

The Roman Road to Salvation

The most important question that anyone can ask is, "What must I do to be saved?" This question may be asked in other forms. For example, someone may say, "How can I be sure that all my sins are forgiven?" They may wonder, "What will happen to me after I die?" However the question is phrased, the facts remain the same. All men have sinned and fallen short of God's glory.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
Romans 3:23

Fortunately, the Bible has the answer to all the above questions and to the problem of man's sin. In Paul's letter to the church at Rome, he sets forth in a very clear and logical progression, God's plan to save man from sin. This explanation is covered in the first five chapters of Romans. Obviously, in this article we cannot deal with every verse in those chapters. We can however deal with four key verses that summarize the conclusions that Paul draws. These four verses are identified by Paul's use of the word "therefore". In understanding the conclusions that are drawn in these verses we will find the way to eternal life as we follow the *Roman Road to Salvation*.

Man's problem

The first conclusion that Paul draws in the book of Romans is found at the beginning of chapter 2.

Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. Romans 2:1

Paul begins by pointing out that there is no excuse for man's condition. We will never be able to point a finger of blame at our family, our friends, our government, or any other outside influence as a justification for our sin. In the final analysis, every man stands guilty, without excuse, before a holy God. This guiltiness extends to every part of man's existence. Our being is totally consumed by sin.

In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul points out that God's desire is to redeem every part of our existence.

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. I Thessalonians 5:23

Obviously, if every part of man, spirit, soul, and body, needs to be redeemed, then every part of man must now be under the stain of sin. As we look at the fall of man we see that this is the case. In the book of Genesis, the fall of man and its consequences are described.

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that

they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. Genesis 3:7

Man is unique among God's creatures in that he was created with a spirit that allows him to have knowledge of God. When man sinned, his spiritual eyes were opened and he came to know evil. Man's spirit, which was created to know only God and His righteousness, now knows the evil of sin.

And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. Genesis 3:8

Man's soul is the seat of his emotion and will. It is with our soul that we can feel affection toward others, including God. When man sinned, his soul, which was created to be a friend of God, became God's enemy. As enemies of God Adam and Eve hid from His presence, rather than communing with Him as they had before the fall.

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. Genesis 3:19

Man's body was created to be the eternal dwelling place of his soul and spirit on earth. When Adam and Eve sinned, their bodies began to die and eventually they returned to the ground from which they had been taken.

So, we see that every part of man's existence is affected by the entry of sin. This truth is repeated and reinforced in Paul's description of man in Romans 1.

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Romans 1:24

God gave man up to dishonor his body.

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: Romans 1:26

God gave man up to vile affections. The soul is the center of the affections of man.

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Romans 1:28

God gave man over to a reprobate mind. The spirit is the seat of man's intellect.

This description in Romans 1 leads to Paul's conclusion at the beginning of chapter 2 that man is without excuse.

There is one point in this regard that we should add. Some

may be questioning how the sin of Adam and Eve could affect our existence many thousands of years later. This question is answered in Romans 5.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. Romans 5:12-14

The fact that all men die is evidence that the sin of Adam has been transferred to all of us. In Adam, we stand guilty and condemned, without excuse. Moreover, the sin that we inherit from our father Adam will always ultimately produce acts of sin in our lives.

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. Revelation 21:8

While some may object that they have never done anything "really bad" the above verse indicates that even liars will take their place with murderers and idolaters in the lake of fire. None of us, no matter how righteous we may claim to be, can deny having ever told a lie. If we do deny it, we have become guilty of the very sin we are denying.

Man's **problem** is that he stands before God spiritually dead, guilty, and without excuse.

God's Proof

In Romans 3, Paul has been continuing his indictment of mankind. His conclusion about man is that he is totally without righteousness.

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: Romans 3:10

As proof of his accusation, Paul draws his second conclusion in the book of Romans.

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Romans 3:20

Most people believe that the law was given as a way to become righteous. They believe that in the keeping of the law they can attain righteousness. In reality, the law was given to prove to man that he cannot be righteous through his own efforts. Two of the smallest words in the English language are two of the biggest words in the law, "if" and "do".

And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us. Deuteronomy 6:25

Notice that the law could only make a man righteous *if* he observed to *do* all it's commandments. The problem is that no one can *do* the 10 moral commandments of the law, (let alone the 600 plus other commandments) perfectly for all his life. Every broken law of God stands as proof of man's sinfulness.

If someone objects that they have only broken one or two of God's laws, and that they have never broken one of the "big

ones", James has a message for you.

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. James 2:10

If someone objects that they have never broken *any* law of God, Jesus Christ has a message for you.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. Matthew 5:27,28

No one can withstand the withering scrutiny of the law, especially as described by Jesus Christ. No one can claim absolute purity, not only in action but also in thought.

The broken law of God is proof of man's sinful condition and every time we break, or even think about breaking, even one of God's laws we are declared guilty of breaking all His laws. The law condemns us by giving *proof* our sinfulness.

Christ's Propitiation

Paul's next conclusion comes in response to a question that could be asked about his last conclusion. If man cannot attain salvation by keeping the law, then how can we be saved?

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Romans 3:28

Our salvation, our justification, comes by faith. The question we must now be concerned with is, "What should our faith be placed in; what is the object of our faith?" This is a vital question because our faith is only as good as the object in which it is placed. It is a very popular notion today to believe that all "people of faith", regardless of what God that faith is placed in, are saved. This teaching makes the act of having faith a work and rewards man for that work. This is contrary to what Paul has already told us about man. God accepts none of our works.

The object in which our faith must be placed is found in the verses immediately preceding Paul's conclusion. Our faith must be placed in the redemption that comes through the shed blood of Christ on Calvary's cross.

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Romans 3:24

Paul also explains in this passage *why* faith in Christ is the *only* faith that is sufficient to save. Faith in Christ saves because Christ was faithful to God the Father's plan of redemption and the Father in turn was faithful to the sacrifice made by His son.

Paul refers several times in his writings to the faith *of* Christ. One of those times is in the passage we are currently considering.

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: Romans 3:21,22

The righteousness of God that brings salvation is available to us through the faith *of* Christ. The first person who believed in God's plan of redemption was Jesus Christ. It was His faith in

what God was going to accomplish through the cross that motivated Him to endure it. If Christ had not had faith in the Father's plan, He would never have gone to the cross. This is why the faith of Christ is such an important part of our salvation. As an interesting side note, we should mention that the Authorized King James Bible is the only popularly available English Bible that translates these verses about the faith of Christ properly. Another reason to believe that the King James Bible is the only word of God for English speaking people today.

Paul also makes reference to the faith of God the Father and the role that it plays in our salvation.

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; Romans 3:25

The word "propitiation" simply means satisfaction. The blood of Christ is a satisfaction for sin. Who is it that is offended by our sin? Whose justice must be satisfied? Our sin offends a holy and righteous God. He must be satisfied with the sacrifice that is offered for sin. The sacrifice that satisfied the Father was the blood of Christ. By faith, God the Father accepts the blood of Christ as the complete and final payment for sin.

When we place our faith in Christ's death on the cross as payment for our sin, we are simply putting our faith in agreement with the faith of Christ and the faith of the Father. We are agreeing with them that Christ's blood is the *propitiation* (satisfaction) for the penalty of sin.

Peace with God

Paul's final conclusion involving our salvation is found at the beginning of the fifth chapter of Romans.

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: Romans 5:1

In this verse, Paul tells us the result of our salvation. Once we have received salvation as a gift of God, by faith, we have peace with God. We need not worry about the condemnation and wrath of God. This fact guarantees the permanence of our salvation. Because we have peace with God, we are eternally secure.

The security that our salvation brings is the result of being placed into Christ and being identified completely in Him.

Our acceptance by God the Father is "in Christ".

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved [Christ]. Ephesians 1:6

Our perfection and completeness are "in him".

For in him [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: Colossians 2:9,10

Our position and blessing include "all things" given to us "with him".

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Romans 8:31,32

The truth of our position in Christ and the peace that it gives us is one of the most wonderful truths in all of Scripture. God is always "for us", and never "against us". Many believers today live under the false impression that God is just waiting for them to step out of line so that He can punish them. However, the truth of Scripture is that being at "peace with God" means that He is *not* pouring out His wrath on us. It means He is *not* punishing us for sin. It means He is *not* chastening us. It means that we can *relax* and *rest* in who we are in Christ, and never fear God's judgement again. This is the thought that Paul uses to conclude the eighth chapter of Romans.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38,39

As with all the blessings that we listed above, God's love for us is "in Christ Jesus our Lord". God loves us with the same love that he has for Jesus Christ. While it is certainly true that God loves all men and desires them to be saved, the intimate type of relationship that he has with His Son is reserved for those who are saved. Only believers are at *peace* with God.

The Roman Road to Salvation

We have seen Paul lay out a very definite course to salvation. Along the way, there are some important signposts for us to keep in mind. He began by pointing out our *problem*. We are without excuse, guilty before a holy and righteous God. Paul then points to the law as *proof* of that guilt. Every time we break God's law, it gives testimony to our sinfulness. Once our problem has been clearly demonstrated, Paul points to the *propitiation* of Christ as the solution to the problem. Only Christ's blood can satisfy the justice of an offended God. Finally, Paul gives us the good news of what results from our faith in Christ. We have *peace* with God. We need never fear God's judgment or wrath again.

Take a trip down the *Roman Road to Salvation* today and at its end you will find redemption, forgiveness, salvation and blessing!

