

Famous Chapter 3's in the Bible

Romans 3: it's God who justifies

What's up with this chapter?

Sometimes in the Bible we find big words. It's terrible to listen to a sermon in a church and here lofty words. To the regular joe we just need the message plain and simple. One pastor said we should keep the cookies on the bottom shelf so all can reach. Does that mean some people are stupid and need simple answers? Heavens no! It means that we should give the simplest explanation so all can understand. In School, they asked us to preach not using christianese. That means we should speak in plain terms. Romans 3 is not simple, but Paul's insights on God are. Paul goes out of his way to say that God will be the only one to judge you if you need to be judged.

This is a ridiculously hard chapter to explain. Big words like justified go right over our heads. What does that mean? The word means having a legitimate reason. Paul is talking to us all in this chapter. He is saying we can be from any nation or tribe and be justified in the sight of God. It's not what we do but how God sees us. This chapter is famous because many people put restrictions on going to heaven. Some say you must speak in tongues. Others say you have to be of this denomination. There is a certain look that we should have like a non- drinker or smoker. Paul uses this chapter to dispel any reason we might have to look legitimate in Gods eyes.

This chapter is cool because some people say they keep the Ten Commandments. Other people say they are good. Both groups believe they have found the way to live in order to go to heaven. Romans 3 ruins this party. Paul says in Romans 3:23 "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." This is one of the most famous verses in the entire Bible. Why? There are

people who think they are clean and good in Gods eyes. This verse lets us know how God feels about people. Psalm 14 says “**there is no one who is righteous, not one.**” Paul quotes this verse because he gets God. If we have any standing in heaven it will be by Gods rules and Gods way.

Read Romans 3 with an open mind twice. What is an open mind. Some people read the Bible and say so what. Another person will say this is hard reading. I get that. An open mind is where you read the words with a theme in mind. The theme of this chapter is two things. One is faith. Some people say they are faithful as a Jewish person. Think of faith as in God alone. It’s not who you are but how God views you. The second thing is who gets into heaven. Paul gives us some examples of People who believe they will enter heaven because they believe they will. Ask yourself as you read this chapter: Does God see me the same way I see me. Am I going to heaven because I think I’m good or God thinks I’m good. There is a difference. Next week I will painfully try and unravel this famous chapter 3 in Romans.

Romans 3. What makes it famous?

It is insane to think I could give you a fun interpretation of Romans 3. This chapter by Paul in the New Testament is mind busting. All this talk of justification, the law, and faith. This is theology 101. Theology is so boring, isn’t it? Ok, let me give it a try. Imagine being in a conversation about some serious topic like women’s rights or ideology of the Liberal politician. In Paul’s time, I believe he was confronting the ongoing issues that arose. He uses a letter to Jewish Christians in Rome as a sounding board to help people understand. The issue was that God is Holy and we are not. How can the two mix?

This chapter is famous because Paul explains God and our role in this relationship. Much of our Christian understanding of that relationship between God, the Bible, and us is explained in Romans 3. Paul begins in a very smart way. We tend to believe something is right or wrong based on things our eyes can see. We learn things from words we hear. Paul tells the readers that the words of the Bible are sacred. The message they give is to be told by Jewish people. God entrusted the Jewish community to tell the Bible to people. They were to be the keepers of the “Oracles of God.”

If we can hear the words or see the words written down it helps. That was the job of the Jewish nation. In verse 2 Paul uses the Phrase “Oracle of God.” Oracle means “Word”. Some of those words are the laws God gave us to follow. In Paul’s day, the basic laws of God had been turned into tough rules that put a strain and burden on the people. The law or word of God was everything to the religious rulers. What it came down to is that if you said you kept the law then it was believed that God loved you. Paul uses Romans 3 to break that belief.

This is what makes Romans 3 famous. God is of Good character. I suppose that is a no brainer but in Bible terms, the words tells us that. The character of God made good laws because he is good. Keeping the good laws is a good thing. Paul then switches the understanding. People are not good just because they follow the good laws. The law was a measuring stick to prove we are all sinners. Verse 20 plainly says that following this law is good but it does not make us good. Further to that, God looks more holy as we fail to be holy.

Paul then attempts to say that making God look good is a good thing. So, should we sin to make God look good? I love it that Paul says “heavens no.” So, where does that leave sinners and a holy God? This issue is also what makes this chapter famous. Paul tells us we are not justified (legitimate) by keeping the law because in all reality we can’t. In Jewish terms, we are

to make a sacrifice to pay for our sins to God. That is the way it has worked for thousands of years. Paul's readers knew that. He then introduces that Jesus died and became the last sacrifice to replace our sin; the effects of the law; and our unholy situation with God. Jesus paid a price so we could all go to heaven. In church, this is what they talk about all the time. They got this idea from Paul in Romans 3. Next week let's see what we can learn through this thing called faith.

What we can learn?

I have been stunned to know that people in the church are given titles. I know who they are. Some men say they are one of the pastors. Others say they are head or lead pastor. I have seen elders stand in groups after a service with their hands in their pockets talking among themselves. They all wear ties. It's splitting hairs but we all know they look important. I was in a Christian university where one Professor demanded we call her Doctor because she had a degree. Either way, people want prominence inside and outside the church.

Romans 3 warns against that. I believe Paul had witnessed the split in the room. Some were Jews and some were gentiles. Each were claiming Jesus was for them first. The words justified and sanctified are used as a heavy club in religious circles. Do you understand and live by those words? You're either with the in crowd or out. Paul is annoyed. God decides who is in his heaven. The Oracles of God (word) was for everyone. To be fair, for thousands of years it appeared that God chose the Jewish nation only. If you really read the Old Testament you would find gentile involvement in God's plan all along.

Why this chapter is famous is because we are all a part of everybody. There is no acceptance formula. The God market was not cornered by Jewish, gentiles (everyone else), rich, poor, law keeper, or sinner. It's important to understand that God judges based on his rules. If

you take out having to follow the law or having to sacrifice, then what is the rules for entering heaven? Paul points out that knowing the character of God is helpful. God is good. Only the good enter heaven. Well if we were all sinners then are we screwed? What it comes back to is the last section of this chapter: faith.

Jesus is God's son. If that is true, then Jesus is a part of God. That means he is good. They say that Jesus died as a sacrifice for us. What that means is that our sin is covered by Jesus goodness. It does not make us good, but it is the price of admission. If we believe Jesus was willing to pay our way into heaven, then we have faith in Jesus. That faith is good enough for God. In heaven, God will look upon us and see the faith for his son's sacrifice. To God that is good enough.

The final thought is time. Your time spent trying to be good enough is ridicules. Being the most important person is a waste of time. It is good if you become important. It is good if you are good. Just remember than acting important and acting good don't get you into God's kingdom. Having faith that in spite our sin that Jesus is good enough to get us in is important. What we do with our goodness and our important status is important too. To be Jewish means you have a responsibility to give Gods word. The elder is responsible for running God's church. The good Christian is responsible for upholding the character of God. That is why Romans 3 is famous.