

DESIDERATA<sup>1</sup>  
ROMANS 3:1-20, WILL THE PRISONER PLEASE STAND  
NOVEMBER 9, 2008

**BIG IDEA: THE VERDICT IS IN—WE DON'T HAVE A LEG TO STAND ON!**

**THE DEFENSE RESTS—silenced**

1. **We gave it our best shot**
  - **We argued that it was God's fault; He wasn't faithful—VERSE 3, Will their *lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness*?**
    - *lack of faith*=the Jews general rejection of Jesus as the prophesied Messiah (per MORRIS)
  - **We argued that it is disingenuous of God to judge; He benefits from our sin! [a weird spiritual co-dependency]—VERSE 7, Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?"**
2. **But none of our arguments get traction:**
  - **God's faithfulness is not contingent on human performance—VERSE 4, Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written: "So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge."** (This is a quotation of **Psalm 51:4**--NOTE: This is David's penitential Psalm re. the Bathsheba Incident.)
  - **God's glory shines brighter in the darkness, but it is not indebted to the darkness.—VERSES 7-8, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?"** <sup>8</sup> Why not say-- as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say-- "**Let us do evil that good may result**"? Their condemnation is deserved.

**THE JUDGE SPEAKS—accountable**

1. **"You squandered your advantage."--VERSES 1-2, What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision?** <sup>2</sup> Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the **very words of God**. [*logia*= "a divine saying," "an oracle," i.e., the entire Old Testament.—MORRIS]
2. **"You are all lawbreakers."--VERSE 9, We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.**
  - **Cf. 1 John 3:4, Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.**
    - **The OT QUOTATIONS:**
      - VERSES 10-12: **Psalm 14:1-3**
      - VERSE 13: **Psalm 5:9; Psalm 140:3**
      - VERSE 14: **Psalm 10:7**
      - VERSES 15-17: **Isaiah 59:7-8**
      - VERSE 18: **Psalm 36:1**
    - **VOCABULARY SIDEBAR: TOTAL DEPRAVITY: Not that every person is as bad as he can be—but no person has any moral claim on the salvation of God.**
3. **"And you all know it!"--VERSE 20, through the law we become conscious of sin.**
  - **The functions of the law:**
    1. **To create moral accountability. Romans 5:13, for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law.**
    2. **To provoke sinning. Romans 5:20, The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more,**
    3. **To create consciousness of sin. Romans 7:7, What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet."**
    4. **To lead us to Christ. Galatians 3:23-25, Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. <sup>24</sup> So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.**

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<sup>1</sup> *Desideratum: Something considered necessary or highly desirable.*

5. **To restrain sinning. Galatians 3:19**, *What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.*
6. **To enhance society. Galatians 5:14**, *The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."*
7. **To witness to Christ's reality. Hebrews 10:1**, *The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming-*

#### INSIGHTS FOR CHRISTIANS TODAY:

1. **We are blessed with the great advantage of having the Word of God.—Verse 2**
  - **2 Timothy 2:15**, *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.* **2 Timothy 3:16**, *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness... THEREFORE, LET'S NOT SQUANDER THE TRUTHS OF THE BIBLE [SEE ROB BELL PASSAGE IN FOOTNOTE]<sup>2</sup>*
2. **God will get His work done with or without us (Let's be sure it's "with us!") Verses 3-5**
3. **Christians are not immune from God's judgment Verses 5-7**
  - **1 Peter 4:17-18**, *For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? <sup>18</sup> And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"*
4. **The freedom of grace must never become license to sin. Verse 8**
  - **Galatians 5:13**, *You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.*
  - **James 2:12**, *Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom,*
5. **My salvation is 100% the result of the grace-based choice of me by God—Verses 9-20**
  - **GRACE=God's riches given to me without respect to His obligation or my merit.**
  - **Romans 5:8**, *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

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<sup>2</sup> Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 26-27. *What if tomorrow someone digs up definitive proof that Jesus had a real, earthly, biological father named Larry, and archaeologists find Larry's tomb and do DNA samples and prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the virgin birth was really just a bit of mythologizing the Gospel writers threw in to appeal to the followers of the Mithra and Dionysian religious cults that were hugely popular at the time of Jesus, whose gods had virgin births? But what if as you study the origin of the word virgin, you discover that the word virgin in the gospel of Matthew actually comes from the book of Isaiah, and then you find out that in the Hebrew language at that time, the word virgin could mean several things. And what if you discover that in the first century being "born of a virgin" also referred to a child whose mother became pregnant the first time she had intercourse?*

*What if that spring [he is playing off the illustration of the springs in a trampoline on which a person bounces. He compares the doctrines of Christianity to springs—they are a means and not an end, p. 22] was seriously questioned?*

*Could a person keep jumping? Could a person still love God? Could you still be a Christian? Is the way of Jesus still the best possible way to live?*

*Or does the whole thing fall apart?*

*I affirm the historic Christian faith, which includes the virgin birth and the Trinity and the inspiration of the Bible and much more. I'm part of it, and I want to pass it on to the next generation. I believe that God created everything and that Jesus is Lord and that God has plans to restore everything.*

*But if the whole faith falls apart when we reexamine and rethink one spring, then it wasn't that strong in the first place, was it?*

*...God is bigger than any religion. God is bigger than any worldview. God is bigger than the Christian faith.*

*....you rarely defend a trampoline. You invite people to jump on it with you.*

*I am far more interested in jumping than I am in arguing about whose trampoline is better. You rarely defend the things you love. You enjoy them and tell others about them and invite others to enjoy them with you.*

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