

“Don’t Even Go There!” (Romans 3:1–8)

Do you have your driver’s license? If so, you undoubtedly understand that the winter season is the most dangerous time of the year to drive. Snow, ice, and blizzards make driving especially hazardous. This is why the winter season is the most dangerous time of the year, right? Wrong! Although the majority of people in a 2010 survey chose winter as the most dangerous time to be on the road, this belief is not supported by the evidence. Rather, summer is the most dangerous season to be on the road, with the Fourth of July being the most dangerous day to drive in the year. Experts suggest that this may be because of more crowded roads, vacation drivers, and summer alcohol drinking habits. The researcher who conducted the survey said, “We are wary of winter driving, but let our guard down during summer holidays, when fatalities are most likely to occur.”¹

What false beliefs do you hold? What ideas have you adopted that are contrary to Scripture? Have you ever thought that your sin was so great that it could keep you from God? Perhaps you’ve wondered if God could ever love and forgive a person like you. Have you ever felt so shackled by your sin that you justified it both mentally and verbally? Certainly one area that we err is in how we view ourselves in relationship to God. It’s so easy to think certain thoughts about ourselves and God that are not in keeping with the Bible. Hence, we must constantly go back to God’s Word and determine what Scripture says. In Romans 3:1–8² Paul says: *Think rightly about yourself and God.*³ Before we consider this text, let’s review how we got here. In 1:1–17, Paul gave an introduction in which he shared his ministry, his mission, and the theme of his book. In 1:18–32, Paul lambasted the blatant sin of the Gentiles. Then in chapter 2, Paul attacked the counterfeit obedience of the Jews. Now in 3:1–8, Paul raises and answers four objections that a Jew might have offered to squirm out from under the guilty verdict Paul had pronounced on him in chapter 2.⁴ In these eight verses Paul provides two contrasts between humanity and God.

1. We are faithless, but God is faithful (3:1–4).⁵ God’s faithfulness is powerfully vindicated in this section. Paul’s statements to the Jews in chapter 2 could be taken to mean that there’s no advantage to being a Jew. Thus, 3:1 opens with a question: **“Then what advantage⁶ has the Jew? Or what is the benefit⁷ of circumcision?”** Although there are two questions in most English versions, there is only one question in the Greek text. (This translation is reflected in the NET, NIV, and NKJV.) To paraphrase the question, Paul is asking, “If Jews and Gentiles are both guilty before God, what advantage is there in being a Jew, particularly to being circumcised?” Today we might say, “If there is nothing to be gained by reading the Bible and going to church, why bother?” Paul answers this question in 3:2 when he exclaims, **“Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.”** Paul insists that there are many great benefits to being an ethnic Jew.⁸ Here, he only gives the most important benefit (“first of all”): “they were entrusted with the oracles of God.”⁹ The phrase “the oracles of God”¹⁰ is likely a reference to the Old Testament,¹¹ specifically those texts that refer to the future salvation of Israel.¹² However, the privilege of the Jews went much further than simply having this revelation from God. They didn’t just possess the Old Testament Scriptures; they were “entrusted” (*pisteuo*) with them. This means that the Scriptures weren’t given to the Jews to keep for themselves. They were given to be both studied and shared.¹³ If you recall, God’s first Great Commission is found back in Gen 12:1–3 when God exhorts Abram to be a blessing to all the peoples of the earth. Unfortunately, as we know, the Jewish people were faithless and failed to fulfill God’s calling.¹⁴

Imagine that we lose power in our church auditorium and our building is engulfed in flames. We all desperately need to escape this building before we are all burned to the ground. But only one person has a flashlight—me. [Turn on flashlight.] Instead of using my flashlight to help you find your way out and escape, I am busy studying the intricacies of the Scriptures.¹⁵ This is ludicrous, right? I would have failed to use my knowledge and my resources for your personal well being. Similarly, though the Jews had a tremendous advantage in having the Law, Paul says they failed to use it properly.¹⁶

The greatest advantage of being a Jew was the exposure it gave to the Old Testament from infancy. These Old Testament Scriptures were given to point the Jews to Jesus. Similarly, this is one of the great privileges of being raised in a Christian home. The longer I'm a Christian the more grateful I am that my parents raised me in Christ. My earliest memories are of my parents reading the Scriptures to my brother and me. By reading God's Word to us from infancy, God used my Dad and Mom to persuade us that we were sinners in need of a Savior. My parents led my brother and me to *think rightly about sin and God*. Parents, this should be your primary agenda. Nothing is more important in this life than sharing Jesus Christ with your children. Don't ever buy into the lie that they need to find their own spiritual way and come to their own conclusions. If you don't influence your kids, I can assure you that someone else will. Help your children to understand their sin. Explain to them that they have missed the mark of God's perfection (i.e., they have sinned in their works, words, thoughts, motives, and attitudes). Bring them low so that they will look up to Christ. This is your calling as a parent.

As a believer, you've been "entrusted" with the whole of the Scriptures. This is a very great privilege, but one privilege that brings added responsibility. Do you study God's Word to know and serve Him better? Has your Bible study drawn you closer to God? Have you then taken this knowledge and shared it with someone else? Bible knowledge, if kept to ourselves, is contrary to God's expressed will. Share what you know about Jesus and His offer of salvation today. Help others *think rightly about themselves and God*.

Paul responds to the Jews' great benefit of the Scriptures with two more questions in 3:3. **"What then?¹⁷ If some did not believe [If some were unfaithful], their unbelief [unfaithfulness] will not nullify¹⁸ the faithfulness of God, will it?"¹⁹** Perhaps you've used the expression, "What the . . .?" This goes all the way back to the apostle Paul; however, many people have included an expletive in this phrase. Here, Paul asks a rhetorical question that anticipates an indignant response of "No way!" Israel's unfaithfulness will never frustrate God's faithfulness. The certainty of all God's promises rests on His character, not on our faithfulness. As you likely know, the Old Testament is the story of Israel's unfaithfulness and God's faithfulness.²⁰ Even when God's people had sunk to the lowest forms of idolatry, God remained faithful to His chosen nation.²¹ This is truly amazing! God can't deny Himself, and thus when His people fail Him, He will not—indeed, He cannot—fail to do as He's promised. God is faithful to His chosen people.²² Rom 3:3 is a strong verse for the eternal security of Israel, God's chosen people. It verifies that God still has a plan for Israel, and when we relate this aspect of His character to the believer today we know that His faithfulness to us is not dependent upon our faithfulness to Him. Paul said it best in 2 Tim 2:13, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself."

Just in case we didn't get his point, Paul follows up the rhetorical question in 3:3 with the powerful words of 3:4a: **"May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar."** The phrase "May it never be" (*me genoito*) is a very potent phrase. This is the first of ten times this phrase is used in Romans.²³ This phrase has been variously translated: "Absolutely not" (NET); "By no means" (ESV); "God forbid" (KJV); and "Perish the thought!"²⁴ It's a phrase of outrage! Paul responds with both guns loaded to the notion that God could or would ever be unfaithful. He exclaims, "Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar." This idea is likely taken from Psalm 116:11 where the Psalmist writes, "All men are liars!" We might not think much about the sin of lying (e.g., "to lie is human"), but God does. In Proverbs 6:16–19, Solomon mentions seven things the Lord hates. Only one is repeated, and it's not pride, shedding innocent blood, or sowing strife. As terrible as these sins are, they are not repeated. The only repeated sin is lying ("a lying tongue" and "a false witness *who* utters lies").²⁵ Returning to Rom 3:4, Paul uses the sin of lying to level all people ("every man") under sin. His point is that all men, women, and children are unfaithful. Yet, Paul also states, "Let God be found true." This means that He is faithful to His Word.²⁶ Paul is saying that God never gives up on anyone . . . under any circumstances! There's nothing you can do that will cause God to leave you or forsake you. If there is, then your sin is greater than God's grace. This doesn't make sin any less sinful, nor does it excuse your disobedience, but it does mean that no matter what you've done, you can be forgiven.

Paul refers to one of Israel's greatest heroes, King David, when he states in 3:4b: **“. . . as it is written, ‘THAT YOU MAY BE JUSTIFIED IN YOUR WORDS, AND PREVAIL WHEN YOU ARE JUDGED [or “when you judge”].’**”²⁷ The phrase translated “it is written” occurs fifteen times in Romans.²⁸ It's a formula that alerts the readers that the writer is making a significant point from the Old Testament. In this case, Paul turns to the words of David in Psalm 51:4. The occasion was Nathan's rebuke of David, after his adultery with Bathsheba (cf. 2 Sam 12:9–14). When confronted by Nathan, David acknowledged his sin and repented. He didn't seek to offer any excuses for his actions. He had no word of defense for his sin. His sin only served to highlight the righteousness of God. David knew that God was absolutely just and righteous in pronouncing sentence on his sin. The only hope that David had was the faithfulness of God. He didn't speak of his good works nor did he promise future good works. The Law didn't even make a provision for the forgiveness of the sin he had committed. He was worthy of death. But it was God's faithfulness, combined with His mercy and compassion that gave David cause for hope.²⁹

The good news of the gospel is our “unfaithfulness” will not “nullify the faithfulness of God.” Even though David was an adulterer, a liar, and a murderer, God forgave him. If God can forgive David, He can forgive anybody! Do you need to be forgiven by God? Is there a sin in your life that you don't think God could ever forgive you for? Please don't let the enemy lie to you. If God can forgive David, He can forgive you and me. He only asks that we humbly come to Him, acknowledge our sin, and seek the forgiveness that He has made available in and through Christ.

The model that David provides for us in Psalm 51:1–4 is a thing of beauty. At one point it seems that David thought God's judgment was too severe. But then he sees his great need (51:1–2). He wants to experience God's grace. He has sinned and yearns for total cleansing, so he fully confesses what he has done. David acknowledges his sin (51:3) and grieves over how his sin hurt God (51:4). He refuses to defend himself against God (51:4b). David's thinking is contrary to the Jews of Paul's day, who would often blame God for their adverse circumstances. Similarly, we are to say, “Lord, it is my fault. What you say is right and what you have done is right. Whatever blessing I have lost is altogether my own fault.” When we lose out, we should not blame God, we should blame ourselves.³⁰ We must own our sin and see sin as God does. Again, we must *think rightly about ourselves and God*.

[In 3:1–4 Paul has argued that we are faithless, but God is faithful. Now we'll see a second contrast . . .]

2. We are unrighteous, but God is righteous (3:5–8). The questions Paul raises in 3:5–8 reveal a rebellious response to Paul's indictment of sin and his condemnation of the self-righteous. These verses demonstrate God's righteous judgment on unbelieving and rebellious Jews.³¹ In 3:5: **“But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms).”**³² Although this objection is to be expected, it is nonetheless absurd and sinful. The phrase “what shall we say?” is found seven times in Romans and nowhere else in the New Testament.³³ It may be used to introduce a conclusion Paul rejects or one that he accepts. In this case, Paul clearly rejects the notion. The word “not” (*me*) introduces Paul's response to this question. When this word begins a Greek sentence, a negative reply is to be anticipated. This is one of Paul's familiar literary devices. He asks a question, but doesn't think there's anything to it.³⁴ That God might be unrighteous is so preposterous that Paul excuses himself for even mentioning such a thing. In other words, how could God be “just” to inflict wrath on me if my unrighteousness works itself out for the “good” of showing how righteous God is?

Paul exclaims in 3:6: **“May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world?”** It's absolutely unfathomable that God should be unjust. If God can't righteously judge in time and in eternity, we will have total anarchy. God's righteous character demands judgment. If God refused to judge sin, He would cease to be God. Righteous judgment is an attribute of a holy, perfect, sinless God.

In 3:7–8, Paul tackles the same objection found in 3:5. The final line (3:8b) nails the coffin shut on the Jew. Paul writes: **“But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner? And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say),³⁵ ‘Let us do evil that good may come?’ Their condemnation is just.”** This is essentially the same argument as the one in 3:5, but this time stated in terms of “lie” and “truth.” It is the ultimate justification for one’s sinfulness and demonstrates the utter depravity of man. It is the wicked and unbiblical philosophy that “the end justifies the means.”³⁶ It would be like saying, “Pray for sickness so doctors will have a chance to heal people. Pray for more fires so firemen can show their stuff. Pray for more disasters so ambulance drivers will have something to do.”³⁷ It would be similar to a murderer saying to the court after his conviction, “My conviction proves the system works; therefore, I should be rewarded, not incarcerated.” This is ludicrous and outright sinful! Getting to the right place (i.e., God’s glory) by the wrong means (i.e., man’s sin) can never be justified. Paul says that the condemnation of those who say these things is just.

However, we must keep two tensions in mind: (1) Sin is always sinful. There’s no such thing as “good” sin. Sin is the reason Jesus came to the earth. Sin is the reason He died on the cross. There’s nothing good about it. It’s evil through and through. (2) God is able to bring about good things from our dumb mistakes. That’s what the grace of God is all about. But please understand: The fact that God can bring good things out of bad choices doesn’t turn stupidity into wisdom! And, it doesn’t justify sin! Sin is always sinful!³⁸

When an unbeliever sins, he or she misses out on eternal life and is storing up wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God (2:5). The sobering truth is that *all* unbelievers will stand before Jesus Christ and give an account for their works, or lack thereof, at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11–15). This will be an excruciating moment! Even as an unbeliever, sin is serious because hell is not the same punishment for every person—it is an individual judgment of works. Similarly, when a believer sins he or she misses out on some of God’s conditional promises in this life. There can also be severe chastening because God wants His children to be in fellowship with Him. Furthermore, we will give an account of our Christian lives at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10). Paul acknowledged the “terror” associated with this event (5:11). Hence, it would be wise to *think rightly about yourself and God*.

It is worth mentioning that the apostle Paul appears to be accused of preaching a gospel that leads to licentiousness (Rom 3:8a; see also 6:12). Like Paul, when you preach that salvation is a “gift” or “free gift”³⁹ you will be accused of promoting “easy believism” or “cheap grace.” However, these allegations are erroneous. Quite the opposite, while salvation may be simple, it’s not “easy.” Everything in us wants to earn our way to heaven. Consequently, it’s difficult to transfer our trust from what we can “do” to Jesus’ work. Calling God’s gift “cheap grace” fails to take into account two things: (1) Grace is not cheap; it’s free (3:24). (2) Grace is not cheap; it cost Jesus His life. The only reason we can have a free salvation is because God paid a tremendous price. In light of Jesus’ sacrifice, you and I ought to live lives that are worthy of our calling. We should express utter gratitude to Jesus for the free gift of grace. We must also urge others to press on to Christian maturity. Anything less is unbiblical. We who proclaim God’s grace apart from works should expect God’s grace to change believers from the inside out.

If you’ve never trusted in Jesus Christ, will you do so? God is eternally faithful and righteous. The Bible teaches that it’s appointed for man to die once and after that comes judgment (Heb 9:27). I don’t know when your appointment will come. I bet you don’t either. So why not be sure where you’ll spend eternity? Simply acknowledge that you are a sinner and express to God that you would like to believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior. I’ve received this free gift, and I know beyond the shadow of any doubt that I’m forgiven and God will be faithful to take me to heaven when I die or when He returns. For me, there’s no greater joy in life than knowing what my future holds and who is holding it.

Today is the last day of October. We are quickly approaching the winter season. For those of us who will be on the road, this can be a good thing. We will likely drive cautiously (especially after reading this sermon). We will also be aware of careless drivers who are on the road with us. Since we will be alert and careful, we may be preserved from potential accidents. We must have a similar mentality in the spiritual realm. We must exercise great caution and humility in how we think about ourselves in relationship to God. The most important thing about you is how you think about yourself in relationship to God. If you see yourself as a sinner in need of a Savior, you are thinking correctly. If you understand that God's faithfulness and righteousness demands judgment, you are thinking rightly. *Think rightly about yourself and God.* When you do, God will change your life and those around you.

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Scripture References

Romans 3:1–8

Genesis 12:1–3

Deuteronomy 6:4–5

Psalm 51:4

Hebrews 1:1–3

1 Peter 1:10–13

2 Peter 1:16–21

Study Questions

1. How does the biblical knowledge I possess work to my advantage (Romans 3:1–2). Read Deuteronomy 4:5–8 and Psalm 19:7–11? What responsibilities go along with being “entrusted” with God’s Word and the gospel? Read Isaiah 43:10–13; Amos 3:2; Luke 12:47–48; and John 14:21?
2. How has God been faithful to me over my Christian life (Romans 3:3)? How has God exhibited faithfulness to me when I have been unfaithful to Him? Read 2 Timothy 2:13. What have I learned about God's faithfulness recently? Have I shared this insight with another believer (or unbeliever)?
3. In light of God’s faithfulness and judgment, how should I respond to my sin (Romans 3:4)? When, in particular, have I appropriately dealt with my sin? How did I feel after my confession? What counsel would I give someone in repenting of sin?
4. What behaviors, attitudes, or worldviews that were considered sinful forty years ago are embraced as normal today (Romans 3:5–8)? What are some things that might be sin, which I have rationalized recently? Read Romans 14:23. Were my arguments reasonable or ridiculous? Why is rationalized speech evidence of guilt?
5. How have I misunderstood the appropriate response to my Christian growth? In what ways are my beliefs, attitudes, and actions similar to the questions raised by the objector in Romans 3:5–8. Do I understand the critical role of gratitude and obedience in response to the gospel? How can I encourage other believers to live lives of holiness on account of what Christ has done for us?

Notes

¹ SermonNews, “Drivers Mistakenly Believe Winter Most Dangerous.” Source: *Science Daily*, 6/28/2010, anonymous.

² Various commentators see this section continuing through Rom 3:9. See Matthew Black, *Romans*. The New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 63–64; Paul Barnett, *Romans: The Revelation of God’s Righteousness* (Scotland, UK: Christian Focus, 2003), 67–68; Michael Eaton, *Romans*. Preaching Through the Bible (Kent, UK: Sovereign World Trust, 2010), 55.

³ Stott rightly states: “Paul’s method of handling Jewish objections to his teaching takes the form of a ‘diatribe’, as we have seen—a literary convention well known to philosophers in the ancient world. In it a teacher would set up a dialogue with his critics or students, first posing and then answering their questions. Paul has already begun to use this genre when addressing both the critical moralizer (2:1f.) and the Jew (2:17f.); but now he develops it further. It is not necessary to suppose that his debating opponent is imaginary or his debate fictitious. It seems more probable that he is reconstructing the actual arguments which Jews have flung at him during his synagogue evangelism.” See John R. W. Stott, *Romans: God’s Good News for the World* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1994), 95.

⁴ Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Romans” (2010 ed.): www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/romans.pdf, 33. Knight writes, “At the beginning of chapter 3 we would expect Paul to summarize his conclusions in chapters 1 and 2. However, he will do this in 3:9–20, but first he must take an eight verse digression. His plain speaking about the Jew has raised some serious questions. So the apostle takes some time to answer four objections.” George R. Knight, *Exploring Romans: A Devotional Commentary* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2010), 73. Moo rightly comments concerning this passage: “The unwary commentator approaches this paragraph thinking to find rather clear sailing after the exegetical whirlpools of chap. 2 and before the theological storms of 3:21. He or she quickly realizes . . . the justice of Godet’s claim: the paragraph of 3:1–8 is ‘one of the most difficult, perhaps, in the Epistle.’” Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*. New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 177–78. As Moo (180) rightly summarizes, “Taken as a whole . . . the passage both affirms the continuing faithfulness of God to his covenant people and argues that this faithfulness in no way precludes God from judging Jews.” I like how Piper puts it: “My brain almost broke trying to understand the complexity of that paragraph [Rom 3:1–8].” John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 98.

⁵ Deffinbaugh observes: “The text falls into two sections, verses 1–4 and verses 5–8. There are several indications of this arrangement in our text itself. In verses 1–4, the verbs tend to be in the past tense; in verses 5–8, they are predominantly in the present tense. In verses 1–4, Paul speaks of the Jews in the third person (“**they**,” “**them**”); in verses 5–8, Paul switches to the first person (“**we**,” “**our**”). In verses 1–4, Paul asks ‘acceptable’ questions, and the outcome is the statement of biblical principles. In verses 5–8, Paul asks questions which are really inappropriate and which reveal the sin of those who ask them. Paul finds it necessary to qualify his question (“**I am speaking in human terms**,” verse 5). The outcome of verses 5–8 is the realization of how evil, in attitude and application, the Jews have become, as evidenced by the perversions of God’s truth in their thinking and practice.” (Author’s emphasis). Bob Deffinbaugh, “Condemning Questions” (Rom 3:1–8): www.bible.org/seriespage/condemning-questions-romans-31-8.

⁶ Lopez analyzes: “*What advantage (Ti oun)*, also translated ‘what then,’ appears in Romans twelve times. It is used by Paul as a technical phrase, to transition by raising a question of something previously taught, to further his argument (cf. 3:1, 9; 4:1; 6:1, 15, 21; 7:7; 8:31; 9:14, 19, 30; 11:7). Then a Jew could logically think, ‘Why be circumcised since obedient uncircumcised Gentiles can be seen as being circumcised? Thus, if being a Jew inwardly is what counts, then where is the privilege (cf. 9:4–5) and profit of belonging to a race (2:17–24) and of being circumcised (2:25–29)?’ Circumcision was a covenant sign (Genesis 17) indicating the bestowing of many benefits.” René A. Lopez, *Romans Unlocked: Power to Deliver* (Springfield, MO: 21st Century Press, 2005), 67–68.

⁷ Schreiner argues that the verb *opheleo* in Rom 2:25 signifies “saving advantage,” and it is likely that the same connotation is present with the noun *opheleia* in 3:1. Thomas Schreiner, *Romans*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 147.

⁸ See Deut 7:6–8 and Amos 3:1–2. Paul will later expand on the advantage of the Jew in Rom 9:4–5, explaining that Israel also had the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises. Here though, he simply argues that they were to be the custodians of God’s Word (see Deut 4:7–8 and Psalm 147:19–20).

⁹ Paul uses *protos* (“first”) in Rom 1:8, but without a second item being mentioned. He does the same here. BDAG *protos* 2: “first in prominence or importance.” *Contra* Moo 182.

¹⁰ This unusual expression is found only three times elsewhere in the NT (Acts 7:38; Heb 5:12; 1 Pet 4:11).

¹¹ Eaton writes, “The Scriptures are to be valued because they are ‘oracles’, revelations, given supernaturally from God.” Michael Eaton, *Romans: A Practical Exposition*, forthcoming.

¹² Schreiner, *Romans*, 148–49 contends that “the promises of salvation for Israel are uppermost in Paul’s mind. The advantage should not be restricted merely to the possession of the Scriptures and the stewardship required because of their possession. This would scarcely advance the argument beyond chapter 2 since the possession of the law by Israel, although an advantage in some respects, ensures only that Israel will be judged because of their failure to obey it. Rather, Paul declares something more profound about the ‘saving advantage’ that ethnic Israel possessed: they had promises from God ensuring them of future salvation.” The word *logion* (“oracles”) is used in the LXX (Greek OT) for the word from God (cf. Num. 24:4, 16; Deut 33:9; Ps 119:67; Isa 5:24; 28:13). It is consistently used in this same sense in the NT (cf. Acts 7:38; Heb 5:12; 1 Pet 4:11). Moo, *Epistle to the Romans*, 183; Thomas Schreiner, *Romans*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 148–9; Stott, *Romans*, 96; Barnett, *Romans*, 65. Johnson understands “the oracles” to refer to the Abrahamic and prophetic promises of a Messiah. Alan F. Johnson, *Romans*. Everyman’s Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 2000), 59.

¹³ Harrison and Hagner remark: “To be ‘entrusted’ with the divine oracles obviously means more than to be the recipient of them. It means more even than to be the custodian and transmitter of them. What is called for, in light of the meaning of *logia*, is faith and obedience.” Everett F. Harrison and Donald A. Hagner, “Romans” in the *Revised Expositors Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 62.

¹⁴ The Jews had a great advantage in having the OT Scriptures because these oracles expounded the way of true salvation. Paul writes, “And the Scripture [OT “oracles”], foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, (Scriptures are personified as a “preacher” who) preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘ALL THE NATIONS SHALL BE BLESSED IN YOU’” (Gal 3:8).

¹⁵ Jesus called this “straining out a gnat, and swallowing a camel” (Matt 23:24 ESV).

¹⁶ This illustration was adapted and revised from Ray Stedman, “Total Wipeout” (Rom 3:1–20): www.pbc.org/files/messages/4644/3506.html.

¹⁷ The punctuation of the NASB and NET is most likely correct here. Paul tends to have a preference for short, pointed questions when he writes in the dialogical style (see Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 183–4).

¹⁸ Paul uses the verb *katargeo* (“nullify”) six times in Romans (3:3, 31; 4:14; 6:6; 7:2, 6).

¹⁹ Stott explains: “The play on words relating to *pistis* (faith or faithfulness) is more obvious in the Greek sentence than in the English. It might be rendered as follows: ‘If some to whom God’s promises were entrusted (*episteuthēsan*, 2) did not respond to them in trust (*ēpistēsan*, 3a), will their lack of trust (*apistia*) destroy God’s trustworthiness (*pistis*, 3b)?’ If God’s people are unfaithful, does that necessarily mean that he is?” Stott, *Romans*, 96. Eaton, *Romans*, forthcoming argues, “One Greek word means **both** ‘believe’ and ‘be faithful’, and a similar one means both ‘unbelief’ and ‘unfaithfulness’. The English language uses two words where the Greek has one covering both ideas.” Author’s emphasis. Eaton is likely correct; however, if I had to choose, I think the preferred translation is “unfaithfulness” (see NASB margin; ESV; NRSV; NIV; NLT) because it is in keeping with the parallelism of the Greek text. *Contra* NASB; NET; NKJV.

²⁰ See esp. Ps 89:30–37.

²¹ When the Israelites worshipped the golden calf and were unfaithful to God, Moses didn’t appeal to God on the basis of Israel’s faithfulness. He appealed to God on the basis of His promises and His character. In the New Testament, after the Jewish people had Christ crucified, Peter exhorted the Jews to repent and return so that their sins may be wiped away and times of refreshing might come.

²² Eaton, *Romans*, forthcoming, writes: “God is faithful in protecting us (1 Corinthians 1:9), faithful when we are tempted (1 Corinthians 10:13), faithful in working holiness into our lives (1 Thessalonians 5:24), faithful in protecting us from Satan (2 Thessalonians 3:3), faithful when we sin (2 Timothy 2:13; 1 John 1:9), faithful to His promises (Hebrews 10:23), God is faithful when we suffer (1 Peter 4:19).”

²³ See Rom 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11; cf. 1 Cor 6:15; Gal 2:17; 3:21; 6:14.

²⁴ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 185 calls “may it never be” the most literal translation.”

²⁵ Steve Elkins, *The Roman Road Revisited* (Dallas: Allie Grace, 2005), 35.

²⁶ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 185.

²⁷ The quotation from Ps 51:4 is taken almost verbatim from the Greek OT (Ps 50:6 LXX), with only minor modifications. The verb *krinesthai* should be taken as middle voice here, not passive. See F. F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 102.

²⁸ See Rom 1:17; 2:24; 3:4, 10; 4:17, 23; 8:36; 9:13, 33; 10:5, 15; 11:8, 26; 12:19; 14:11; 15:3, 4, 9, 15, 21; 16:22.

²⁹ When we get to Rom 4 Paul will tell us how David was saved.

³⁰ Eaton, *Romans*, forthcoming.

³¹ See also Deffinbaugh, “Condemning Questions.”

³² Paul will discuss this matter further in Rom 6:1–14.

³³ See Rom 3:5; 4:1; 6:1; 7:7; 8:31; 9:14, 30.

³⁴ The exact expression, “I am speaking in human terms” occurs only in Gal 3:15.

³⁵ Lopez, *Romans Unlocked*, 70 helpfully applies this passage: “As a result of corrupt reasoning, the sinner objects to being judged for sin since it enhances God’s Holy character. Hence he says, ‘**Let us do evil that good may come**’? Stunningly, rumor had it that Paul and his companions were **slanderosly reported** as teaching this very thing. However, just because God uses man’s transgression to enhance His glory and display His grace, it does not mean man should go unpunished. Perhaps the contention ‘where sin abounded grace abounded more’ in 5:20 (and 6:1, 15) originates here in germ. Today, the same slanderous charges of encouraging license to sin are hurled at those who teach God’s free grace, as if teaching unadulterated-grace necessarily leads to sin. Unfortunately, in every era, there have always been those who misunderstand or corrupt the meaning of God’s free-grace. Just because one teaches grace as Paul taught does not in any way suggest or imply that one should sin. To such a ridiculous charge Paul sees no need to refute. He simply entrusts them to God: **Their condemnation is just**. Obedience is assumed and required by everyone regardless of how God uses disobedience in His sovereign plan (cf. Matt 18:7).” Author’s emphasis.

³⁶ As Boa and Kruidenier state, “Getting to the right place (God’s glory) the wrong way (by man’s sin) can never be justified.” See Kenneth Boa and William Kruidenier, *Romans*. Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2000), 86.

³⁷ Charles R. Swindoll, *Coming to Terms with Sin: A Study of Romans 1–5* (Fullerton, CA: Insight for Living, 1985), 36.

³⁸ Eaton, *Romans*, forthcoming.

³⁹ Rom 3:24; 5:15 [twice], 16 [twice], 17; 6:23; 2 Cor 9:15; Eph 2:8. Cf. James spoke of the new birth as a gift from God: “Every good *gift* and every perfect *gift* is from above, and comes down from the Father . . . Of His own will He brought us forth [regenerated us] by the word of truth . . .” (Jas 1:17–18). The author of Hebrews also speaks of eternal salvation as “the heavenly gift” (Heb 6:4).