

**TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
IHOP BIBLE STUDY**

**# 3 Romans 3: 1 - 20, "Law and Righteousness" – with commentary**

**Romans 3:1 - 8, "God's Righteousness;" Romans 3: 9 - 20, "No One Is Righteous."**

**The purpose of the Letter to the Romans is to develop a "Model for Living the Awakened/Transformed Life." Today's study is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of 27 lessons.**

**According to our Study Chart** we are studying the 2<sup>nd</sup> section of our chart called "Awaken to The Work of God."

**WS:** Last week we defined **Righteousness** as "The experience of living the Awakened life. Traditionally, this word is translated as "having a right relationship with God." Consequently, when we have an affirmative relationship with God/Love we are thoroughly awakened to our intended purpose as humans."

We defined **God's Righteousness** as "Absolute unmerited Love. Permanent Awakening. Perfect At-One-Ment."

**Unrighteousness** is defined as living out of God's presence, intentionally or un-intentionally. It is living unconsciously. One IHOPer said it succinctly, "**It is the denial that God is important to us.**"

**How does God punish us?** God provides for "The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself." God does not directly punish us, because God is only a God of love." (Interestingly, last week Donna, one of our IHOP co responders wrote to remind me of this reality. Thank you, very much!) I wish more of you would correspond with me. It makes it more interesting for all of us.)

**Read the assignment in one reading.**

**I. Romans 3: 1 - 8, "God's Righteousness."**

**A. Vs. 1,** What is the advantage of being a circumcised Jew?

**WS:** The advantage is they have The Law. While The Law only exists to convict us, it is God's grace to awaken us to live humane lives. The IHOP Bible study reminded us that The Law does not save us. The Law "saves us from" spiritual sleep, and in this way it is a means of God's grace. The purpose of The Law is to Awaken us!

**B. Vs. 2,** What does it mean to be "entrusted with the very words of God?"

**WS:** The "very words of God" are the Ten Commandments. One IHOPer reminded us also this includes the Prophets.

Always, The Law is the objective word through which the surrendered life to God is interpreted. Christians are required to keep the Ten Commandments too. This is not because our salvation depends on it; rather it is because we already have experienced God's grace and desire to express our surrender to God in this way. The Law continues to convict us of our need for God's grace.

For Christians, the cross of Jesus Christ is the objective reality through

which we are awakened to a fully humane existence. The Cross and the Empty Grave are the objective symbols through which we express our surrender to God. These two symbols demonstrate the way in which we surrender our lives to God. We are required to die to our denial of God (our un-righteousness), in order to live the abundant life.

When my sinner neighbor surrenders through the cross, and I surrender through the cross, what overcomes our state of human separation is The Cross. We find our At-One-Ment in the cross.

## II. Vs. 3 - 8, The affects of a lack of faith

A. Vs. 3, Why does the lack of faith NOT nullify God's righteousness?

**WS:** First of all, the IHOPers reported that God can be nothing other than the Truth. By definition, God is incapable of being anything other than in a right relationship with us, no matter how blind we are to this relationship.

Second, we explored the possibility that Paul was confronted by such arguments by those outside the early church as well as inside it. Consequently, Paul made much of this argument.

B. Vs. 4, What is the significance that "everyman (*sic*) is a liar?"

**Review Ps. 116:11 WS:** This passage from Psalms was read in the context of verses 7 to 14. The Psalmist supports the experience of what it means to be human is to be hopelessly separated from neighbor, self and Perfect At-One-Ment. In Sartre's terms, human's life with "No Exit."

**Review Ps. 51:4, 5 --** Observe what the Psalmist says that makes all humans sinners.

**WS:** We are born hopelessly separated from neighbor, self and Perfect At-One-Ment, or God/Love.

**Explain.** Theologically, humans are created to live At-One with God as Perfect At-One-Ment. Genesis 2 and 3 is the mythological story of The Fall. Note this is mythological; it is a story to illustrate and illuminate the human condition. Humans are in a state of being characterized as unable to fulfill our intended purpose. It is for this reason that The Law was created to awaken us to our intended purpose through the guilt of our fated separation (sin). Guilt is not emotionally supportive, and it hampers the ability of humans to see through the guilt to the grace of God. Then the demonstration of Jesus Christ clearly demonstrated the kind of death necessary to die to our human fate. Then, the grace of God clearly stands on the other side of the cross and empty grave. As we surrender our human lives to God, through the cross, then we clearly experience the grace (peace) of God as Perfect At-One-Ment.

**Jeremiah 9:3-5** explains this phenomenon as "Men (*sic*) do not acknowledge me."

## C. The effects of unrighteousness

1. Review our definition above the start of this lesson.

**WS:** The IHOPers observed that living outside of a relationship to God also is known as Hell. In this way, Hell is not a place but the antithesis of having a relationship to God as Perfect At-One-Ment.

2. **Vs. 1 - 6**, Describe Paul's argument

**WS:** The Jews were entrusted with the Ten Commandments as a means of God's grace. However, if God's forgiveness is made more evident through our human fate (and misdeeds), then is it unjust for God to punish us?

Why am I judged to be a sinner?

If my "lie" helps prove God's love, is God unjust to judge my human fate and misdeeds? Why not live in the illusion (evil) that good may come more clearly because of my sinfulness?

**D. Vs. 7 - 8**, What's the problem here?

**WS:** One IHOPer noted that a commentary mentioned Paul's use of the "doublet" in these two verses. Verse 7 reflects on the "human" things, while verse 8 reflects on the in-human things.

Isn't God's vengeance the healing that comes from our human disobedience? The problem is that we do not (or can not) interpret God's vengeance as a manifestation of God's grace. If "The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself," then the reward can be experienced both as God's Wrath and as God's profound and unmerited love for us.

When my wife confronts me with my inhumanity, I experience her confrontation as both wrath and the re-awakening of my humanity as a human individual.

**NOTE:**

An interesting corollary is that the Jews never interpreted this experience as individuals, but rather as the Tribe or community. The Early Church did the same. Only in our era of profound individuality has this been misinterpreted personally as individuals.

**III. Vs. 9 - 20, "No one is righteous"**

**A. Vs. 10 - 18** are proof-texting from the OT. Review the following:

1. Ps. 14: 1 – 3: **WS:** The fool says "no" to God.
2. Ps. 53: 1 – 3 **WS:** All are corrupt.
3. Eccles. 7:20 **WS:** Not a right man [*sic*] on earth.

**B. Vs. 17**, Define "the fear of the Lord."

**WS:** The "fear of the Lord" is misinterpreted today as "angst." The Early Church use of this term meant to "stand in awe" or to honor God.

**C. Vs. 19**, Define the experience, "The whole world being accountable to God."

**WS:** As the Psalmist and Early Church writings support, the meaning of being human is to exist outside of God's presence. Every human being can not escape this truth. "God presence" is defined as the experience of Perfect At-One-Ment. Humans are incapable of experiencing Perfect At-One-Ment. Our only hope is an object reality (the Grace of The Law, or the Grace of the Cross) as a means through which we can surrender our human condition and be "re-born."

**D. Vs. 20,** Review Paul's conclusion.

1. Do you agree?

**WS:** In light of what Paul has said it is hard not to agree. Unless, for course, we are in denial.

2. Can you explain it on the basis of your own human experience?

**WS:** I live in a perpetual state of separation, even from those I love the most and who love me the most in return. I continue to live in a state (fatedness) of being human and know personally the horrible guilt and angst that drives me to deep despair in the fear of hurting myself or others. (Psychologically, it is only my Super Ego that prevents my human actions.) On the other side of this human experience—actually, two sides of the same coin--I clearly know of my re-birth that is the result of the human surrender of my whole life to Christ's cross. Unfortunately, I must remind myself, or be reminded by others, of this truth daily; sometimes, it is necessary to be reminded many times over. (Sigh)

**NEXT WEEK** – In the last four sessions, Paul is concerned about both the Jews and the Gentiles. Next week, his focus is more on the role of faith and Jesus Christ.

**Alright, folks, talk to me!**