

Will the Prisoner Please Stand?!

Romans 3:1-20

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)
 - **Cf.** the argument of Moses about annihilation of the wilderness Israel:
 - **Numbers 14:11-23** *The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them? ¹² I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them, but I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they." ¹³ Moses said to the LORD....
¹⁵ If you put these people to death all at one time, the nations who have heard this report about you will say, ¹⁶ 'The LORD was not able to bring these people into the land he promised them on oath; so he slaughtered them in the desert....'
¹⁹ In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now." ²⁰ The LORD replied, "I have forgiven them, as you asked. ²¹ Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth, ²² not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times-- ²³ not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it.*
 - **Cf. 2 Timothy 2:11-13** *Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; ¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; ¹³ if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.*
- **We argued that it is disingenuous of God to judge; He benefits from our sin! [co-dependent]—**
 - **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."
• **VERSE 4** is a quotation of **Psalm 51:4**, *Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.* [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?" ⁸ 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.*
 - **Grace invites abuse and slander.**
 - **Cf.** the brightness of a **rainbow** or a **sunbeam** against the backdrop of angry, dark clouds.

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?* ² *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)*
 - **Inspiration: 2 Timothy 3:16-17**, *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work*
 - **Cf. Romans 9:4-5** *the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. ⁵ Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.*
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: Romans 3:10-12** *As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. ¹² All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”*
 - **Psalms 14:1-3** *They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good. ² The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. ³ All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one. [cf. parallel passage in Psalm 53:1-3]*
 - **VERSE 13: Romans 3:13** *“Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.” “The poison of vipers is on their lips.”*
 - **Psalms 5:9** *Not a word from their mouth can be trusted; their heart is filled with destruction. Their throat is an open grave; with their tongue they speak deceit.*
 - **Psalms 140:3** *They make their tongues as sharp as a serpent's; the poison of vipers is on their lips.*
 - **VERSE 14: Romans 3:14** *“Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”*
 - **Psalms 10:7** *His mouth is full of curses and lies and threats; trouble and evil are under his tongue.*
 - **VERSES 15-17: Romans 3:15-17** *“Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ ruin and misery mark their ways, ¹⁷ and the way of peace they do not know.”*
 - **Isaiah 59:7-8** *Their feet rush into sin; they are swift to shed innocent blood. Their thoughts are evil thoughts; ruin and destruction mark their ways. ⁸ The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths. They have turned them into crooked roads; no one who walks in them will know peace.*
 - **VERSE 18: Romans 3:18** *“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”*
 - **Psalms 36:1** *Of David the servant of the LORD. An oracle is within my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes.*
 - **NO FEAR!!! You better fear God!**
 - **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.**
 - **Attesting Scriptures:**
 - **Romans 3:23** *all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*
 - **Romans 6:23** *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
 - **John 6:44** *“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.*
 - **Ephesians 2:4-5** *because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved.*

- **Ephesians 2:8-10** For it is **by grace you have been saved**, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- ⁹ **not by works**, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
- **MUGGERIDGE:** *The depravity of man is the most empirically verifiable fact but also the most resisted by the human mind--Malcolm Muggeridge (Ravi Zacharias, Cries of the Heart (Nashville: Word, 1998), 112*
 - There is nothing in me that merits heaven and eternal life.
 - There is nothing in me that merits God's grace and forgiveness.
 - There is nothing in me that obligates God to do anything for me.
- **AUGUSTINE:** *In the Confessions, he set out to show that human beings do not begin their lives in innocence, trailing clouds of glory, which then become darkened by the adult environment. No creature is more selfish, he thought, than the baby in the cot: 'If infants do no injury, it is for lack of strength, not lack of will' (C i.11). Henry Chadwick, Augustine—A Very Short Introduction (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 72.*
- *Dear God,*
So far today, God, I've done all right.
I haven't gossiped, haven't lost my temper,
Haven't been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or even overindulgent.
I'm very grateful for that.

*But in a few minutes, God,
I'm going to get out of bed.*

And from then on, I'm probably going to need a lot of help! Amen (by David Mays)

- **GUGGEHIMER:** *Tonight when the clock strikes twelve, the present century will have come to an end. We will look back upon it as a cycle of time within which the achievements of science and in civilization are not less than marvelous. The advance of the human race during the past hundred years has not been equaled by the progress of man within any of the preceding ages. The possibilities of the future for mankind are the subjects of hope and imagination--**Randolph Guggehimer**, New York Board of Education, December 31, 1899 (Senator Robert Torricelli, *In Our Own Words*, Kodansha International, 1999, 1)*
 - But since Randolph spoke those affirming words...
 - World War I
 - World War II
 - Korean War
 - The Red Revolution in China
 - Viet Nam War
 - Palestinian conflict
 - Genocide in Eastern Europe and Africa
 - Drug Cartels in South America
 - **The falsity of the "moral example" theory.**
 - **The falsity of the "divine spark" theory.**

3. "And you all know it!"—

- **VERSE 20, through the law we become conscious of sin. [SEE #3 BELOW]**
- **The FUNCTIONS OF THE LAW:**
 1. **To create moral accountability**
 - **Romans 4:15** *And where there is no law there is no transgression.*
 - **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.*
 - **Silenced/held accountable**
 - *On a job application one question read, "Have you ever been arrested?" The applicant printed the word No in the space. The next question was a follow-up to the first. It asked, "Why?" Not realizing he did not have to answer this part,*

the “honest” and rather naïve applicant wrote, “I guess it’s because I never got caught.” (John C. Maxwell, *Developing the Leader Within You* (Thos. Nelson Publishers, 1993), 35.

- **No excuses; no rationalizations.**
 - **Cf. Adam**
 - **Genesis 3:12** *The man said, "The woman you put here with me-- she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.*
 - **Cf. Saul:**
 - **1 Samuel 15:14-24** *But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?"*
 - ¹⁵ *Saul answered, "The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD your God, but we totally destroyed the rest."*
 - *"But I did obey the LORD," Saul said. "I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king.*
 - ²¹ *The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal."*
 - ²⁴ *Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned. I violated the LORD's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them.*

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."*
- **Romans 7:10-13** *I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. ¹¹ For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. ¹² So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. ¹³ Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.*

4. To lead us to Christ (schoolmaster)

- **Galatians 3:23-25** *Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. ²⁴ So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.*

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."*
- **Romans 13:10** *Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

7. To witness to Christ’s reality

- **Hebrews 10:1** *The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming-*

4. Psst! This Judge has something up His sleeve!

INSIGHTS FOR CHRISTIANS TODAY:

1. **We are blessed with the great advantage of having the Word of God.—AWANA VERSE. V 2**
 - **1 Timothy 4:13** *Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.*
 - **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 3:14-17** *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*
 - **LET’S NOT SQUANDER THE TRUTHS OF THE BIBLE [SEE ROB BELL PASSAGE IN FOOTNOTE]¹**
2. **God will get His work done with or without us (Let’s be sure it’s “with us!”) Vv.3-5**
 - **Matthew 16:18** *And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*
 - **3 John 1:8** *We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men [itinerant missionaries] so that we may work together for the truth.*
3. **Christians are not immune from God’s judgment V. 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? ¹⁸ 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 V.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.*

¹ 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.

- **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—none of works.**
Vv. 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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