with diversity.

# *Sprinting Through Romans*

## *Historical Errors in Reading Romans, cont'd .....*

- Framing our reading by theological inquiry and debate rather than listening to the text.
  - ◆ Many of us have been brought up in a certain tradition of what the Letter to the Romans has to mean; thus we are caught in the endless cycle of reading into Romans what we have been taught to find there, which confirms in the end that Romans means exactly what we thought all along.
  - ◆ But the mystery of God is always more difficult to domesticate than our traditions tend to admit. After Paul has said all he has to say about the mystery of God's righteousness, even he can still only exclaim, *"How unsearchable are [God's] judgments and how inscrutable [God's] ways! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been [God's] counselor?'"* (Rom 11:33–34 NRSV).
  - ◆ It is perhaps more appropriate to do as Paul advises and simply **"stand in awe"** (Rom 11:20) rather than presume to systematize and codify this mystery.
  - ◆ For Paul, standing in humble awe of God will allow Jew and Gentile to worship together in the one body (Rom 15:7–13), whereas the propositional approach to Romans, so often taken by the church, has contributed to the fracturing of this body.

# Sprinting Through Romans

## Purpose

- Understanding the purpose for which any biblical author wrote is always one of the keys to understanding his writing. To get Romans into proper perspective we need to attempt that. But.....,
- if the amount of scholarly debate is anything to go by this is much more difficult with Romans than with any of Paul's other writings:
  - ✓ "Last will and testament" – dominated for 100 years from mid 19<sup>th</sup> century – several variations
  - ✓ To introduce himself to the Roman Churches – but practice of the time was to have someone else do that – And Paul knew many people in the Roman churches who could have done that for him
  - ✓ To enlist the support of the Roman Church in his defense against Judaisers in Jerusalem
  - ✓ To enlist the support of the Roman church for his proposed mission to Spain – so he sets out his gospel in detail so the Roman church can understand his gospel and know what they are being asked to support
  - ✓ An occasional letter to address problems in the Roman church
- A good rule of thumb, though, is if the plain meaning of the text makes sense don't look for a complex one! So, .....
- ..... does Paul tell us in his letter what his purpose is?
- I believe he does! But from the internal evidence of the letter we find that instead of a single purpose Paul may have had several purposes.
- He may have been "*killing several birds with one stone,*" here, so to speak.

# Sprinting Through Romans

## Purpose, cont'd. ....

- There's no reason to doubt his stated intention in chapter 1

**1:11** For I long to see you, so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you,  
**1:12** that is, that we may be mutually comforted by one another's faith, both yours and mine.  
*(Greek = that is, to be comforted together with you through the faith in one another).* **1:13** I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I often intended to come to you (and was prevented until now), so that ***I may have some fruit even among you***, just as I already have among the rest of the Gentiles. .... **1:15** Thus I am eager also to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome.

- Paul also gives us a 2<sup>nd</sup> reason for writing the letter in Chapter 15

**15:23** ... I have for many years desired to come to you **15:24** when I go to Spain. For I hope to visit you when I pass through and ***that you will help me on my journey there***, after I have enjoyed your company for a while.

- Also from Chapter 15 we learn of Paul's more immediate Travel plans -

**15:25** But now I go to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. **15:26** For Macedonia and Achaia are pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. **15:27** For they were pleased to do this, and indeed they are indebted to the Jerusalem saints. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are obligated also to minister to them in material things. **15:28** Therefore after I have completed this and have safely delivered this bounty to them, I will set out for Spain by way of you, **15:29** and I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of Christ's blessing.

# Sprinting Through Romans

## **Purpose, cont'd. ....**

- Paul is preparing to depart for Jerusalem with the relief funds he has collected from his converts in Achaia and Macedonia (Rom 15:25 – 29). □
- This act of charity and kindness **serves as a symbol for the reciprocity and partnership** between the Jerusalem church, which is essentially Jewish, and Pauline churches, which are predominantly Gentile.
- In Romans 15:30 – 32, Paul expresses concern for how the collection will be received by the Jerusalem community. □ This collection effort represents **Paul's way of signaling the solidarity** between the Diaspora-Gentile churches and the Judean churches.
- The funds he takes to Jerusalem are **the firstfruits of the eschatological pouring in of the wealth of the nations to Jerusalem**, which he may have seen as the initial fulfillment of OT prophecy, especially that of Isaiah.
- The grateful acknowledgment and acceptance of this gift from Paul on the part of the Jerusalem and Judean churches **would signify an affirmation of peace and unity** between the churches he has founded and the churches that emerged as a result of the Jewish mission.
- In light of the conflicts in Antioch and Galatia, and in light of the growing hostility against Paul in Jewish and Jewish Christian circles (see Acts 21:20 – 22), Paul was understandably concerned **that the unity of the church would be sealed** through the acceptance of this offering.
- He therefore asks the Roman Christians, who have not had the opportunity to contribute to this collection, to begin to act as Paul's partners even before he visits **by supporting him in prayer** (Rom 15:30 – 32), which Paul believes to be truly effective, and not just a casual request in religious circles.

# Sprinting Through Romans

## Purpose, cont'd. ....

- From the subject matter of the letter as a whole, understood in its proper context, we can see that ***the unity of the new people of God in Christ***, i.e. the unity of Jewish and Gentile Christians in the Roman churches is ***the major concern of the letter and so is Paul's primary purpose.***
- I would suggest that this is the initial fruit that Paul desires to have from among them. If Paul can assist in achieving that unity, [*or at least in giving them the resources to achieve it themselves*], it will feed into second purpose – support for his mission to Spain.
- Of all Paul's writings Romans contains the most comprehensive presentation of Paul's teaching on justification found in the N.T. This is necessary,
  1. to achieve his purpose of building unity between Jewish and Gentile Christians, and
  2. to clear up the misunderstandings of his message that are commonplace if he is to secure the support of the Roman church for his intended Spanish mission
- Interestingly, in chapter 15, Paul expresses a reluctance to build on another's foundation. Yet he did not plant the church in Rome.
- But his introduction to the letter in chapter 1 would indicate that, as Apostle to the Gentiles, he felt a certain responsibility towards the Roman churches.
- The strategic importance of Rome to the spread of the Gospel generally and because it is the ideal base from which to conduct the Spanish mission are also motivating factors.

# Sprinting Through Romans

## What We Must Not Do .....

- In reading Romans there has been a habit since the Reformation to read the Reformation's theological battle with 16<sup>th</sup> century Roman Catholicism's justification by works into the text. We must not do that.
- Paul's issues with the Jewish Christians were quite different. [But note in 1: 13, "*just as among the rest of the Gentiles*"]
  - ✓ The Law as boundary marker.
  - ✓ Response to "How then shall we live?"
- Neither must we read Romans as Paul's systematic theology on justification by faith.
  - ✓ He wrote a letter not a theological treatise.
- It contains the most comprehensive treatment of justification that we find in any of his writings but that was not his primary purpose.
- As mentioned above, Paul's primary concern in this is the unity of the new people of God in Christ, which appears to be threatened almost everywhere Paul goes – indeed, almost everywhere that there are both Jewish and Gentile Christians [*though in Rome the roles appear to be reversed*] – ***by a failure to think through what God has done in Christ and in pouring out the gift of the Spirit.***
- For Paul and for the Gospel the stakes are high .....

# *Sprinting Through Romans*

## *Further Background.....*

- The threat to the unity of the church that Paul battled throughout his ministry was the tension between Jewish and Gentile Christians over the boundary markers of the people of God – [*Even in God’s family we have sibling rivalry!*].
- So it is no surprise that the issue turns up in Rome also. Jewish and Gentile Christians may even have met in separate house churches and appear to have been at odds regarding Gentile adherence to the Jewish law — especially over the three fundamental markers of Jewish identity in the Diaspora:
  - 1) *circumcision* (2:25–3:1; 4:9–12),
  - 2) *Sabbath observance*, and
  - 3) *food laws* (14:1–23).
- What was at stake practically was whether Gentiles must observe the Jewish law on these points.
- What was at stake theologically *was the gospel itself* — whether “God’s righteousness” (i.e. His righteous salvation that results in right standing with Himself) comes from “*doing*” the law or *through faith* in Christ Jesus and the *gift of the Spirit*. [Often forgotten in the discussion on justification]

# Paul's Concern....

- Given this tension [*perhaps, conflict*] between Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome Paul has a fundamental argument that he presses from the beginning to the end of Romans that could be stated like this:
  - *that God might give Jews and Gentiles “the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had,” so that together “with one mind and one voice you [i.e. they] may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 15:5 – 6).*
    - *This is the kind of statement that we can easily skip over because it doesn't contain any great, exciting doctrinal truth. But it is fundamental to the “adornment” of the Gospel. If the Gospel is adorned with bitter in-fighting between Christians its witness is diluted or lost. The church no longer acts as the light of the world.*
    - *BUT more than that.... As Gordon Fee points out, the gospel itself is what is at stake theologically in this tension / conflict between the Gentile and Jewish Christians in Rome! Perhaps that is why we find here in Romans the most complete presentation of the Gospel in Paul's writings.*
    - *The Gospel is the good news of salvation that comes to Jew and Gentile alike as a gift of grace – that is, as a gift of God's unmerited favour to those who are undeserving, on the basis of faith in Jesus.*
    - *If the mind and “voice” of the Gentiles is of grace and the mind and “voice” of the Jewish Christians is of grace plus Torah [Law] then the world can gain no clear understanding of the Gospel*
    - *So Paul wants more than just an end to the tension. He wants an end to the tension on the basis of truth. He wants the churches in Rome to glorify God “with one mind and one voice!” He wants them “singing off the same hymn sheet,” so to speak! He wants them to be absolutely clear and agreed on what the Gospel is.*
    - *I hear in this issue a challenge to a spiritual and intellectual rigour when it comes to our faith.*
      - ✓ *If the Christian experience had been reflected on adequately would the doctrinal tensions have existed in the Roman church?*
    - *I would contend that spiritual / intellectual laziness in regard to our faith will always get us into trouble and will inevitably lead to a “fuzziness” in regard to what we believe and, indeed, as to the content of the gospel itself*

## Paul's Concern, cont'd.,

- In resolving this tension the fundamental argument that Paul presses from the beginning to the end of Romans is that neither Jew nor Gentile has any advantage over the other in the matter of salvation.
- At the foot of the cross the ground is level. Forgiveness, acceptance, salvation, the gift of the Spirit are all on a single basis – grace working through faith. So with “*one mind and voice,*” i.e. with a unity of understanding and a single Gospel of grace, Jewish and Gentile Christians should glorify God.

### ■ Rom 1:16

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. [NET Bible]*

### ■ Rom 15:5 - 13

*Now may the God of endurance and comfort give you unity with one another in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.....*

*Receive one another, then, just as Christ also received you, to God's glory..... Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe in him so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. [NET Bible]*

## Paul's Concern, cont'd.,

- The focus of Paul's argument is on what makes such unity possible:  
*God's righteousness given to Jew and Gentile alike on the basis of faith in Christ Jesus and effected through the gift of the Spirit.*
- That's why we discover so much emphasis on thrashing out the basis of justification / righteousness in Romans.
- Paul insists that God placed no difference between Jew and Gentile, but gifted them both with salvation and the "end-time" gift of the Spirit on the same basis of faith in Christ. Consequently they ought not allow their cultural and traditional diversity affect their unity.  
✓ *(How this same point is made in Acts)*
- When we come to the final chapters it is easy to miss this. There's a temptation to see Rom 15 and 16 as simply wrapping up the letter with incidentals such as
  1. matters having to do with the relationship Paul hopes to have with this church for his proposed Spanish mission, (1:1–15; 15:14–33)
  2. a commendation of Phoebe who is carrying the letter to them, (16:1–2), and
  3. greetings to friends (16:3–16), and
  4. concluding with a final exhortation, greetings, and doxology (16:17–27).

# Sprinting Through Romans

- For the purpose of our summation - our “sprint” through Romans – I’m going to divide the main body of Romans into four sections
  - 1) The issue of human sinfulness, showing
    - a) first its universality (Gentile and Jew alike, with the law offering no advantage to the Jew) and then
    - b) the effectiveness of Christ in dealing with sin, so that right standing with God is based on faith alone — for which Abraham, the “father of us all” (4:16), serves as the example and model.
  - 2) How faith in Christ and the gift of the Spirit effect the kind of righteousness that the law intended but could not pull off, since it lacked the power to deal with human sinfulness;
  - 3) How God is faithful despite Jewish unbelief, having a place for both Gentiles and Jews in the newly constituted “olive tree” (11:24);
  - 4) What the righteousness effected by Christ and by the Spirit (thus apart from the law) looks like in terms of relationships within the believing community and beyond.

# Mapping Our Sprint

- Rom 1: 1 - 6: **Greeting**
- Rom 1:7 – 15: **Thanksgiving & Prayer**
- Rom 1:16 – 17: **Thesis Stated**
  
- **Part 1: Rom 1:18 – 5:11**
  - *Sin, the Law, Christ, and Faith*
  
- **Part 2: Rom 5:12 – 8:39.**
  - *Sin, Christ, the Law & the Spirit*
  
- **Part 3: Rom 9:1 – 11:36.**
  - *God's Faithfulness & Jewish Unfaithfulness*
  
- **Part 4: Rom 12:1 – 15:13.**
  - *Practical Outworking of God's Righteousness*
  
- *Rom 15:14 - 33. Paul, the Gentile Mission & Rome*
- *Rom 16:1 – 27. Concluding Matters*

# Thesis Statement

## ■ Thesis Statement Rom 1:16-17

**1:16** *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 1:17 For the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel from faith to faith, just as it is written, "The righteous by faith will live."* (The NET Bible)

- Many of the ideas and concerns of Romans are anticipated in this thesis sentence. Taken together with Rom 1: 2–4): the gospel
  1. is about God's Son;
  2. it is God's **power** bringing salvation to Jew and Gentile alike; [Waltke: Presence]
  3. it is the revelation of God's righteousness, available to all on the same basis, namely, faith in Christ Jesus.
  
- There will be an expanded form of the thesis in Rom 3 but note first *"its [i.e. the gospel's] proof, so to speak, is **dynamical**, not logical. It is demonstrated, not by argument, but by what it does."*

# Thesis Restated

## ■ Thesis Restated & Expanded

### Rom 3:21 26

**3:21** But now apart from the law the righteousness of God (which is attested by the law and the prophets) has been disclosed —

**3:22** namely, the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction,

**3:23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

**3:24** But they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

**3:25** God publicly displayed him at his death as the mercy seat, *[propitiation]*, accessible through faith. This was to demonstrate his righteousness, because God in his forbearance had passed over the sins previously committed.

**3:26** This was also to demonstrate his righteousness in the present time, so that he would be just and the justifier of the one who lives because of Jesus' faithfulness.

# Part 1: On Sin, the Law, Christ, and Faith. Rom 1:18-5:11

## The Antithesis

Rom 1:18-3:20

- Paul begins by painting the dismal picture of the human condition, starting with Gentile sinfulness. From there he moves on to Jewish sinfulness:
  1. Idolatry leads both to the worship of the creature and to injustice and hatred of every kind (1:18–32). *[This is essentially the context of the Gentiles].*
  2. But note that he quickly counters in the next chapter by arguing that having the law does not thereby advantage the Jews, allowing them to judge others (2:1–11): *[The Jewish context]*
    - ❖ (some) Gentiles who do not have the law do what the law demands (2:12–16), and
    - ❖ (some) Jews who have the law still break the law (2:17–27).
  3. The only hope lies with heart circumcision (see Deut 30:6) by the Spirit (Rom 2:28–29).

## *Part 1: The Antithesis cont'd.....,*

### **A Word About the Wrath of God**

Rom 1:18-3:20

- Paul begins the section with a statement about the *“wrath of God being revealed against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of humanity”*
  - ❖ God’s wrath is not revealed as a great outpouring of anger in which God “loses it” and zaps humanity.
  - ❖ Rather, if we read the text carefully, we note that God’s wrath is seen in His giving humanity over to its own devices – He lets them do what they wanted. Three times it says that God gave them over to “something or other.”
  - ❖ Each time that “something or other” was the inevitable consequence of their actions and each one was a further spiraling downwards morally – because that’s the way evil works.

## *Part 1: The Antithesis cont'd.....,*

### **A Word About Jewish Sinfulness**

Rom 1:18-3:20

- The Jews enjoyed tremendous privileges because of Torah (2:17–20)□
- But if these had simply become
  1. a means of measuring themselves over against others,
  2. of demarcating their cultural boundaries, or
  3. of self-assertion (boasting, 2:23\*), while they themselves did not observe the law's commandments,
- the privileges did not matter at all (2:25–28)□
- According to **2:29**,□ the Jew is that person who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal. His praise is not from humans but from God.

## *Part 1: The Antithesis cont'd.....,*

### **A Word About Circumcision**

#### **Deut 30:6**

The Lord your God will also cleanse your heart and the hearts of your descendants so that you may love him with all your mind and being and so that you may live. [NET Bible]

#### **Rom 2: 28-29**

**2:28** For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision something that is outward in the flesh, **2:29** but someone is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart by the Spirit and not by the written code. This person's praise is not from people but from God. [NET Bible]. This will be taken up in Chapter 8.

See also the prophetic literature, *“uncircumcised in heart”*, etc.,

## Part 1: The Antithesis cont'd.....,

### A Word About Jewish Sinfulness

Rom 3:1-3:20

- Paul does not deny the advantages given to the Jews by Torah (3:1; cf. 9:4–5).  
 3:1 Therefore what advantage does the Jew have, or what is the value of circumcision 3:2 Actually, there are many advantages.....
- His point is that these do not fundamentally give them an advantage with regard to their relationship with God (i.e., *possessing these privileges do not make them righteous in God's sight*).
- Even though they have Torah, they are as much under the power of sin as the Gentiles they despise as “sinners” (3:9).  
 3:9 What then? Are we better off? Certainly not, for we have already charged that Jews and Greeks alike are all under sin,
- Paul then supports his argument by a chain of verses from Torah (Rom. 3:10–18; cf. in sequence Pss. 14:2–3; 53:1–2; 5:9; 140:3; 10:7; Isa. 59:7–8; Ps. 36:1) which demonstrate that  
*“none is righteous, no not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God”* (3:10; Ps. 14:2–3).
- It is a clever strategy. These texts of Torah are addressed to Jewish Christians – to those who have the “advantage” of Torah, so *“that every mouth may be stopped”* (3:19) [Luke Timothy Johnson]

## *Part 1: The Antithesis, cont'd.*

- After a brief look at the issue of God's faithfulness in light of Jewish sinfulness (3:1 – 8), Paul concludes with the bad news — that Jew and Gentile alike are sinful and need help, which the law could not provide (3:9 – 20).

### **Note:**

- When Paul is referring to God's faithfulness he is referring to God's promises, especially those made to Abraham and he'll work that argument out in chapter 4.

## Part 1: “Sin” in Romans

# A Word About “Sin” as Paul Uses it in Romans

- For Paul, individual sinful acts are the consequence of “sin”, but it is not itself “sin”. The opposite of sin in Romans is not individual acts of righteousness, but faith. Thus, sin and faith are the two fundamental responses of a human being to God:  
**Rom 14:23** “Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin”.
- In such contrasts, Paul speaks of sin in the singular, because it is a rebellion found, not in multiple acts of moral failure, **but in a basic disposition, or orientation, of human freedom.**
- That orientation is away from God and the disposition is one of independence from God. [C.f. Genesis 3 Adam]
- At root, sin is the disposition that strives to establish one’s own existence and value apart from the claims of the Creator God.
- This disposition is what Paul terms **“life according to the flesh,”** and,
- it seeks to construct life and worth out of self-effort, in effect establishing oneself as the “god” of one’s own life. **“Captain of my own ship; master of my own destiny!”**

## Part 1: “Sin” in Romans

# A Word About “Sin” as Paul Uses it in Romans

- In this orientation
  1. morality,
  2. virtue, and
  3. even the observance of Torah’s commandments can be an expression of sin.
- Because they can all articulate the human attempt to establish life and worth on one’s own terms.
  1. Virtue can therefore be **a source of boasting** over another person who is immoral. But such judgment **is itself a hostile expression of the flesh**, and an expression of sin (2:1–3).
  2. Likewise, **observance of God’s commandments** can become a form of boasting (2:23), as one attempts to achieve righteousness apart from God’s granting of it.

- Luke timothy Johnson, The Writings of the New Testament

- Klaus Bockmuel refers to this as ***“The religious version of human self rule”*** [Listening to the God Who Speaks]

## *Part 1: The Antithesis, cont'd.*

- God's own response is the greatest good news ever: *Through the death of Jesus Christ, God's righteousness is given apart from the law and is available to Jew and Gentile alike by faith (3:21 – 26).*
- Paul then raises the three questions (3:27 – 31) to be answered in the rest of the argument:
  - 1) “Boasting” is excluded;
  - 2) Its exclusion is based on the “law” of faith, apart from the Mosaic Law;
  - 3) Faith is the only answer, since there is only one God — for Gentiles as well as Jews. *[Paul is quoting the shema. If there is only one God then He must be the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews – Elaborate!]*

## Part 1: The Antithesis, cont'd.

**3:27** Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded! By what principle? Of works? No, but by the principle of faith! **3:28** For we consider that a person is declared righteous by faith apart from the works of the law. **3:29** Or is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of the Gentiles too? Yes, of the Gentiles too! **3:30** Since God is one, he will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. **3:31** Do we then nullify the law through faith? Absolutely not! Instead we uphold the law.

- At this point of the argument, as I've already mentioned, Paul refers back to Deuteronomy – the “Shema, Israel” – the touchstone of Jewish monotheism – repeated by faithful Jews every day.
 

**Deut 6:4** Listen, Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! **6:5** You must love the Lord your God with your whole mind, your whole being, and all your strength.
- Do you see where Paul is taking the argument?
- By bringing in the reference to the “shema” he is pushing the argument to the logical conclusion of monotheistic belief.
- If there is only one God then He has to be the God of the Gentiles as well as the God of the Jews.

## *Part 1: The Antithesis, cont'd.*

- The whole argument of justification is related to God being judge – the popular Jewish belief being that the final judgement would mean salvation for the Jews and condemnation for the Gentiles.
- A basic requirement for any judge who would be a just judge is that (s)he must judge *without partiality*.
- It is on this premise that Paul *overturns the popular Jewish belief* about God. I.e. that He would judge Gentile sinners and save Israel, His people.
- Not explicit in the text but nevertheless underlying Paul's whole argument regarding justification is the other quality demanded of a judge in the Torah and that is that the judge must be the defender of the helpless [e.g. *the widow, the orphan and stranger, in the O.T.*]
- The One passing judgement in justification is God Himself, and it is reflective of His character that He defend the helpless – both Jew and Gentile sinners – *also reveals His righteousness, i.e. his faithfulness to His promises*

## *Part 1: The Antithesis, cont'd.*

- J. I. Packer is in the habit of saying in his lectures that wrong belief about God will lead inevitably to wrong practice in life! Why was Israel so easily able to slip into injustice through corrupt judgements? Because they entertained a belief about God that included partiality towards them – *we become like what we worship*
- Paul reaches the climax of his survey of human sinfulness in Romans 3:9–20. Both Jews and Gentiles, for all the attempts made by Jews to preserve the boundaries between them, are united under the power of sin. Paul uses a chain of Scriptures to prove the pervasiveness of sin (Rom 3:10–18). The Law itself, functioning as Scripture and witness, attests to the universal need for redemption.
- The implication of this becomes the major point of the following section. As there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile in sin, so there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile in salvation.

## ***Part 1: On Sin, the Law, Christ, and Faith, cont'd.***

- In developing his argument for justification by faith Paul is aiming primarily here at the Jewish Christian – the argument is over against the Jewish Law, specifically the identity markers of circumcision, Sabbath observance and kosher foods. So to support his argument he goes to Scripture. A Jew will not be convinced by an argument on any other basis than from the Torah and/or the prophets and writings.
- Paul goes back to the story of Abraham. This is going to the very foundation of the nation before the “Law” was given on Sinai, [or *Horeb*], following the Exodus, four centuries later. It is almost an argument from first principles. *“This is how it was in the beginning .....*!”
- Paul is opening himself up to the question, Why then the Law? What purpose does the Law have then? He’ll deal with that more fully in chapters 7 and 8.
- Then he further supports his argument by appealing to David in the 32<sup>nd</sup> psalm.