

The Bible (Unmuted) Transcript
Episode 19
Romans, Part 7 (Rom 3)
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Episode Summary:

In this episode, we dive back into Romans -- this time in chapter 3. This is a pivotal chapter in the book itself. From the start, Paul asks a very important question: If Israel has been unfaithful to her God-given vocation to be a light to the nations, then will God be unfaithful too? Will God backtrack on his promises to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3)? That's the question of Romans 3. For Paul, the answer is simple: God will be faithful to the covenant promises. But how? That's another key question. And the answer is that God's faithfulness is demonstrated through the faithfulness of Jesus the Messiah. As we dive into these questions, we also take a journey through Isaiah and key sections of Matthew's gospel to show how, exactly, Jesus's faithfulness demonstrates the faithfulness of God.

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Transcript:

0:00 Hey everybody! Welcome back to another episode of the Bible Unmuted. I'm excited to be with you again today because we are back in the book of Romans. This time we're in chapter 3. Now, chapter 3 is a very important chapter in this wonderful book. And it's one that has a lot of significant things to say and I think it's an anchor chapter, actually. Okay, so it's hard to say that as if other chapters in Romans are not important, I'm not suggesting that. I'm just saying there are things in chapter 3 that we can't afford to miss. That's why in today's episode we are going to tackle the entire chapter. But don't worry, we're not going to get too much into the weeds. In fact, I want us to climb about 50,000 feet into the air, look down and get the whole picture, but we will read every verse. So we will be sure to cover everything. So, anyway I hope you are ready for that. We've got some great music playing in the background. I've got some hot tea, and an open bible. I mean what better way to do a bible study than with jazz music and hot tea? So, okay here we are.

So before we jump into Romans chapter 3, I want to share some stuff about the new book coming out in February. It is a ways off, but it is available for pre-order. I've been talking about that some and I thought I would share a little bit more about that. So, the way publishing works today is that authors need to market their book. We have social media, we have all sorts of ways of doing that now. In past generations we didn't have that so marketing looked a lot different back in the day. But today it's social media. There's a lot of marketing of books on social media and that's just the way publishing works these days. Now here's the thing. I'm not good at it – not good at any of that. I'm not good at marketing. I mean that's just the way it goes, I guess. And like I've said before, I'd rather be writing a book on eschatology than marketing a book on eschatology. And the reason is, I just don't think I'm gifted at that sort of thing. I'm just a nerd who would prefer to be reading his Greek Bible. That's just who I am, I guess. So all that to

say, this is me marketing my book. (chuckles). So anyway, if I could be so bold to ask...if you would. If you get some time, next time you are on social media, go and share the Lexham or the Amazon links to my book. It's called *The End of the World as You Know It*. And I've shared on my Facebook, if you are friends with me or follow me on Facebook, there are links. You'll just have to go through all those and find where I've shared the Lexham landing page for the book. And then you can just share that with your friends and pass that around if you would. It means so much to me that you would do that. So, just Google the name of the book, *The End of the World as You Know It*, and it's published with Lexham Press, or you can go to Amazon and find it there. And, really I would appreciate it if you could share both of my books so far. And I have started a third book. More on that in the future. But these two books, if you would be so kind as to share them with your friends, I would be super encouraged by that. And I would thank you so much for your willingness to do that. Let people know that the new book is available for pre-order. The old book, the old Romans book, you can buy that now. But the new one is available for pre-order and it ships in February of 2024. So this is sort of the soft launch. That's the way it works. You do the pre-order launch and release it that way and it will ship in February. I really appreciate that, it means a lot to me. Thanks so much for considering that.

And on that note, if you have a podcast where you have some sort of outlet that you'd be interested in having me be interviewed about the book or to chat about the book, I am all for that. Just shoot me an email, send me a message. I would be super willing to do that. I would really appreciate the opportunity, in fact. So as always you can contact me on my website at matthewhalsted.com. There is a contact form. That contact form goes straight to my email and you can contact me that way. If you have a venue you would like me to come speak at, I would be open to doing that as well, as my schedule permits, depending when you would like me to do that. Just reach out to me on my website and I would be happy to dialog further. Thanks so much for your continued support. It means so much to me.

Okay, so let's get into today's episode. We are going to dive into Romans chapter 3.

4:57 Okay, let's start chapter 3 by reading verses 1 and 2. Paul begins verse 1 like this:

1 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? 2 Much, in every way. For in the first place the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

So Paul starts off with a question. What advantage does the Jew have? What blessing is there of being a Jew? And what sort of value is there in circumcision? You know circumcision was the sign and the seal of God's covenant. Now those are Paul's questions, but why does he need to ask them? The reason of course is because of all that he said in chapter 2 which if you haven't listened to those episodes, go back and listen to them, or at least read the transcripts. Because in chapter 2 that's where Paul said Jewishness is spiritual and it is open to Gentiles. So Paul's Jewish readers are going to be asking questions like, "Okay, look Paul, doesn't that nullify the blessing of being part of Abraham's family? Doesn't that negate the significance of physical circumcision? You know if you spiritualize everything, than what about physical circumcision?" Now Paul anticipates these objections. And these objections give us a glimpse into the assumptions of the Jews in Paul's era. They recognize the blessing. It was to be part of Abraham's physical lineage. And they know doubt would've smirked at Paul's words, no doubt, in chapter 2. Perhaps so, at least. Now one might expect that Paul would answer these objections by saying, "These things have no value at all." But that's not what he says. I can't emphasize this enough. Paul was a Jewish theologian. He never conceived of his apostleship as being divorced from his Jewish heritage. That's why he can say in verse 2, "*Much, in every way. For in the first place the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.*" Of course, says Paul, the Jewish people as a people do have significance. The Jewish story does have value. He tells us why this is the case. He says, "*For in the first place the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.*"

Now what does that mean? I suspect, as do other scholars, that Paul is referring to Israel's vocation. Like I mentioned in the last episode on Romans, Israel was elected for the purpose of blessing the nations.

For the purpose of calling the nations back to God. Israel's election started in Genesis 12, and Israel's election was the solution to the problem of Genesis chapter 11. The Tower of Babel episode. It was there that the nations were fractured and cursed. That all happened in Genesis 11. But God installs a plan to restore them in Genesis 12. And this is why I call this the Genesis 11 & 12 narrative. And its one key element of the grand story of scripture, I think. It tells us that Israel's family was the means by which God would fix the world. It's a theme that's not just found in Genesis 11 & 12, but in other passages too. For example in Isaiah. There in Isaiah, we read about how Israel is called to be a light to the nations. Israel in these passages in Isaiah, is called a servant.

8:25 To see what I mean, let's look at Isaiah 41:8-9

*But you, Israel, my servant,
Jacob, whom I have chosen,
the offspring of Abraham, my friend;
9 you whom I took from the ends of the earth,
and called from its farthest corners,
saying to you, "You are my servant,
I have chosen you and not cast you off"*

So here the servant is Israel. But what is Israel, what is this servant supposed to do? Well, this servant is supposed to be a light to the nations. So for example. Look at Isaiah 42:1-7

1 Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. 2 He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; 3 a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. 4 He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching. 5 Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: 6 I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, 7 to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

Now notice verse 6-7. That last part. "*I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.*" Notice those verses. They sound very similar to Paul's words in Romans 2:17-20. I'll read those verses again. It says,

17 But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast of your relation to God 18 and know his will and determine what is best because you are instructed in the law, 19 and if you are sure that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 20 a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth,

See, that's very fascinating. That sounds very much like the Isaiah text. Because remember to be a Jew, meant being part of the family for the light of the world for the good of the world. In Isaiah the servant is Israel. I mean that's very clear from the passages that we read. But interestingly, the servant is also depicted as someone who rescues Israel. But this should not negate the fact that the servant is also somehow mysteriously the people of Israel as a whole. We saw this in Isaiah 40:8-9 where Israel is called God's servant. Listen also to Isaiah 49:1-7

1 Listen to me, O coastlands. Pay attention, you peoples from far away! The LORD called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me. 2 He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished

arrow, in his quiver he hid me away. 3 And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." 4 But I said, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my cause is with the LORD, and my reward with my God." 5 And now the LORD says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the sight of the LORD, and my God has become my strength— 6 he says, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." 7 Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, "Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

So it's clear that this servant is Israel. And this servant is supposed to do two things really. 1.) Rescue Jacob; rescue Israel. And 2.), rescue the nations. As we recall Genesis chapter 11 and chapter 12, that Genesis 11 & 12 narrative, Israel is supposed to do that job – rescue the nations. But as we also know from the larger context of scripture itself, Israel herself was sinful and needed to be rescued. They weren't to the covenant. Israel was not faithful at all to the covenant. And that's why Paul says in Romans chapter 3 verse 3.

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

13:27 What Paul is asking, is given Israel's unfaithfulness, what will become of God's own faithfulness to the covenant? I mean this question does make sense. After all God promised Abraham that he would use his family to rescue the world. But if Abraham's family cannot be used due to their own sin and their rebellion, than how will God be faithful to the promise? Is God's faithfulness somehow dependent upon Israel's faithfulness? For Paul the answer is a strong "No." Paul thinks that God's faithfulness; his covenant faithfulness, his righteousness, will be established. God is not a liar after all. So listen to Romans chapter 3:4-8. Paul says,

4 *By no means!* (MH: Now that's an answer to verse 3, where Paul asks, what if some were unfaithful? Will their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? – By no means!) *Although everyone is a liar, let God be proved true, as it is written, "So that you may be justified in your words, and prevail in your judging."* **5** *But if our injustice serves to confirm the justice of God, what should we say? That God is unjust 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 falsehood God's truthfulness abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner?* **8** *And why not say (as some people slander us by saying that we say), "Let us do evil so that good may come"?" Their condemnation is deserved!*

15:03 Okay, let me unpack this text for a moment. The question in verse 3, was about Israel's unfaithfulness. What if they were unfaithful? Does their unfaithfulness negate the faithfulness of God? And of course Paul answers that question in the negative. You know, "By no means!" says Paul. The unrighteousness and unfaithfulness of God's people, will actually and mysteriously, open up the way in which God's righteousness is demonstrated. And that's why Paul kind of goes on a tangent in verses 5-8, where he anticipates an objection. And that objection that he anticipates goes like this. "Okay Paul, since Jewish unfaithfulness opens the door for God's faithfulness to be demonstrated, than I guess that means that sin is a good thing. And that God shouldn't punish us for our sin." Now, Paul calls that sort of thinking rubbish. What Paul is actually saying is that essentially, God will exercise his wisdom to bring about redemption. He will bring about the rescue of the world, even though the people he chose to do that failed in their vocation. In other words, I suspect Paul would agree that God is incredibly intelligent and incredibly powerful such that if he promised to do something, he will surely do it. As Isaiah's prophecies hinted, God will find a righteous servant. A righteous Israelite to do the job.

Now all of this becomes crystal clear later on. So let's gain some altitude and fly out about 30,000 feet above the text so that we can see what Paul is doing and kind of where Paul is headed. When we get to chapter 3:21-22, we see that God's faithfulness is revealed through Jesus. In verse 21 we read,

*21 But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, (and) is attested by the law and the prophets, 22 the righteousness of God through **faithfulness of Jesus Christ** for all who believe.*

In other words, God's faithfulness is revealed through the faithful work of Jesus the Messiah. Now in this text I've used the NRSV, but I've tweaked it a little bit. I'll say more about that in a moment. But first let's look at the large passage that comes before it. Namely verses 9-18. We read verse 9:

9 What then? Are we any better off? No, not at all; for we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin, 10 as it is written: "There is no one who is righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned aside, together they have become worthless; there is no one who shows kindness, there is not even one." 13 "Their throats are opened graves; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of vipers is under their lips." 14 "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 ruin and misery are in their paths, 17 and the way of peace they have not known." 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Now what Paul has done here is string out a number of texts from the Old Testament into one. And that's a fascinating thing. I just encourage you to get out your bible in this section of Romans 3:9-18. It's fun to go through all that and find the texts that he is drawing from. He just kind of pieces them all together. But anyway, we won't detain ourselves in that. I want to get to verses 19 and 20. So let me pick up on verse 19. Paul says,

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20 For "no human being will be justified in his sight" by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

Now here we have to remember Romans 2:15 – I'm sorry – verse 13. In verse 13 Paul said, and again...you really...I need to pause here for a moment. Romans 2 is so important for understanding Romans 3. So I kind of refer back to Romans 2 occasionally. So I want to emphasize this a ton. You've got to have a good grasp on Romans 2, so that you are prepared for Romans 3. So anyway, in Romans 3 just in those verses I read, verses 19-20, Paul says "For "no human being will be justified in his sight" by deeds prescribed by the law" We have to recall Romans 2:13 because it was there that Paul says, "For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified". Now these two passages appear to stand in tension with each other. I mean on the one hand in Romans 3:20 Paul says that, "No human being will be justified in his sight" by deeds prescribed by the law." But in Romans 2:13 he says, "The doers of the law who will be justified". So there seems to be some tension between these passages. But in fact, there's no contradiction here at all. In chapter 2, Paul does say that "the doers of the law will be justified." But he also says in that same chapter – chapter 2:26, "there are those who are uncircumcised who keep the requirements of the law. And that their uncircumcision will be regarded as circumcision." In other words, when Paul says, "doing the law" in chapter 2, he is not saying keep the works of Torah. He's saying that in fact there are people who did not keep the works of Torah, like circumcision, who will none the less be considered as fulfilling the law itself. That's a very important point to make. And here in chapter 3 the same thing is said, albeit in a different way. Nobody will be justified by performing works of Torah, because what Torah actually does is reveal how sinful the doer is. So how does a person become justified if they are not circumcised or a law keeper in that sense? And that's the question that was asked in Romans 2. How are Gentiles keepers of Torah even though they don't have Torah naturally since they were born outside of the Torah, outside of the

covenant, outside of the promises, outside of Israel...how do they keep the Torah? In other words, in Romans 2, remember, how can Paul say that someone who is uncircumcised can keep the requirements of the law? Circumcision was a requirement of the Law. And he's saying, "Yeah, those who are uncircumcised can keep the requirements of the Law." Like how can he say all that? Well, the answer is given in Romans 3:21-22

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22:45 In verse 21, Paul says, "*But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.*" A couple of things need to be said here. So, first we need to remember Romans 1:17. "*For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith."* Now, if you remember from our episode on that verse, this is a quotation from Habakkuk chapter 2. In that episode I discussed how in the Greek Old Testament, known as the Septuagint, this verse is rendered, "*The righteous shall live by **my** (or God's) faithfulness.*" Why is this important for Romans 3? Chapter 3 verse 21-22.? It's important because here in chapter 3, we finally see how God has shown himself faithful. If Israel has been unfaithful in her mission to rescue the world, because of her sin, than God will still prove to be faithful none the less. After all, he promised Abraham that he would use his family to rescue the world (Genesis 12:1-3). And God can't lie, so he is going to be faithful. God has faithful servant to do the job. It's the true Israelite. It's Jesus. And here in Romans chapter 3:21-22, we see this explicitly. "*But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.*" Now how has the righteousness of God been disclosed? How has it been revealed? It's been revealed through the faithfulness of the Messiah.

Now, verse 22 here is tricky. And I don't think the NRSV gets it right. The NRSV translates it as, "*the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe*" This is slightly redundant. "*The righteousness of God has been revealed through **faith** in Jesus Christ for all who believe*"... Well, in Greek there is a better option for translating this. So in Greek we see that the best way to translate this is, "*the righteousness of God, through the **faithfulness** of Jesus Christ to all who believe.*" The NRSV does have a footnote that says you can translate this as, "through the faith of Jesus of Christ." And, okay, well, that's better than nothing. But again, faith, or *pistis* (πίστις), can mean faithfulness too. And that's something I've talked about before. And I think this is the better translation. I think faithfulness is the best translation here. The benefit of this translation that I'm proposing – and a number of scholars have proposed this too – but the benefit is that it reduces the redundancy of the text so that now you have, "*righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ to all who believe.*" This means that Jesus has been faithful. And as a result of that faithfulness, people can place their trust and faithfulness in him. This translation also makes sense of the working narrative so far.

25:50 So if you recall from earlier, Romans 3:1-5 kicks off the chapter by bringing front and center the question of Israel's unfaithfulness and the question of God's faithfulness. And this is all summarized and wrapped up quite well by the time we get to verses 21 and 22 where Jesus's faithfulness is the answer to how God has been faithful to the covenant, to use Israel to rescue the world. And even though Israel has been unfaithful with the oracles and the words of God, Jesus has been faithful. He is the righteous servant, the true Israel.

And I've mentioned this several times before, but you really need to read N.T. Wright's book, *Justification*. And you also need to pick up his book, *The New Testament and the People of God*, which highlights the storied approach of scripture. And this storied approach is fleshed out quite well in his *Justification* book, too, particularly in his section on Romans where he talks about Abraham and God's covenant to Abraham. I highly recommend this because I really think it will help your reading of Paul, and I really think you think through Romans and Galatians as well, too.

The main point is this: Jesus is the faithful one who has been faithful to the covenant. That's what Paul is saying here. The righteousness of God, the faithfulness of God has been revealed through the faithfulness of Jesus to all who believe. But it's not just Paul who is saying this kind of thing. This is the way the early Christians understood Jesus's ministry. They understood that Jesus was the faithful one, the true Israelite. For example, let me ask you a question. Do you think it's a coincidence that Jesus lived through a time in Egypt and then left there to go back to Israel? Not at all. Matthew did not think it was a coincidence. And by Matthew, I don't mean myself. I mean Saint Matthew, the gospel writer. For example, in Matthew 2:14-15 we read this,

14 Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, 15 and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

Now that part, "*out of Egypt, I have called my son,*" that is a quotation from Hosea 11:1. And that verse says this,

11 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

Now in context, Hosea is not predicting anything. He is reflecting on the past. And he's not talking about the Messiah. He is talking about Ancient Israel, the nation that left Egypt at the Exodus. By applying the Exodus story to Jesus, Matthew believes that Jesus is in a sense the re-enacting the story of Israel. He's going through the same motions as Israel did, only he's doing so without sin. For Exodus, think Exodus 4:23, and Hosea 11:1, the verse we just read. For Exodus and Hosea, Israel is the son of God. That's how Exodus describes Israel. That's how Hosea describes Israel. As the son of God. But Israel's story has been re-enacted through the divine Son of God. Through Jesus. Jesus is Israel. And as Israel, Jesus will lead God's people back to God and he will lead the "not" God's people, i.e., the Gentiles back to God, too. I mean, this is what Isaiah prophesied about the servant. That the servant would rescue Israel and bring Israel back to God. And he would also do the same for the nations. I mean, this idea is the Genesis 11 & 12 narrative all over. The human family has gone astray, but God elects Abraham and his descendants to redeem the nations. The elect become the means by which the non-elect come into the family. And this idea will come to a pinnacle in Romans chapter 9. Especially in Romans 9:25-26. It's there where Paul will himself quote Hosea as a word of inclusion to the Gentile. For example, Romans 9:25 says this,

25 As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'"

30:07 See, this is all part of the plan. The nations are coming into the family through Jesus, the true Israel. "*Those who were not my people, will be my people.*" Now, back to Matthew for a moment. We have already seen that Matthew believes Jesus seems to be re-enacting the story of Israel's exodus. But there is actually more. In the next chapter, Matthew chapter 3, Jesus is baptized in the Jordan River. And we are told this is to fulfill all righteousness. Now, this doesn't mean that Jesus needed his sins washed away, right? Jesus has no sins. This is instead to reveal God's faithfulness. This is to reveal God's righteousness. It's to fulfill all righteousness and it's especially to show that God is faithful. And even here, Jesus is re-enacting the story of Israel as he crosses the Jordan, in a very figurative sort of way. He crosses through the waters of the Jordan. Jesus is starting his ministry. And once he is baptized a divine word comes down from heaven. And that divine word is this, "*This is my son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased.*" Did you get that? God has a son with whom he is well pleased. See, Israel barely got out of Egypt without displeasing God by worshiping the golden calf, right? (Chuckles) They barely got out of Egypt before they started worshiping the golden calf. But here, we have someone who has come through the exodus, out of Egypt, and into the Promised Land. He has come in faithfulness. Jesus is re-enacting the story of Israel except he is doing so without sin. He's doing it faithfully. And perhaps that's why Paul can say, "It's through the faithfulness of Jesus that God's righteousness is demonstrated."

Okay, but there's more here. See, Jesus, according to Matthew's gospel, he finds himself next in a wilderness of temptation in Matthew chapter 4. Now, how long was he in the wilderness? That's right, 40 days and 40 nights. Now that's an interesting number, is it not? How long was Israel wandering through the wilderness? Yep, you guessed it. Forty years. So again here we see that Jesus is re-enacting the story of Israel, but instead of succumbing to the temptations and the sins, he conquers them. So, soon after this, Jesus goes up to a mountain and teaches people. This is Matthew chapter 5 – 7, the Sermon on the Mount. And there he gives people instructions about what life is to look like for people of the kingdom. Here Jesus becomes the New Testament version of Moses. It's a re-enactment once more of the story of Israel.

32:51 Okay, let's get back to Romans 3. I'll start back up at verse 21 and I'll read through verse 26.

21 But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. (MH: Or the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who believe.) For there is no distinction, 23 since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; 24 they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; 26 it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.

So, because the righteousness and faithfulness of God has been found in Jesus's own faithfulness, everything changes. Covenant faithfulness is now centered around the ministry of Jesus. It's not centered around Torah keeping any longer. It's not centered around works of Torah. And Paul tells us why in this passage, "*For there is no distinction since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" In other words, if even the Jews are sinful - you know, even the very Jews who were called to be light to the Gentiles, than everyone, Jew and Gentile, will need rescuing by someone else; namely the faithful Israelite. Israel's servant. Abraham's true son. I mean, if everybody is sinful - even if the Jews are sinful, than you're not going to get saved by becoming a Torah keeping Jew. Because all Torah really did was show you your sin. It doesn't make you holy. So, this is the great leveling of the situation. Because of the universality of sin, than everyone is on equal footing. And if that's the case, than we all need to be rescued by someone outside of ourselves - by the faithful Israelite. Physical Israel couldn't do it because they were sinful. Gentiles certainly couldn't do it - absolutely not. It took a faithful Israelite. And that's why from here on out, our faithfulness should be centered around not Torah keeping, but around Jesus. Our faithfulness should be focused on Jesus the Messiah. And that's the point.

And here in this passage, Jesus is called the sacrifice of atonement. Now the word here is **hilastérion** (**ἱλαστήριον**). And in the Greek Old Testament, it was the word used for the cover of the Ark of the Covenant. And this is where the blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement when the nation of Israel was purified and cleansed. And Jesus himself is now the place where people are cleansed. And this cleansing is not just for Israel, but for everybody. Because, again, everyone is sinful. And everyone, Jews and Gentiles, are separated from God. But in Christ, everyone is brought near to God. Now this word, hilastérion is pretty cool because of its Old Testament history. And in the Greek Old Testament, like I said, was the word to describe the cover or the lid on the Ark of the Covenant. And it was on that lid that the blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement.

I pulled out a commentary here by Douglas Moo, or Doug Moo. It's the second edition of his commentary on Romans. I highly recommend everybody gets it. I don't agree with Doug on several things, but he's a great scholar and I love getting his insights on things. And he's got an interesting section here. I was just thumbing through this as I was preparing for this podcast. I would like to read a paragraph. It's kind of a long paragraph, but I think it's worth reading. And it's a section where he talks about the hilastérion, the

lid of the covenant and how that has interestingly now been applied to Jesus himself. Jesus's body is now the place of atonement. Anyway here's what he says. This is the second edition of the Romans commentary page 252 and 253. So he says this,

What Paul means by designating Christ a hilastérion, has been the subject of considerable debate. When the use of hilastérion in the Bible is considered, a strong case can be made for taking the word as a reference to the Old Testament mercy seat. The cover over the Ark where YHWH appeared and on which sacrificial blood was poured. The word refers to this object in its one other New Testament occurrence, Hebrews 9:5, as well as in twenty-one of its twenty-seven Septuagint occurrences. Particularly significant are the several occurrences of the word in the description of Leviticus 16 of the Day of Atonement ritual. According to this text, the high priest is to enter the Holy of Holies once a year and sprinkle on the mercy seat, or upon the hilastérion, the blood of a sacrificial victim thereby making atonement. In the Old Testament Jewish tradition, this mercy seat came to be applied generally to the place of atonement. By referring to Christ as this mercy seat, then, Paul would be inviting us to view Christ as the New Covenant equivalent, or anti-type of this old covenant place of atonement, and derivatively to the ritual of atonement itself. What in the Old Testament was hidden from public view behind the veil, has now been publically displayed as the Old Testament ritual is fulfilled and brought to an end in Christ's once for all sacrifice. This interpretation which has an ancient and respectable heritage, has been gaining strength in recent years. It is attractive because it gives to hilastérion a meaning that is derived from its customary and biblical usage and creates an analogy between an essential Old Testament ritual and Christ's death that is both theologically sound and hermeneutically striking.

In other words, it's fascinating because this ritual of sprinkling blood upon the Ark of the Covenant's lid, upon the hilastérion, was something that was definitely a secluded private matter. The public didn't see this. It was in the Holy of Holies where this happened. But what's fascinating is that for Paul here...again, Paul is a good Jew, he knows his Old Testament text – he's saying the Jesus is the hilastérion and it this happened on the cross. And this was publically demonstrated, God's righteousness, God's faithfulness was publically displayed by Jesus on the cross. Jesus is the new hilastérion. Jesus is the place of atonement.

39:47 This brings us to the last section of Romans chapter 3. So we will read verses 27-31.

27 Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. 31 Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

So like we saw in Romans 2, the Jewish people thought that they were the rescue plan for the world that they were guides to the blind, and lights to those in darkness, and they were correct. That was their calling. That was their vocation. But as we've seen in Romans 3, they have failed to live up to that vocation. We also saw that in Romans 2. And so God has brought a faithful Israelite to do that job. Now that being said, there is no room for boasting. Jews cannot boast in their genealogy. Just because they have Abraham as their father does not mean that they are necessarily in the covenant, or that they are necessarily faithful. No. The story of Israel is really the story of unfaithfulness. Just like the story of Gentiles. Everybody, all people, are unfaithful. And so nobody can boast. Jews cannot boast in keeping their works of Torah. They cannot boast in keeping circumcision or the dietary laws, or what not. No,

these laws are what showed Israel to be distinct and different from the people around them. That's why they had the laws to begin with. What you could call ceremonial laws, these works of Torah, made Israel distinct. Their dietary laws alone made Israel look different from the surrounding nations. These laws, these works of Torah, were what showed Israel to be in covenant with God. They publically displayed the covenant status of the Jews. It's kind of like how a wedding ring shows that you are in covenant with your spouse. It's a public demonstration, a public image of covenant. And these works of Torah were signs and symbols of covenant membership. And because of the gospel Christ, because of the situation here, Jews can't boast in those things anymore, if they were. So what Paul is saying is that Israel cannot boast in having Abraham as their father, or they cannot boast in keeping Torah, they cannot boast in recipients of the covenant because they have not kept covenant. So all boasting has been excluded as a result of the ministry of Jesus. Jesus has come along and publically demonstrated God's faithfulness. Everybody else has come along, Jew and Gentile, and demonstrated unfaithfulness to God.

So in verse 29-30 we read how Paul asks another question – a couple of other questions. I'll read it again just for clarity.

29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

So that part where he says, "God is one". This is a reference back to the Shema. "Hear O Israel. The Lord our God, the Lord is one." That comes from Deuteronomy 6:4. And Paul is bringing that in here. He is subtly alluding to it. And essentially what Paul is saying here is, "Look. We only have one God. And because of that, we should only have one people. The Jesus people." God doesn't have just one group of people. He is ultimately the God of everyone. Yes, it's true. God did originally elect Israel out of all the nations. You know this through Genesis 12 and Deuteronomy 32, but God's goal has always been to bring everyone together in unity. And he has done that through the Messiah. And so Paul ends the chapter with a question. Verse 31.

31 Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law

Now this is a question that needed to be asked. Because to some readers, it might seem like Paul is doing away with the Torah. But he wants to remind everybody that, no, he is operating from thoroughly Jewish world view. This idea that God would bring the nations into covenant is an Old Testament idea, after all. Think of Genesis 12 and Isaiah. And the idea that God would circumcise hearts – it too is an Old Testament idea. Think of Deuteronomy 10:16 and chapter 30:6. In Romans chapter 2 Paul echoes back to those texts. He reminds us of those texts. But in chapter 3 he wants to remind his readers again about them. It's so important to Paul that his readers understand that he is not overthrowing the law by his gospel of faith. No, the gospel does not disregard the law. The gospel fulfills it.

45:05 I think that the takeaway from today's episode is actually pretty simple. God has one people. It is in Jesus the Messiah that the world is healed and brought back to God. Even when God's people failed to be faithful, God will never fail to be unfaithful. He is always faithful to his plan. God doesn't lie. And God's faithfulness is revealed through the faithfulness of the Jesus the Messiah. And we can participate in that faithfulness by believing in Jesus. By giving our allegiance to Jesus. By pledging our own faith to him. See, Jesus is Isaiah's servant. Jesus is the story of Israel in the flesh. He is the one who brings everything together again. He's the glue of the story. Jesus's story is the gospel story. And the gospel is all about unity between previously divided people, between Jews and Gentiles. These two factions can come together again in the Messiah because, you know, at the end of the end of the day, we are all sons and daughters of Adam and Eve. And we all need a Messiah to save us. And thanks be to God, that's why the Messiah came. He came to seek and save those who are lost. And that is good news indeed.

46:27 That's the end of today's episode. And thanks again for listening to The Bible Unmuted. If you like this podcast, consider rating it on your podcast platform, subscribing to it, and sharing with your friends. You

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