



**CHALLENGING  
QUESTIONS...**  
**...DIVINE ANSWERS!**

**THE BOOK OF**

# **ROMANS**

**Chapter 3:1-8**

# Introduction

Scholars have noted, within the past two decades, Paul's frequent use of an ancient rhetorical style: **Diatribē!** **Diatribē** is the asking of a question and then providing an answer, i.e., Rom 3.1-2a; which we will read momentarily.

As most teachers know, questioning is a good teaching tool. Paul anticipated the questions of his readers and provides a response. In our Lutheran context, we talk of this as catechesis: Question (What does this mean?) followed by an answer.

Romans  
3:1-8

# Introduction

In the opening verses of this chapter, Paul defends the value of being a Jew, defends God from the criticism of being unjust, and defends himself from the criticism of encouraging evil in order that good come (vv.1-8). The climax of his discussion of the unrighteousness of all humanity climaxes in vv.9-18, which consists of a series of OT quotations woven into one seamless, vivid, and powerful testimony to universal unrighteousness.

Romans  
3:1-8

# Introduction

**Should a pastor preach this as his initial sermon to a congregation? This is what Paul is doing! Most of us would shy away from such condemning “Law!”**

**However, Paul knows that if the Roman Christians do not fully comprehend their unrighteousness, they will never fully see their complete need for Christ’s righteousness and trust fully in Him for what they do not have.**

**Romans  
3:1-8**

# Romans

## 3:1-2

Paul's two part question in v.1 links back to 2:25-27. As a result of what Paul said in these three verses, one might conclude that the rite of circumcision is not an advantage, and perhaps, is even a burden upon the Jew (cf. Gal. 5:2-3). Such an perception, though, would be misreading Paul. In v. 2, Paul is outlining the *“preeminent advantage”* of being a circumcised Jew: *“Indeed, [it is] primarily that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.”* Now Paul returns to a word that he hasn't used since 1:17 – *faith!*

# Romans

## 3:2

*“Indeed, [it is] primarily that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.” (2b)*

His use of ἐπιστεύθησαν is the Aorist Indicative Passive for of the Greek root word for faith: πιστεύω. This passive form conveys the idea of being “entrusted” with something. It’s also a 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural = They; “...*they were entrusted...*” Such use enforces Paul’s use of the second person singular “you” throughout Romans 2 and is an element of diatribe. Paul will now expand his audience so as to engage more into the discussion of the importance of being entrusted and given faith.

# Romans

## 3:2

Lastly, Paul's use of a very important word answers his two question diatribe. His use of the Greek word for "sayings" "oracles" is very intriguing. The noun that Paul uses is very uncommon and rarely found in Holy Scripture: **λόγια**. "Sayings" <sup>(1)</sup> or "oracles" <sup>(3)</sup> encompass everything that Paul referred to in the opening verse of his letter (1:2). There he refers to "**holy writings**" that is, Holy Scripture.

# Romans

3:2

Thus, Paul's point is that there will be negative consequences surrounding sinful human interaction with God's Holy Law.

Paul affirms that Israel's reception of "...the embodiment of THE knowledge and THE truth..." of God in the Torah (2:20; and also see 7:12) is a great advantage!

# Romans

## 3:3

*<sup>3</sup>What, then, if some were unfaithful? Their faithlessness will not make the faithfulness of God's ineffective, will it?*

**Paul again refers back to 2:17-29, which elicits an inquisitive response in v. 3!**

**He uses a very important word: *some*. In the Greek (τίνες), provides further evidence that Paul's address to the "you" Jew in 2:17-29 is not a blanket condemnation of ALL Jews. When we come to Romans 11:17, we will discuss this topic again, and show that we cannot misinterpret Holy Scripture by saying that God's Word is anti-Semitic.**

# Romans

## 3:3

*<sup>3</sup>What, then, if some were unfaithful? Their faithlessness will not make the faithfulness of God's ineffective, will it?*

**Paul's application of "faith" both to God (v.3) and to believers (1:17) is evident. However, God's faithfulness is fulfilled in Christ Jesus, and is the object of saving faith (1:17). As Paul continues his discussion with the Roman Christians, his use of this dichotomy between God and mankind is only heightened. He will do this by contrast: "truth" and "falsehood," "righteousness" and "unrighteousness."**

# Romans

3:4



*Never may it be! However, let God be true, and every man a liar, just as it stands written: “In order that You may be justified in Your words and You will overcome when You judge.”*

Verse 4 brings out Paul’s point in a very literary way...his use of words are very striking. *“However, let God be true, and every man a liar....,”* The verb “let be” that Paul uses here expresses the idea of transition from one state to another. Not that God changes from untrue to true, but our understanding of God goes from cloudy to clear.

# Romans

3:4



*Never may it be! However, let God be true, and every man a liar, just as it stands written: “In order that You may be justified in Your words and You will overcome when You judge.”*

Paul is saying in essence, *“Let God be seen by us for what He truly is: True!”*

Compared to God, every man (i.e., the thoughts that come from natural man, from the heart!) is a liar. Why? So that you might be proved right when people test what you say. That way, God will receive all the glory. Look how St. John shows he is inspired by The Holy Spirit, as is Paul: **St. John 3:33; 7:18; 8:26.**

# Romans

3:4



*Never may it be! However, let God be true, and every man a liar, just as it stands written: “In order that You may be justified in Your words and You will overcome when You judge.”*

**Paul, though not quoting directly from OT, contrast with the psalmist’s despondent exclamation and between God and Israel (the Jew) (Ps. 116:11). Yet, to suggest that the faithlessness of some Jews might somehow negate God’s faithfulness is a lie!**

# Romans

3:4

*Never may it be! However, let God be true, and every man a liar, just as it stands written: “In order that You may be justified in Your words and You will overcome when You judge.”*

**Yet, Paul reinforces his thought with a quote from Holy Scripture:**  
*“...just as it stands written: ‘In order that You may be justified in Your words and You will overcome when You judge.’”*

# Romans

## 3:4



*...just as it stands written: “In order that You may be justified in Your words and You will overcome when You judge.”*

Paul is using Ps 116 (specifically, verse 4) to recover the “righteousness” language which has been absent since 1:16, 17. Paul is bringing the Jew back to 2 Sam. 11:1 – 12:25 and God’s righteous judgment of King David after being confronted by Nathan and David’s repentant response. Paul’s use of verb “to judge” and noun “judgment” will be repeated throughout chapters 2 and 3 to demonstrate the forensic nature of Paul’s argument.

# Romans

## 3:5-8



In verses 5-8, and as will be made clear in Romans 5, Paul is addressing the basic problem in Judaism (and humanity, in general) of an optimistic anthropology (a trust in what man can do). In other words, most religions teach that human beings are, in essence, good and can use their “righteousness” to win favor with their god(s). Jews did not deny grace, or faith, as vital to one’s righteous status, but they **over-emphasized** that works played a role in one’s righteous status; they denied that man’s righteousness is an **alien righteousness** that is received by God’s grace alone through faith alone.

# Romans

## 3:5-8



**The entire pericope, verses 1-8, speaks of God's identity and activity. Then and now God has spoken to His people. Then and now, His faithfulness is not abrogated by human faithlessness. God is True! And His truth resounds to His great glory. His righteousness is established and repeatedly vindicated in His Words and when He judges.**

# Romans

## 3:5-8



**Therefore, God's Truth, Faithfulness, and His Righteousness do have negative consequences upon those that Paul has described since 1:18 (the unbeliever, the moralists, the Jew).**

**God will properly judge the world and also rightly charge man as a sinner. As a result, in God's righteousness...He rightly brings His wrath upon all the "unrighteousness" of fallen, unrepentant mankind (3:5, as Paul has clearly pointed out in 1:18).**

# Romans

3:5-8



**Lastly, and in a very paradoxical way, all of the activities and characteristics of God provides great assurance to you and me, and all true Christians, that in Christ Jesus, through faith, His faith-full people will be vindicated and DECLARED Not Guilty! Paul will explain the exact how and why as he (and we) continue further in Romans.**

# A Study of the:

## Augsburg Confession June 25, 1530

**NEXT  
WEEK!**

