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Living Hope EFC

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Unless help arrives death is sure, all is lost... Romans 3:1-20

ILLUS: John Griffith's Son

Back in the days of the Great Depression a Missouri man named John Griffith was the controller of a great railroad drawbridge across the Mississippi River. One day in the summer of 1937 he decided to take his eight-year-old son, Greg, with him to work. At noon Griffith put the bridge up to allow ships to pass and sat on the observation deck with his son to eat lunch. Time passed quickly. Suddenly he was startled by the shrieking of a train whistle in the distance. He quickly looked at his watch and noticed it was 1:07 – The Memphis Express, with 400 passengers on board, was roaring toward the raised bridge! He leaped from the observation deck and ran back to the control tower. Just before throwing the master lever he glanced down for any ships below. There a sight caught his eye that caused him horror. Greg has slipped from the observation deck and had fallen into the massive gears that operate the bridge. His left leg was caught in the cogs of the two main gears! Desperately John's mind whirled to devise a rescue plan. But as soon as he thought of a possibility he knew there was no way it could be done.

Again, with alarming closeness, the train whistle shrieked in the air. He could hear the clicking of the locomotive wheels over the tracks. That was his sound down there – yet there were 400 passengers on the train. John knew what he had to do, so he buried his head in his left arm and pushed the master switch forward. That great massive bridge lowered into place just as the Memphis Express began to roar across the river. When John Griffith lifted his head with his face smeared with tears, he looked into the passing windows of the train. There were businessmen casually reading their afternoon papers, finely dressed ladies in the dining car sipping coffee, and children pushing long spoons into their dishes of ice cream. No one looked at the control house, and no one looked at the great gearbox. With wrenching agony John Griffith cried out at the steel train: 'I sacrificed my son for you people! Don't you care?'

- Green, 309

Freedom has always come at the cost of someone's life! A fact we celebrate on July 4th every year.

What a clear depiction of what Paul has been telling us in Rom.1-3

- On this train were people of varied moral & religious lifestyles (**R.1-2**)
- **ALL** – were helplessly on their way to sure death! **1:18, 2:5**
- No amount of pleading, crying, religion, human efforts/ status helps.

APPLY: Help comes from Another, One outside mankind, or he is lost.

- 1 Cor.15:22 "In Adam all die, in Christ all shall be made alive."

Paul has been going into detail to shock man into understanding his perilous condition. It would be nice if we would all learn by a word of instruction or correction, but most of us need harsh realities to wake us.

As we begin chapter 3, Paul answers several questions/ objections he assumes will be presented by his Jewish audience, then makes his final indictment against Jew & Gentile – leaving no room for man's acquittal.

- The whole picture is that of the courtroom & legal prosecution.

Q.1: **3:1**. Doesn't being a Jew give some advantage with God?

A. **3:2 = Yes**, you have the promises/ Law/ Tabernacle/ Prophets of God.

- **2:17-20** – *These are REAL advantages!*
- If you had lived in OT days, would you want to be a Jew or Gentile?
- **Israel knew God in a way that people without the Bible did not!**
- **Today**, would you rather be born in the U.S., or in Iraq, Iran or India?
- America has known God in a way other countries have not. We have our seminaries, Bibles, know God's will, churches, superior moral laws. *And all of these are very legitimate advantages!*
- But all of these are gifts meant to bring us to the Savior! **Have they?**
- Has God's kindness brought us repentance or rebellion? (**2:4,5,24**)

Circumcision:

2:25-29: Not even circumcision will get the Jew into heaven.

- μὲν: Ritual without reality = unrighteousness. – See **John 8:31-44**.
- δέ: Reality without ritual = righteousness. – **Acts 10:28-45** Cornelius.

POINT: Abraham was given circumcision as a sign of the Cov't God made with him, because of Abraham's faith: **4:11**.

- The Jews confused the "sign" with the faith *relationship* it represented

The Talmud states: (Jewish Commentary on Law): *H.C.G.Moule*

"Circumcision is equivalent to all the commandments that are in the Law.

"The wise men have said, that Abraham our father sits at the door of hell, and does not suffer any one that is circumcised to be cast into it," –259

ILLUS Today: Baptism – the symbol of faith in Christ.

Marriage ring – the symbol of a love relationship.

POINT: You can be married without a ring, and the ring means nothing if you're not married. It is a lie! Pretending a relationship that doesn't exist.

- Religious symbols, ceremonies, holy days, sacraments, education – do not make us different on the inside. None of these take away sins.

Q: What have we done with our advantage?

Schaeffer: Makes some points to consider.

(1) "God had put Jerusalem in the midst of the nations for a purpose. Israel's purpose was to speak of God's existence and His character, and to call other nations to God. *Jonah* is an outstanding example of Israel's failure to do this...They have done the exact opposite.

The reality of God should have been seen in the righteous lives of the people who worshiped in His house...But because of their sin, God stopped protecting them, & the other nations could now say, 'Their God is just like any other God.' Israel's immorality caused other nations to blaspheme God (2:24)," *The Finished Work*, 57-58. >**Romans 11:20-23!**

(2) "Unfortunately the same can often be said of Christians today. Too often people of other religions who come in contact with Christians go away disgusted. Almost all the great blasphemous leaders of the world today have been instructed in our universities and have gone away untouched and disgusted. At the same time, God has often withdrawn His hand of

protection and allowed people from Christian backgrounds to fall to the influence of ideologies such as atheistic communism or pagan religions of the East. Our situation is **exactly parallel** to that of the Jews in Bible times," 58.

(3) All of the major "Christian" nations from past history into our day have known the truth and have deliberately turned away from it...Instead of being missionaries we have caused nonbelievers to blaspheme," 59.

Q.2: **3:3**. Will Israel's unbelief nullify God's promises/ faithfulness?

"Paul, if what you say is true, aren't you saying that Israel's unbelief has caused God's promises for Israel to fail? (Gen.12, 2 Sam.7, Prophets?)

- **Q:** Can man's disobedience nullify God's plans/ sovereignty?
- **A:** - **3:4**. Never! - **Acts 2:23 Rom.11:25-33! Oh the depths...**
- **God does not depend upon man's ability to bring about His plans in history, any more than He does for man's salvation.** Man is inept!

Q.3: **3:5,7** If our sin only enhances God's greatness, how can God then judge us? We are, in effect, glorifying God by our sin.

Here is an example of how *twisted* man's reasoning can be (1:21,25).

ILLUS: It would be like saying...Because the bombing of the Twin Towers on **9/11** – caused a renewed zeal for American patriotism, & strengthened our national unity and military, *HOW can we condemn the terrorists?* Their terrorism actually helped us become a better country?

- Evil – is justified. "All works together for good." - **Isaiah 5:20**.

Paul's Answer: 3:6,8. While God is great enough in His wisdom to overrule evil, even the evil of the Cross, to turn all upon His glory, this never changes the character of EVIL. God will judge evil and those who refuse to repent, while forgiving all who repent & accepting them as sons

Verse 8: This same mischaracterization takes place today.

Moule: "The mighty paradox of justification without works lent itself easily to the distortions." - Jews thought Christians – Anti-nomians.

- *Today:* "You Christians think all you have to do is believe and you can do whatever you want, and you'll go to heaven."

Paul's final indictment against Jew & Gentile/ Mankind: **3:9-20**.

3:9 The Charge! All mankind is "under sin."

- Jew or Gentile, it makes no difference. All came from the same origin
- Paul does not say: "All men are sinners," BUT "All are UNDER sin."
- **Under SIN'S dominion.** 3:23; 6:12, 14, 23; 7:5,18; 8:8. DEAD in sin

D.R. Davies: "The supreme irony of the human situation in every age is that the one thing, and only thing, in which all mankind is concretely at one is sin. And the irrational paradox of it is that it makes any other sort of unity impossible. The unity for which men strive in various ways

is always being negated by the unity for which they never need to strive – the unity of sin.” - *Bib.Sac.*, April 1974, Johnson

3:10-18 Paul's 14 Count Indictment! The Proof presented!

1. **V.10**- Not even one person is righteous.
 - a. This is not Paul's opinion, but God's-with unlimited exposure.
 - b. Paul uses the Jewish Bible to prove his point: **Ps.14:1-3**.
2. **V.11**- No one understands. Even with God's Word – man has not judged correctly the spiritual truths God has given; **1 Cor.2:7-9, 14**.
3. **V.11**- No one seeks God. Not even the Jews **Jn.8:44**. Not even Adam!
4. **V.12**- All have turned aside/ away.
5. **V.12**- All are worthless; (gone bad, soured – used of fruit or milk).
 - a. A rotten apple may look good on one side...
6. **V.12**- None does good, not one! **Mark** 10:17,18; 7:20-23; Is.64:6
 - These **first 6** indictments have dealt with the **extent of sin**: ALL MEN.
 - The **next 8** describe the "**depth**" of sin in man: from head to foot.
7. **V.13**- Throats are open graves. **Matt.12:34** –
 - a. Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. Psalm 5:9
8. **V.13**- Their tongues practice deceit.
9. **V.13**- Poison of asps under their tongues, Ps.140:3. Mt.23:33 Snakes.
10. **V.14**- Mouths full of cursing & bitterness.
11. **Vs.15**- Feet are swift to shed blood.
 - a. The feet act in harmony with man's mouth and heart.
12. **Vs.16**- Ruin and Misery mark their paths.
 - a. *Archeology* = truly the study of the "ruins" of past civilization
 - b. This is a summary of history since creation.
13. **Vs.17**- They do not know the way of peace.
 - Many today seek the way of peace in the world. Who has found it?
14. **Vs.18**- There is no fear of God before their eyes. Prov.1:7

3:19-20 The Verdict! No one is righteous, nor is there any hope.

Jew and Gentile alike have known innately the laws of God.

- All men know by instinct, intuition, conscience – that they are responsible to their Creator! (1:21, 2:14) All are without excuse!
- **The very Law the Jew thought was his boast & his advantage, is his judge!** Law cannot save. It only pinpoints all our failures!

This was the world in Paul's day, and it is no different today!

- We have built up an enormous debt against God! Unpayable.
- When God shows us His ledger – our mouths are shut, silenced!

APPLY: We are all on the **1:07** – the **Memphis Express**. The drawbridge is up and we are heading for eternal doom. *Off the cliff of eternity!*

- We can scramble, cry, believe in our selves (in human potential), in science, politics, social progress – **but none of these cure the problem of SIN.** They only address symptoms.
- The train rushes on closer and closer as time for each life runs out.

3:21- “BUT NOW...” Romans 5:6-10

God does not look to man to help himself. God begins with another source altogether. He looks to Himself. He alone knows what must be done. He alone can do what must be done. ***He pays for our sins!***

- He closes the drawbridge for everyone who comes to Him.
- **His love would save us, at the expense of His Only Son.**

NOW – we must make our choice. And eternity turns upon it.