



Group Discussion Guide

Romans 3:1-18

For groups meeting February 2 evening through February 9 morning.

After dismantling the Jewish mindset of superiority in Romans 2, Paul then asks the questions, "Then what advantage has the Jew?" and "... what is the value of circumcision?" (Romans 3:1). His answer states, "the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God," (v. 2). The advantage to being a Jew, then, was that they were the direct recipients of the law. They were to receive the law in faith and trust God by seeking His power to faithfully follow the precepts He had set forth. However, many Jews chose not to trust God and follow His ways, and therefore Paul states these Jews were "faithless" (v. 3).

The question he asks next is, "Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?" (v. 3). In other words, does their disobedience cancel out God's plans to redeem mankind through the nation of Israel? Paul answers with an emphatic, "By no means!" (v. 4) and then he quotes from Psalm 51:4, which is a psalm of David that the king wrote after being confronted over his sin with Bathsheba. God is just in his words and his judgment. God keeps his promises in spite of the sinfulness of mankind.

Next, Paul addresses the argument that, if the sin of mankind magnifies the righteousness of God in dealing with sin, then God is wrong to punish sin. Once again he uses questions in handling this (vs. 5-8), and his answer is the same as it was in v. 4: "By no means!" (v. 6). The sins of people do not serve the purpose of magnifying the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul started this passage by asking if there was any advantage to being a Jew, and he continues this line of thinking in verse 9 as he asks, "Are we Jews any better off?" While he indicated the Jews had the advantage of receiving the law, here he states that the outcome for Jews is no different than the outcome for Greeks. Both, he writes, "are under sin," (v. 9).

What follows is a condemnation of mankind compiled from Psalms, Proverbs and Isaiah (vs. 10-18). A familiar phrase leads this section: "None is righteous, no, not one," (v. 10). From these verses we are faced with the reality that no human is righteous and therefore no human can stand justified before God without God's righteousness that is given when one trusts in Jesus (Romans 1:16-17). Our sinfulness is seen in our words (vs. 13-14), our actions (vs. 15-17) and our attitudes (v. 18).

Discussion Questions

1. Paul writes that the Jews “were entrusted with the oracles of God,” (v. 2). How would this have been an advantage for them?
2. Why do you think Paul asks if the unfaithfulness of some Jews would cancel out the faithfulness of God?
3. Consider the context of Psalm 51:4, which Paul quotes in Romans 3:4. What does the setting of that Psalm teach us about the sinfulness of man and the justice of God?
4. In Romans 3:5-8, it seems Paul is combatting a very relaxed attitude about sin. What leads to this mindset? What causes us to attempt to justify our own sin?
5. How would you describe the spiritual state of mankind after reading Romans 3:10-18? Why do you think Paul breaks this down into words (vs. 13-14), actions (vs. 15-17) and attitudes (v. 18)?
6. Why is it important for us to carry this truth about human depravity to others, so that they can see the reality of sin? Do you think that is becoming more difficult in the society we live in? Why or why not?