

Romans 3:1-20 (ESV)

¹ Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?

What advantage is there to being a Jew? Not much. Actually these days and over the years it is actually more of a problem than a blessing in many ways. But the reality here is how it applies to us.

² Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

What advantage is there in being called a Christian? What advantage is there in being called Baptist?

Let's start where this passage starts.

Much in every way! WE are entrusted with God's word, and God's message to the world.

We are the people who have access and understanding of God's word. What do I mean by that? You guys are trained every week in understanding God's word. You hear it, in some ways you get lectured each week. Because of that, you have a much greater knowledge of God's word and God's will for people's lives than the average Australian. You are the custodians of God's word for the world.

Some would say that is what I am paid for. Sorry, not my attitude there.

Ephesians 4:11-12 (ESV)

¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

My job is to prepare you guys to do what God has in store for you. It is why I preach, it is why I preach the way I do. I am not an exegete, I am not a theologian, I am not an academic, in many ways I am not a preacher. I am your trainer. In some ways your coach. Sometimes you won't like the coaches call

Unfortunately, some won't get with the program so to speak, others will take longer in training, some will back away from God's call. That's what Paul talks about here.

³ What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?

⁴ By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged."

Actually, Paul is still saying, we will all get it wrong. We will all fail to keep the sin away from our lives BUT we still are the custodians of God's word.

God trusts us with that. Oh that is amazing. God trusts us with His word for the world. Don't you just love that! Don't you feel the privilege Don't you feel the honour.

⁵ But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.)

⁶ By no means! For then how could God judge the world?

⁷ But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner?

⁸ And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

We have to ask ourselves here. Does the end justify the means? What can we compromise with to get the message out there about Jesus? What standards do we maintain as Godly and what can we release as cultural and not for us?

Here is a topical one. **Is same sex marriage ok because our culture is different?**

Is living together before marriage ok because our culture has changed?

Is working on Sunday ok because our culture has changed?

Is it ok to eat pork or prawns because our culture has changed?

IS it ok to sin because our culture has changed?

See where I am coming from?

At Yeoval there was much discussion about the past and farming implications on change.

Let me explain. 20 years ago, no Baptist farmer ever harvested on a Sunday. It just wasn't done. Now, there are no men in church during harvest time because they are all working. Standards change. Under grace not under law.

Was it wrong in the past to expect such a standard? Is it wrong now to do that work on Sunday? That is just one area of change and it concerned the people out at Yeoval. Still does, they have to work through it every year at harvest time.

For me, hey I work every Sunday. It's not an issue. So do nurses, some doctors, ambulance people etc. These days so do Coles and Woolies people, clothing shop attendants, waiters and waitresses. The world has changed.

These are part of the reason that we don't have attendances at church like we used to.

So where are we on issues like that? IS it wrong to work Sunday. Well it aint the Sabbath. That's Saturday or Friday night to Saturday night technically. Should we take time off then?

Oh big issues. Are we wrong shopping on Sunday? Are we wrong to get petrol on Sunday as it makes someone else work on Sunday. All this sounds trivial but they were the issues thirty years ago.

It is these type of contemporary issues we need to work through and decide if the bible is making statements that are normative and for all time or whether they are principles to be a guide. Unfortunately, too many issues have been placed in the flexible category and that has lead to a drop in Christian distinctiveness.

It's as if we have decided to be a little bit sinful to look at bit trendy or up to date when in reality I think a lot of it is just an easier lifestyle.

⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,

¹⁰ as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one;

¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God.

¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

¹³ "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips."

¹⁴ "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."

¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood;

¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery,

¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known."

Look at V 9

⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,

Let's translate this to be applicable to us.

Are we Christians and better off, No not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,

Or even

Are we Baptists and better off, No not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,

Notice that this verse does not have a full stop, the sentence continues

¹⁰ as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one;

¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God.

He is tying it all in. He is making sure we get it. We sin. Jews, Christians, Baptists, You, me them, everybody! And the end does not justify the means. You can't sin without consequence and that consequence is that it stuffs up our relationship with God.

The reality that Paul is talking about here is that sin is a problem, and a problem for all.

Good Jews do it, Good Christians do it, Good Baptists do it. Thus there is always problems with it.

Get this next verse:

¹⁸ “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Hey isn't this where our society sits. Isn't this just what the world is like today. Nods of agreement. Problem is that this is not written to the world at large but to Christians.

Get this verse again.

¹⁰ as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one;

¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God.

We are not inherently good. Notice it says no one understands, no one seeks for God.

I think Paul is nicely saying, You Christians just aren't getting it. Your looking out for your own interests not God's so stop it.

Paul goes on:

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

Here is the thing, you know. You lot have had great teaching from this pulpit for many years, you know what sin is, no matter how good you think you are, what does it say:

For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

Oh crikey. I had someone say to me last week “ Pastor John you are really hammering us, when do we get on to some nicer stuff.”

I am just preaching the scriptures as it comes out.

Well, I think Paul really wanted us to dwell on the issue of sin. I think we need to have a much greater understanding of how God see’s it. He doesn’t like it and won’t accept it.

Having said that, next week we look at this:

Romans 3:23-24 (ESV)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Is that nicer? Not really, it still points out we all sin, but it does give a great hope and a great perspective.

God can and will deal with it.