

# Light Reading/Deep Reading of the Bible

## Romans 3

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## Romans 3

Does "justification by faith" mean that works are unimportant?

**Brief Bible Reading: Romans chapter 3 deals primarily with sin, law, righteousness, and God's plan of redemption for Jews and Gentiles. Jewish Superiority and Responsibility: Paul begins by asking the question: Do Jews have an advantage over Gentiles? His answer was yes, because the Jews were entrusted by God. Even if some people don't believe, God remains faithful, and His righteousness does not change because of unbelief. Paul refuted the false notion that God's righteousness is revealed when we sinned, emphasizing that God's judgment is just. Paul pointed out that both Jews and Gentiles were under the power of sin, and that no one could be justified on his own. He quoted Old Testament passages (e.g., Psalms and Isaiah) to prove the sinfulness of all mankind and show that the function of the law is to convict people of sin, not to be saved by keeping the law. The law convicts a man of his sin, but it does not justify him. Paul explains that God has revealed His righteousness through the redemption of Jesus Christ, which has nothing to do with the law but is obtained by faith. It is the free grace of God that all people, Jew and Gentiles, are justified through faith in Jesus Christ. Christ's death satisfied God's justice and became a sacrifice for sin that saved those who believe in Him. Paul emphasized that this does not abolish the law, but fulfills it, because faith leads people to live true righteousness.**

**This chapter emphasizes the core doctrine of justification by faith, stating that salvation is the grace of God, not by human works. For Christians, it is a reminder to humble ourselves to our sinful nature, to rely on Jesus for salvation, and to respond to God's grace with faith.**

**Does "justification by faith" mean that the works are not important**

**"Justification by faith" is an important concept in Christian theology, especially in the Protestant tradition, derived from passages such as Romans 3:28 in the Bible: "A man is justified by faith, not by the works of the law." Whether this means that behavior is unimportant, however, is an issue that needs to be carefully explored.**

**Core Idea: Meaning of Justification by Faith: This doctrine emphasizes that human salvation and reconciliation to God is achieved through faith in Jesus Christ and not through personal works or merits. Because man's sinful nature prevents him from meeting God's standards through full obedience to the law, he can only be justified through faith in the redeeming grace of Christ. In this view, works are not the basis of justification, but the fruit or manifestation of faith. The Role of Behavior: While justification by faith emphasizes the centrality of faith, it does not mean that behavior is unimportant. The relationship between works and faith is mentioned many times in the Bible, such as James 2:17, "Faith, without works, is dead." This shows that true faith naturally produces good deeds. In the Protestant tradition, works are seen as evidence of faith, not as a condition for salvation. True faith transforms a person's life and prompts them to live a behavior that is in line with God's will. Justification is entirely the grace of God, and works are the result of faith, not the cause of justification.**

**To think that "justification by faith" means that the work is completely unimportant may be a doctrinal misunderstanding. This misconception is sometimes referred to as "cheap grace," the belief that salvation can be achieved by only verbal faith without the need to change lives or take responsibility. Jesus taught in Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that does the will of my Father who is in heaven." This suggests that the act is a test of the truth of the faith.**

**Conclusion: "Justification by faith" does not mean that works are unimportant, but rather emphasizes that salvation is based on faith, not earned by works. True faith naturally flows from good deeds, which are the fruits of faith and reflect one's relationship with God. Behavior is an extension and manifestation of faith, not a substitute for faith.**

**We pray**

**Dear Heavenly Father,**

**Thank You for the faith that enables us to trust in Your love and promises and to remain steadfast in Your grace. Lord, help us not only to believe in our hearts and confess in our mouths, but also to live out Your truth in our daily lives. Let our faith not be empty words, nor temporary emotions, but can be translated into practical actions to love, forgive, help those in need, and persist in doing righteousness in the face of difficulties.**

**Teach us, Lord, that faith without works is dead; Let our lives be witnesses that we may see Your light and glory through our actions. May our faith, like Abraham, be willing to submit to Your guidance; May our actions, like the Lord Jesus, be filled with love, truth, and sacrifice.**

**In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.**

Romans 3

Amplified Bible

All the World Guilty

3 Then what is the advantage of the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? <sup>2</sup> Great in every respect. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God [His very <sup>[a]</sup>words]. <sup>3</sup> What then? If some did not believe *or* were unfaithful [to God], their lack of belief will not nullify *and* make invalid the faithfulness of God *and* His word, will it? <sup>4</sup> Certainly not! Let God be found true [as He will be], though every person *be found* a liar, just as it is written [in Scripture],

“That You may be justified in Your words,  
And prevail when You are judged [by sinful men].”

<sup>5</sup> But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? God is not wrong to inflict His wrath [on us], is He? (I am speaking in purely human terms.) <sup>6</sup> Certainly not! For *otherwise*, how will God judge the world? <sup>7</sup> But [as you might say] if through my lie God’s truth was magnified *and* abounded to His glory, why am I still being judged as a sinner? <sup>8</sup> And why not say, (as some slanderously report and claim that we teach) “Let us do evil so that good may come of it”? Their condemnation [by God] is just.

<sup>9</sup> Well then, are we [Jews] better off than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles) are under the control of sin *and* subject to its power. <sup>10</sup> As it is written *and* forever remains written,

“There is none righteous [none that meets God’s standard], not even one.

<sup>11</sup>

“There is none who understands,  
There is none who seeks for God.

<sup>12</sup>

“All have turned aside, together they have become useless;  
There is none who does good, no, not one.”

<sup>13</sup>

“Their throat is an open grave;  
They [habitually] deceive with their tongues.”

“The venom of asps is beneath their lips.”

<sup>14</sup>

“Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.”

<sup>15</sup>

“Their feet are swift to shed blood,

<sup>16</sup>

Destruction and misery are in their paths,

17

And they have not known the path of peace.”

18

“There is no fear of God [and His awesome power] before their eyes.”

<sup>19</sup> Now we know that whatever the Law [of Moses] says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that [the excuses of] every mouth may be silenced [from protesting] and that all the world may be held accountable to God [and subject to His judgment]. <sup>20</sup> For no [b]person will be justified [freed of guilt and declared righteous] in His sight by [trying to do] the works of the Law. For through the Law we become conscious of sin [and the recognition of sin directs us toward repentance, but provides no remedy for sin].

#### Justification by Faith

<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God has been clearly revealed [independently and completely] apart from the Law, though it is [actually] confirmed by the Law and the [words and writings of the] Prophets. <sup>22</sup> This righteousness of God comes through faith in Jesus Christ for all those [Jew or Gentile] who believe [and trust in Him and acknowledge Him as God’s Son]. There is no distinction, <sup>23</sup> since all have sinned and *continually* fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are being justified [declared free of the guilt of sin, made acceptable to God, and granted eternal life] as a gift by His [precious, undeserved] [c]grace, through the redemption [the payment for our sin] which is [provided] in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God displayed publicly [before the eyes of the world] as a [life-giving] [d]sacrifice of atonement *and* reconciliation (propitiation) by His blood [to be received] through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness [which demands punishment for sin], because in His forbearance [His deliberate restraint] He passed over the sins previously committed [before Jesus’ crucifixion]. <sup>26</sup> *It was* to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the One who justifies those who have faith in Jesus [and rely confidently on Him as Savior].

<sup>27</sup> Then what becomes of [our] boasting? It is excluded [entirely ruled out, banished]. On what principle? On [the principle of good] works? No, but on the principle of faith. <sup>28</sup> For we maintain that an individual is justified by faith distinctly apart from works of the Law [the observance of which has nothing to do with justification, that is, being declared free of the guilt of sin and made acceptable to God]. <sup>29</sup> Or is God *the God* of Jews only? Is He not also *the God* of Gentiles [who were not given the Law]? Yes, of Gentiles also, <sup>30</sup> since indeed it is one [and the same] God who will justify the circumcised by faith [which began with Abraham] and the uncircumcised through [their newly acquired] faith.

<sup>31</sup> Do we then nullify the Law by this faith [making the Law of no effect, overthrowing it]? Certainly not! On the contrary, we confirm *and* establish *and* uphold the Law [since it convicts us all of sin, pointing to the need for salvation].

**Romans Chapter 3, providing an in-depth exploration of the text, including its background, structure, key themes, theological significance, and insights from the original Greek. The analysis references the English Standard Version (ESV) for clarity and consistency, tailored to your request for a deeper understanding.**

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## **I. Background and Context**

**Romans is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Rome, composed around AD 55–57, before Paul visited the city. It is considered Paul’s theological masterpiece, systematically presenting the gospel. Romans 3 serves as a pivotal chapter, building on the themes of human sinfulness and God’s judgment (Chapters 1–2) and introducing the doctrine of justification by faith, which sets the stage for Chapters 4–8.**

### **Context:**

- **Audience:** The Roman church consisted of Jewish and Gentile Christians, with tensions between the two groups (e.g., whether Jews held a privileged status due to the Law).
  - **Purpose:** Paul seeks to unify Jewish and Gentile believers, emphasizing the universal nature of salvation and refuting the idea that salvation comes through the Law.
  - **Cultural Background:** Jews saw themselves as God’s chosen people, privileged by the Law and circumcision. Gentiles were considered “unclean” unless they converted to Judaism.
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## **II. Structure and Detailed Analysis of Romans 3**

### **1. The Advantage of the Jews and God’s Faithfulness (3:1–8)**

#### **Key Points:**

- Paul addresses a hypothetical question: “What advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?” (3:1).
- The Jews’ advantage lies in being “entrusted with the oracles of God” (3:2). The Greek term *λόγια τοῦ Θεοῦ* (*logia tou Theou*, “oracles of God”) refers to the Old Testament Scriptures, particularly God’s covenant with Israel.
- Even if some Jews are unfaithful, God’s faithfulness (*πίστις*, *pistis*, meaning “fidelity” or “trustworthiness”) remains unshaken (3:3–4). Paul quotes Psalm 51:4 (Septuagint): “That you may be justified in your words.”
- Paul refutes a false inference: if human sin highlights God’s righteousness, should we sin more? (3:5–8). He calls this logic absurd, affirming that God will judge sin.

### **Theological Significance:**

- **God's faithfulness and righteousness form the foundation of His redemptive plan, unaffected by human failure.**
- **This section challenges Jewish pride in their covenant status, emphasizing that privilege brings greater responsibility, not superiority.**

### **Application:**

- **For modern believers, this underscores that God's Word (Scripture) is a privilege and a responsibility. We should humbly share the gospel rather than boast in our knowledge.**

## **2. The Universal Sinfulness of Humanity (3:9–20)**

### **Key Points:**

- **Paul concludes: "Both Jews and Greeks are under sin" (3:9). indicates being under sin's power, highlighting its universal dominion.**
- **Paul strings together Old Testament texts (e.g., Psalms 14:1–3, 5:9, 10:7) to form a "chain of condemnation," depicting humanity's depravity: no one is righteous, no one seeks God, all are deceitful and violent (3:10–18).**
- **The Law's purpose is to "make people conscious of sin" (3:20). means "knowledge of sin," showing the Law as a mirror that reveals sin but cannot save.**

### **Theological Significance:**

- **This passage establishes the doctrine of *total depravity*: no one can achieve righteousness on their own.**
- **The Law is not a means of salvation but a "tutor" pointing to Christ (cf. Galatians 3:24).**

### **Application:**

- **This calls for humility, acknowledging our sinfulness and avoiding self-righteousness based on moral or religious efforts.**
- **For evangelism, it emphasizes the need to help people recognize their sin and God's grace as the starting point for the gospel.**

## **3. Justification by Faith (3:21–31)**

### **Key Points:**

- **God's Righteousness Revealed (3:21–22): God's righteousness is revealed apart from the Law, through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ can be interpreted both ways), attested by the Law and the Prophets.**

- **Universal Need and Salvation (3:23–24):** All have sinned and fall short of God’s glory, but are justified freely by God’s through the redemption in Christ.
- **Christ as Propitiation (3:25):** God presented Jesus as a “propitiation” possibly alluding to the Old Testament “mercy seat” (Exodus 25:17–22), symbolizing Christ’s blood satisfying God’s justice and atoning for sin.
- **God’s Justice and Grace (3:25–26):** God’s righteousness is demonstrated in Christ’s death, showing Him as both just and the justifier of those who have faith.
- **Faith, Not Works (3:27–31):** Boasting is excluded because justification comes through faith, not works of the Law. This does not nullify the Law but upholds its true purpose through faith.

#### **Theological Significance:**

- **Justification by faith** is a cornerstone of Protestant theology, emphasizing that salvation is entirely by God’s grace through faith in Christ, not human effort.
- The concept of *propitiation* (*hilastērion*) connects to Old Testament sacrificial systems, showing Christ’s death as fulfilling God’s justice (*propitiation*, satisfying God’s wrath) and cleansing sin (*expiation*).
- Paul underscores the universality of salvation: Jews and Gentiles are equally in need of Christ and saved by faith.

#### **Application:**

- **Personal:** This passage calls us to rely wholly on Christ’s redemption, abandoning pride in self-effort and embracing God’s grace through faith.
- **Church:** It reminds the church to unite in Christ, welcoming all people regardless of background, as the gospel is universal.
- **Ethics:** Justification by faith does not negate good works but places them as the fruit of faith, motivating believers to live out love and justice.

#### **IV. Connections to Other Scriptures**

##### **1. Old Testament Background:**

- Psalm 32:1–2 (quoted in Romans 4:7–8): The blessing of forgiveness.
- Habakkuk 2:4: “The righteous shall live by faith,” foundational to Romans 1:17 and 3:21–31.
- Exodus 25:17–22: The mercy seat, prefiguring Christ’s atonement.

##### **2. New Testament Parallels:**

- **Galatians 2:16:** Reaffirms justification by faith in Christ, not works of the Law.
- **Ephesians 2:8–9:** Salvation is by grace through faith, not works.
- **Hebrews 9:11–14:** Christ, as High Priest, offers His blood for eternal redemption.

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## **V. Modern Application and Reflection**

### **1. Personal:**

- **Humility and Gratitude:** Recognizing our sinfulness fosters gratitude for Christ's redemption and discourages self-centeredness.
- **Living Faith:** Justification by faith is not mere intellectual assent but inspires a life of love and obedience (cf. James 2:17).

### **2. Church:**

- **Unity in the Gospel:** Romans 3 breaks down ethnic and cultural barriers, urging churches to embrace diversity in Christ.
- **Evangelistic Mission:** The universal scope of the gospel calls churches to share Christ with all people.

### **3. Society:**

- **Justification by faith** encourages treating others with grace, avoiding judgment based on moral or religious standards.
- **God's righteousness** inspires Christians to pursue justice and mercy in society (Micah 6:8).

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## **VI. Common Questions and Answers**

### **1. Why can't the Law justify?**

**The Law reveals sin (3:20), but human sinfulness prevents perfect obedience (Galatians 3:10). Christ's death fulfills the Law's demands, justifying those who believe.**

### **2. Does justification by faith mean works are unimportant?**

**No. Justification is by faith, but genuine faith produces good works (James 2:14–26). Works are evidence of faith, not a condition for salvation.**



**3. How does salvation differ for Jews and Gentiles?**

**There is no difference. Romans 3:29–30 affirms God as the God of both Jews and Gentiles, with salvation through faith in Christ alone.**