

Dr. Craig Keener, Romans, Lecture 5, Romans 2:1-3:23

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This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Romans. This is session 5 on Romans 2:1-3:23.

I'm not going to do all of Romans in the same level of detail that I did in the first chapter.

Often when I teach in a book, I'll do the first part in more detail because we can show how much detail we can go into if we want to. But then you do that much detail on everything, the course becomes very long.

So, moving now to Romans 2, which presupposes Romans 1. Romans 1 is a setup in a sense for Romans 2, starting with verse 18, the Gentiles are lost. Well, now he's going to show that actually everybody's lost, Romans 2.

God's impartial judgment, chapter two, verses one through 16. Diatribe was a common lecture style where you also find, you find it in this section, you find it in chapter three, verses one through nine, chapter nine, and verses 14 through 24. It's the kind of lecture-style Stoics sometimes used.

Epictetus uses that in his writings. It's like you ask rhetorical questions as a way of engaging your audience. And sometimes you directly address somebody in the You have an imaginary interlocutor, which allows you to demolish potential arguments against your position.

So, you make an argument, well, but you might say this, and then you demolish that argument without having to worry about a real interlocutor bringing up something you hadn't thought of. But in any case, Paul had debated enough in synagogues, he probably heard a lot of different arguments. The interlocutor here, is the interlocutor here in verse three Jewish, or does that only happen in verse 17 where the interlocutor is explicitly Jewish? Well, probably he's implicitly addressing the same interlocutor through the whole chapter.

So, in light of verse 17, if you hadn't realized it before, you realize you have to go back and read the whole chapter that way. Why? Because of what we know in verse two, Paul says, this is what we know. Verse four, this is what the interlocutor should know.

And there's also a continuity of subject matter. 2:9, and 10, and 12 through 15 have a continuity of subject matter with 2:25 to 29. But it's subtle in the first section.

Paul is still preparing his rhetorical trap for what's going to happen later. He says, oh man, in chapter two, verse one, and in verse three, and in chapter nine, verse 20, it was a way of singling out a here, a rhetorical practice called apostrophe. It was a common rhetorical device.

And we see that the sinners implicitly condemned themselves in 1:29 to 31. They recognize that such behavior merits death. They know better and they deserve divine judgment in two, three, and five.

The morally lax Gentiles excuse themselves. The strict Jews condemn themselves, but in 2:15, all are condemned. This language appears elsewhere in this context too.

In Romans 1:32, they excuse themselves. 21, they condemn those who do this, but both approaches of sinners. 1:20 for the Gentiles, 2:15 for his Jewish hearers.

Both approaches of sinners are inexcusable. Paul builds a syllogism. A syllogism is an argument with a major premise, a minor premise, and therefore, a conclusion.

They commit these sins, verse one, such sins merit God's judgment, verse two, and also back in 1:32, the last verse of chapter one. Therefore, in verse three, they will not escape God's judgment. That's a rhetorical trap of its own.

Most thinkers, most moralists condemned such inconsistency, whether they were Jewish or Gentile, but he's going to make a more explicit challenge in 2:17 through 25 against inconsistency, against hypocrisy. This section here, the syllogism at the beginning prepares for his warning against judging cultural differences in 14, 3 and 4 and 10 and 13. Who are you to judge? Well, if that's true for sins, then it should be true for other things too.

In chapter two, verses four and five, we read about God's mercy. God's mercy gives space for repentance. God's mercy here brings righteousness, not simply blessing sinners in their sin.

It's pretty clear in verse four. Jewish hearers should know God's kindness was what led people to repentance, 2:4. And in terms of those who refuse to turn to God and those who do return to God, Paul uses the language of treasuring up something in heaven. Jewish people spoke of treasuring up rewards in heaven.

You hear Jesus doing the same thing in the Gospels. You have it in the Jewish apocryphal book of Tobit chapter four, treasuring up rewards in heaven. But here, what these people are stirring up in verse five is wrath.

Verses 6 through 11, you have a chiasm, a chiastic structure. Sometimes you pronounce it chiasm, but some scholars have really overdone this. They've tried to make everything in the Bible into a chiasm by using things unevenly.

Like they'll take one or two words out of a paragraph and then compare it with something later on and just ignore the rest of the paragraph. People can force things into chiastic structure, but this is one of the more persuasive ones. Verse six, God repays each according to their works.

And then in 2:11, because God is impartial. So, the impartiality of God was a major theme in ancient literature. But if you're going to have a chiastic structure, it's an inverted parallel structure.

So, he starts with one note. We often label it this way. This is A and then the last part is A prime.

The next note will be B and then you have B prime and then C in the middle or C and C prime. Or you might have more letters than that. Or sometimes it's just A, B, B, A. But anyway, God repays them according to their works.

Verse 6, God is impartial, and verse 11.

Verse 7 and verse 10.

Verse seven, to those who do good, seeking glory and honor. And verse 10, but glory and honor to those who do good.

And then in the middle, verses eight and nine, but wrath to those who disobey the truth, suffering to those who do evil.

So, he drives home the point, that this is part of God's impartiality, part of God's fairness. Yes, he'll reward the righteous. And yes, he will judge the wicked.

And so, well, that's what you see in chapter one. God's righteousness is revealed from heaven and it's revealed to those who trust in him. And his wrath is toward those who follow idols and also commit all these other kinds of sins, including slander, boasting, and so forth.

God's ethnic impartiality, 2, 6, and 11. Well, 2, 9, and 10 explicitly say he will judge both Jew and Gentile. And later on, in this chapter in verses 12 through 15, both those with the law of Moses and those with only natural law.

Those with greater revelation are more accountable. Remember Amos chapter three and verse two cited earlier. You alone have I chosen among all the families of the earth.

Therefore, I will judge you for your iniquities, declares the Lord. Jesus also says this in his teachings, that the servant who knew his master's will and didn't do it will be beaten with many stripes. The servant who didn't know the master's will and didn't do it will be beaten with fewer stripes.

Jewish people knew that God judges people by their deeds. The surprise here is that God's own people are not favored. In fact, Paul says they're judged more strictly because they know better.

And today this would apply to people who've been raised in church or people who've heard more of the gospel and the teachings. Judge more strictly because they know better, 2.12 to 15, 3.20, 7.7 to 11. Knowledge of the law makes you more responsible for obedience to the law.

Everybody acknowledged impartiality. Both Jew and Gentile said that's the right way for a deity to be. The Old Testament often spoke of God's impartiality as a judge, but it wasn't usually applied in ethnic terms.

Well, he'll judge the Gentiles the same way as he'll judge us and vice versa. Who does the good works for eternal life here? This is something scholars often debate. Well, in context, all of humanity is lost, 3.9 and 3.23. So here are the views that are given about this passage here.

This refers to a real but small class of people like what Jewish people thought of when they thought of righteous Gentiles, those who didn't commit adultery, and those who weren't sexually immoral. Well, they thought that's not very many Gentiles, but the ones who are often God fears to come to the synagogues or whatever. A real but very small class of people here or a hypothetical class of people, perhaps for rhetorical purposes, something like possibly chapter 10 and verse 5, where he says, those who observe the law will live by it and then goes on to show, well, that's not really how you're justified because you don't live by the law.

Galatians chapter 3 and verse 11. Or the third possible view that's been offered is that it refers to Christians because, in verse 29, you have it apparently applied to believers in Jesus. Which view is best? Okay, well, I'm giving you my view here.

Whoever is teaching when they tell you the best view, what they mean is that's their view. And that's true with the things I said in the last lecture and lectures to come as well. I'm just trying to explain the text the best we can.

Which view is the best? In principle, the righteous will be saved. In practice, it's those who are in Christ who are able to live righteously, chapter 8 verses 2 through 4. But the point here that Paul is underlining that he's making is the focus is on God's ethnic

impartiality. Those who boast themselves morally superior treasure up wrath, chapter 2 and verse 5. Gentiles would at least sometimes do morally right actions.

Jews would sometimes not do them. And he's saying that only Christians can fully fulfill this. Now, you and I both know Christians who don't always fulfill this, including ourselves probably.

But in Christ, we are able to do so because it's Christ living through us, not ourselves. And he's making us more into his image. Without Christ, the natural law of the conscience functions like the external law of Moses.

It doesn't go as far, and doesn't reveal as much, but it can identify some of our sin. But conscience, like the law of Moses, it can identify sin, but it doesn't transform people's hearts to make us righteous. You can see that in the following chart.

The righteous do good works in chapter 2 and verse 7. Well, these can't be Jewish works of the law 3:20, 27, and 28. The righteous endure, believers endure. The righteous seek for glory 2:7. No one seeks for God 3:11. One must not seek righteousness the wrong way.

Chapter 10 verses 3 and 20. The righteous seek glory and honor 2:7 and 10. Humanity lost God's glory 3:23. The glory awaits believers in various passages.

The righteous receive eternal life. Well, believers in Jesus receive eternal life. The righteous will have peace.

Well, humanity does not know peace 3:17, but believers will have peace 5:1, 8:6, 14:17. The righteous do good 2:7 and 10. The wicked do not do good even when they have the law 7:18 and 19. Believers should do what is good 12:9 and 21 and so on.

Doers of good include both Jews and Greeks 2:10. Both Jews and Greeks are under sin in 3:9 and the community of believers includes both Jews and Gentiles 1:16, 9:24 and 10:12. The law in obedient Gentiles hearts by nature 2:14 to 15. Well, the view here is that this refers to Christians who have the law in their heart or this refers to the conscience that's in all humans, which one do I think is likelier? Well, in practice, Christians, you have this in 8:2 to 4 where the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death, echoing Jeremiah 31 verses 31 to 34 where the law is written in our hearts as part of the new covenant. This prepares for 2:29 where it is talking about people who serve Christ, but Christians also had access to the written law.

So, in principle, it's not addressing Christians. It's addressing, you know, it's saying these are people who don't have the law in writing, but they have it written in their

hearts. In practice, Christians will have it in their hearts, but in principle, it's the natural law innate in humanity.

God's revelation and creation, like in chapter 1 verse 20, they have this revelation in themselves or could mean among themselves, but may mean in themselves, including within humans, chapter 1 in verse 19. The Greco-Roman notion of conscience, chapter 9 in verse 1. If it looks to you like I'm straddling both views, well, maybe I am. The law of nature view was widespread in Greco-Roman sources.

We already saw the argument based on nature back in chapter 1 verses 26 and 27. Even Judean thinkers spoke of the Noahide laws and diaspora Jews also spoke of a law in nature. It's a pervasive concept in antiquity, lots and lots of material.

In 2:15, he speaks of their thoughts being divided, ultimately accusing or defending them. It may portend what you're going to get in 7:15 through 23, where you have the morally divided person who knows what's right but can't do what's right. In that case, they know what's right because of the law.

They have greater knowledge, but they're still divided. Indicting hypocrisy, 2:17 through 24. This is diatribal hyperbole.

I already spoke of it as *reductio ad absurdum*. This just drives the point. It takes it to an extreme.

That was a common way to illustrate your point in antiquity and people would understand that as a rhetorical method. Most Jewish people did not commit adultery. Most Jewish people did not rob temples, especially they didn't rob temples.

But the point is that Jewish ethnicity and possession of the law do not guarantee superiority over the Gentiles. He's speaking of all Jews in chapter three, verses nine through 20, but here he focuses on one, his imaginary interlocutor. The law of nature.

Some Gentiles might do right because of the law of nature. Sometimes they might do right. But this Jewish objector here, this imaginary interlocutor, three or four times claims the importance of the law.

2:17 boasting the law, 2:18, 2:22, 2:23. And yet this interlocutor breaks the law. Chapter two in verse 23, is boasting in the Torah. Torah study was central to Jewish teachers' piety, 2:17 through 20.

We find it central here, but it was also central to Jewish teachers' piety. But you run the risk of something like that of intellectual and spiritual pride. And actually, I must

say that sometimes seminarians, when they graduate from seminary, sometimes graduate with a sense of superiority.

Seminary is meant to equip you so that, and these videos are meant to equip you in such a way that you can feel competent. But satisfaction over one's competence, you have to be careful that that doesn't become something where you look down on other people. It's God's gift to you so you can use it to serve other people.

The danger of intellectual and spiritual pride was one that was a risk for Torah teachers, but it's not an ethnic issue that is limited to Jewish people. It's something that can happen to anybody as we get proud of our religious knowledge or whatever. Some use such proficiency to diminish concern for failure in praxis or failure in some other area of our lives.

Ancients despised people who were unqualified. They praised people who had great qualifications. But for Paul, boasting in one's works versus boasting in God's activity was sinful. You see it in 3:27, 4:2, 5:2-3, 5:11, and 15:17. This keeps coming back. Boasting is not right because it puts the focus on us instead of God. That is a subtle hint of idolatry.

Look at the rhetoric of 2:17-24. The interlocutor, the objector to Paul, imaginary objector, comes up with 11 different pious Jewish claims in verses 17-20. This is challenged with five rhetorical questions. It is often in court rhetoric, not by any means limited to court rhetoric, but you keep pounding home with various questions faster than the person can answer.

It just drives them to the point and makes them look like they can't answer well. In verses 21-23, you've got these five rhetorical questions, each of these using the rhetorical device of antithesis, contrasting two things, and also using anaphora. Anaphora is where you start and end with parallel language.

Well, especially you start with anaphora, but here we have, I guess one way you could put it, you have X dot, dot, dot, Y in one statement. In the next statement, you have X dot, dot, dot, Y. You repeat the same thing at the beginning and the end here. There's a rhetorical appeal to authority.

And then he finishes the hyperbolic hypocrite off with an explicit proof text in chapter two, verses 23-24. So, he just levels this imaginary interlocutor in a way that drives home his point. The claimed righteousness in the law that this person claims is really available only by the Spirit.

In chapter two in verse 17, you claim the name Jew. Well, true Jews in 2:29, children of Abraham 4:12 and 16:17, and those grafted in Israel in 11:17. Boasting in God 2:17-23, but the real boasting in God you have in 5:11, and you're set up for it in 5:2-

3, we'll see about later. Knowing God's will and approving what is good, 2:18. Well, it's only in 12:2 that we find really knowing God's will and approving what is good.

A light to those in darkness, 2:19. Well, we are to be people of light rather than of darkness in 13:12. This one claims to be a teacher of the law in 2:20, but we see the right use of teaching in 6:17, 12:7, 15:4, and 16:17. Having knowledge and truth in the law, 2:20, that's what this person claims, but really having knowledge of the truth appears in 15:8 and 14. Some of the sins here, temple robbery, verse 22, was often the epitome of impiety for Gentiles. Gentiles believed that if you did this, you would face judgment, and they had all sorts of stories about the gods judging people who desecrated temples and robbed temples.

Many Gentiles suspected Jews of this crime because Jews were the ones who didn't consider pagan temples sacred. Now, Jewish apologists rightly disclaim this. They really did not go around robbing temples.

But here we have a hyperbolic opponent who says, you know, I am against idols, but he doesn't avoid idols. He'll go into a temple to rob an idol and melt it down or something. Profaning God's name, verses 23 and 24, well, often that was the epitome of impiety for Jewish people.

And there was actually a scandal from a hypocritical Jew in Rome that was familiar because a generation earlier, there was a Jewish charlatan who claimed to teach Moses' laws, and he was going around exploiting Roman women, which was the very thing that Roman men most disliked about foreign religions, don't convert our wives. We have our household, Roman household religion around the hearth, don't convert our wives. But he was exploiting Roman women, gathering money supposedly for Jerusalem, but really he was gathering money for himself.

This was exposed and xenophobic Romans were so upset that the entire Jewish community was expelled or enslaved. We read about this in Josephus' Antiquities, 1881 to 84. Tiberius expelled the Jewish community from Rome a generation earlier.

And so, the kind of person Paul is describing actually was known. Not the characteristic usual Jew, but this kind of hyperbolic Jew will actually, they may have had somebody in mind who was like this. Paul goes on to say, the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.

This is one reason for church discipline, because if you have Christians acting just like the world, then you'll have outsiders reacting just the way that I was reacting before I was a Christian, saying, well, you know, Christians don't live any differently. They don't believe it. Why would I believe it? Part of that is because I didn't distinguish nominal Christians from real Christians.

There were real Christians who weren't living just like everybody else. But in any case, blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. And this is a rhetorical shock by the way he uses scripture, just like he does in chapter 3, verses 10 through 18.

The context of Isaiah 52:5, that he quotes, God's name was blasphemed because of his people's suffering. But here, God's name is blasphemed because of their sin. They were exiled to begin with, however, because of their sin.

Ezekiel 36:18 to 20, and so on. Paul might connect Isaiah 52:5 with many of his people's rejection of the good news in Isaiah 52:7, which he cites later on in Romans chapter 10 and verse 15. He still knows the context, knows that whole context, just two verses off.

So, verses 25 through 29, he speaks of inward Jewishness. Jewishness is valuable only for those who keep the covenant, Paul says. If you don't keep the covenant, you're actually in more trouble because you knew better.

Some Gentiles, he says, keep the covenant better. They follow the moral demands of the law, although they lack knowledge of what the law contains, but they're still nice to their neighbor, for example. And some Jewish people aren't nice to their neighbor.

This isn't really something any of us would deny because, well, the same could be done for people who claim to be Christians. Uncircumcised God-fearers attached to the synagogue often held some of the Jewish values, the kind of values in the law. In principle, any Gentile could do this.

In practice, it's those who are in Christ, the ones who have the Spirit, where the Spirit produces fruit in us. That's not something we can boast about, but it's something God gets the credit for because he's doing it in us. You look at chapter two in verse 29, where he describes it this way and the same kind of imagery you have in chapter seven, verses five and six, and chapter eight and verse nine.

He speaks of spiritual circumcision. He speaks of those who are uncircumcised in heart, verse 25. We have that in the Old Testament, Leviticus 26:41, Jeremiah 4:4, Jeremiah 9:25 and 26, about those who are uncircumcised in heart.

Well, Paul also argues the converts, the converts, those who keep God's law are circumcised in heart, 2:26. Circumcision was a significant barrier for Gentiles. Many Roman Gentiles criticized Jews for this practice.

It was a primary barrier for Gentile men desiring to join God's people because it was rather painful for an adult, probably pretty painful for a baby as well, but babies tend not to remember it when they get older since it normally happens on the eighth day. But for Paul, Gentile believers have been spiritually grafted into the heritage of the

people of God, chapter four, verse 16, chapter 11, and verse 17. The emphasis on circumcision appears in fairly few biblical texts, but it's quite crucial where it does appear.

Genesis 17, the sign of the covenant. Anybody in your household has to be circumcised. Anybody who lives in your midst, Exodus 4:26, Moses is in big trouble if he doesn't allow his sons to be circumcised.

Leviticus 12:3, talking about babies, Joshua 5:2-8, well, they didn't do it in the wilderness. Now they come into the land. They renew the covenant with circumcision.

It's a symbolic identification. It's not saying that's ontologically efficacious, like circumcision has some sort of spiritual effect by itself, but it's a way of identifying with the people of God. It hadn't been done during the wilderness.

Moses' kids hadn't been, and his sons hadn't been circumcised before God made him do it. But it was mandatory as a form of identification with Israel. It was emphasized, especially in recent centuries, as distinctive of national identity, partly because Jewish people had been so persecuted for this.

We talked earlier about being persecuted for different kinds of boundary markers that made them very valued among the people. Antiochus IV Epiphanes, it said that if mothers circumcised their children and he found out that the babies were killed, they were hung around the mother's neck and they'd both be thrown from the walls of Jerusalem. Very horrible treatment because they insisted on keeping God's covenant.

Well, if that's part of your ancestry, certainly you are going to consider that a mark of loyalty to your people to continue to do that. There were people who wanted to run naked in Greek fashion at races and didn't want anybody to mock them for their circumcision. So, they became uncircumcised.

They had an operation to pull forward their foreskin. That was during the Maccabean era. Therefore, one of the marks of showing that you were faithful to the covenant was maintaining your circumcision, not being uncircumcised.

The Old Testament, however, also speaks of spiritual circumcision. Deuteronomy 10:16, Deuteronomy 30:6, Leviticus 26:41, and the other ones we mentioned, something like that in Ezekiel 44:7 and 9. For Paul, spiritual circumcision is more crucial because that's the real meaning of which the outward symbol is just a sign. It's an outward marker of the covenant, but it's the inward marker that matters more.

He didn't see a need to alienate people from the covenant needlessly by requiring them to get circumcised or uncircumcised for that matter. He warns against that as well. 1 Corinthians 7:18 and 19, Galatians 5:6, Galatians 6:15. The reason that he thinks that the inward is enough is that here in verse 29, he talks about the promised gift of the Spirit.

As in the book of Acts, which confirmed Gentile's acceptance before God. If God has accepted them, and if they have received the promise of the Spirit, which was eschatologically associated in these Old Testament texts that talk about the restoration of Israel, the outpouring of the Spirit would be for God's people. So, if God has accepted them as people, if God treats them as spiritually circumcised, if God treats them as inwardly part of his covenant, as inwardly descended from Abraham, as following the model of Abraham, then the outward marking becomes superfluous for those who aren't ethnically Jewish.

He speaks of the genuine Jew who seeks his or her praise from God. Verse 29, like the righteous people of 2, 7, and 10. There may be a wordplay here that probably not everybody would catch.

Paul seems to do that once in a while. In 2 Corinthians 4, he speaks of this great weight of glory. Well, in Hebrew, kabod can mean what we translate as glory, or it can mean weight or heaviness.

So here also, well, what does the name Judah mean? Well, it's translated differently in the Septuagint of Genesis 29 and 49, but Judah means praise. And so, the genuine Judahite, he says, the genuine Judean is one who seeks his or her praise from God. Verse 29.

And then he's also going to speak of the spirit and the letter, a contrast. And he will return to that in chapter seven and verse six. And that's where I intend to deal with it because we have more context that can help us figure out what he means there.

But moving on for now into chapter three, where he continues this thought of, well, who's the true Jew? The one who's Jewish inwardly. And so that raises the question, well, what's the point then of ethnic Jewishness? Is there any value in that? He's going to say, oh yes. He's not playing down ethnic distinctions or things like that.

Romans chapter three, verses one through eight addresses God's faithfulness. God is not the one who broke the covenant. So here Paul is doing something like theodicy, showing that God is faithful.

Rhetorical questions and objections from an imaginary interlocutor suggest that he's using the diatribe form still at this point. There's an obvious objection to what he's

just argued in 2:25 to 29. What's the value of ethnic Jewishness? And that objection, that question is raised in chapter three in verse one.

Questions about the value of something or the benefit of something. Those kinds of questions were used regularly in ancient rhetoric and ethics, in rhetorical handbooks, and in philosophic works. They talk about, well, here are ways that you evaluate things.

And one of them is how something is valuable or beneficial. Well, what was the benefit of ethnic Jewishness? Paul's response is greater opportunity. They had a special role or they had a special role in salvation history.

Chapter 9, verses 4 and 5, chapter 11, verses 12 and 15, looking even to the future. Also, they had greater access to the clearest revelation, scripture. Paul says they were entrusted with God's oracles, chapter three in verse two.

So, they had a big advantage over Gentiles in that they had more access to God's revelation. But he says, first of all, in chapter three in verse two, he never comes back with second or third. Now, granted, many of us professors are really absent-minded, but it may be that Paul is planning to pick this up later.

He does pick up the advantages of Jewishness in chapter nine, verses four and five. Although in chapter one in verse eight, he also uses language like first and doesn't always pick it up again. The second objection to which he must respond, the interlocutor, verse three, Israel's lack of faith should not negate God's faithfulness.

Some Jewish teachers argued that no matter how Israel behaved, God always counted them as his children. You actually can argue both ways from texts in the Old Testament. Anyway, Paul says that God's covenant faithfulness was unable to be violated, in chapter three in verse four.

His covenant faithfulness equals his righteousness, but God's righteousness means that God is also Israel's judge. So disobedient Israel will be punished and God will be shown righteous in punishing them. I was going to give an illustration, but I think I will court too much controversy by that.

So let me just say that in the Old Testament, God never abandons his people completely. God always still has a plan for his people. But when Israel did wrong things, God punished them.

And so, you can't just say, well, this is Israel. This is God's people. You always have to agree with Israel.

That wasn't true in the Old Testament. God is justified. God is shown to be righteous and humanity's protests are condemned.

Paul says in chapter three in verse four, that everyone is a liar. That language is from Psalm 116 verse 11 or 115 in the Septuagint. It anticipates the sinlessness texts in Romans chapter three, verses 10 through 18, especially 3.13. And it was probably familiar, especially to Jewish people or those who had celebrated Jewish festivals.

Paul's core ideal audience may catch more of what he means. Not everybody catches what the core ideal audience catches, but Paul would certainly know this. This is from the Hallel.

He quotes from Psalm 116 elsewhere, but this is the Hallel. Psalms 113 through Psalm 118 were regularly sung during the Passover season. More explicitly, he cites Psalm 51.4 where the psalmist admits the psalmist's guilt and God's righteousness.

I am guilty. God is righteous to recognize that I'm guilty. But Psalm 51 was also applied to David's repentance.

That's the superscription that we have for that psalm. And that superscription existed in Paul's day. It anticipates God's forgiveness of David without works in Romans chapter four, verses six through eight, which we will see later.

The next objection, Israel's sin glorifies God. Chapter three, verses five and seven. This interlocutor is getting desperate now and Paul is really reducing him to *reductio ad absurdum*, reducing him to the absurd.

Well, in verse six, God is righteous to judge the world. So, God is also righteous when he judges his disobedient people. The effect of the interlocutor's argument in verse eight is let's sin because it does something good.

Something good comes out of it. God is glorified by doing this, by dealing with our unrighteousness. Some had actually twisted Paul's own teaching of justification by faith is allowing sin.

Some do that with Paul's teaching of justification by faith today as well. But for Paul, the righteous, the justified, remember it's the same verb, the righteous can live righteously. Romans 6, you can compare Galatians 2:17 through 21, Galatians 5:5 and 6, Galatians 5:24. So, Paul is going to argue that all are under sin.

Chapter 3, verses 9 through 20. God is faithful to his covenant. Chapter 3, verses 1 through 8.

But Israel has not been faithful three, nine through 20. And of course, Jewish people, when they look back at their past, echoing Nehemiah, echoing Daniel, and Ezra, they recognized that Israel had often disobeyed God. Well, Paul is going to link together various texts and it was common to link together texts using a common keyword or phrase or concept or context, link together words.

In Judea, the practice is called Gezer HaShavah, the linking together of texts based on a common keyword. But Paul does this at greater length than most of his contemporaries, linking together a number of texts here. He links together texts about death, three, 13, A, and C, and also 15 through 17.

It's also a theme in 5:12, 14, 17, and 21. 6:16, 21, 23, 7:5, 10, 13, 24, 8:6. He's going to talk a lot about death, but he's already dealing with that theme here in these verses that he quotes in verses 13, 15, 16, and 17. Most of the texts he cites allude to body parts.

So that's the connection for his Gezer HaShavah. Eyes in verse 18, feet in verses 15 through 17, and most extensively, and not surprisingly when we're talking about sin, the mouth in verses 13 and 14. His use of talking about body parts may prepare for later on in the book where he's talking about the members of our body under the power of sin and talking about flesh, 6:6, 7:5, 7:24, and 25, 8:10, 8:13. You can also see it in Colossians 3:5 and so forth.

Paul gives us his biblical support for his principle in 3:10 through 18. First of all, he cites Psalm 14, 1 through 3, two identical lines in 1 and 3. So Paul changes the first one, because they both said kindness. Paul changes the first kindness to righteous, which fits the point he's making in his larger context in Romans 1:17 and so forth, talking about righteousness.

Well, if there's nobody kind, obviously there's nobody righteous either. He also quotes from Psalm 5:9, Psalm 140:3, Psalm 10:7, Isaiah 59:7 and 8, and finally Psalm 36:1. Now most of these obviously are from the Psalms. The only exception, Isaiah 59:7 and 8, that's the only one that applies to Israel as a whole.

The Psalms in context apply to the psalmist's enemies, but Paul is able to make a midrashic link between these texts or among these texts that would have been understood by his Jewish contemporaries. So, he used the same method, although not usually at such great length. He says Scripture proclaims these matters to those who are under the law.

Those were the ones who heard the law, chapter 3, verse 19. Those were the ones therefore who had the greatest knowledge and responsibility, he says. Condemnation in 3:19. Well, he says the law condemns those who are under it.

Well, does the law actually speak? But here he's using something like prosopopeia or personification, where the law acts as an individual and the law speaks these things. Law here, not just meaning the books of Moses, but Scripture speaks these things to those who are under it. So this is Scripture speaking.

Thus, he says, every mouth, he's already talked about mouths, sinful mouths, but every mouth, including Jewish ones, in verse 19, will be silenced at the judgment. So the objector of chapter 3, verses 5 through 8 is going to have nothing to argue in the day of judgment. Everybody will be silenced before God.

The law reveals people's sinfulness, he says, again, as exemplified in chapter 3, verses 10 through 18. And now he makes an allusion to Psalm 143, verse 2, where the psalmist pleads for God's mercy because no one living, here Paul says, no flesh will be reckoned righteous in God's sight. So, God's standard is so perfect, the psalmist says that I need your mercy because there's no other way I can be reckoned as righteous.

The works of the law, verse 20, some have taken this as specifically Jewish identity markers, such as circumcision. We see these identity markers in chapters 4 and 14. Others argue that it means all the law.

And I think they have the better argument overall. If you're asking whether I'm new perspective or old perspective, by now, if you're aware of those categories, you're aware that I am trying to take the best I can from each argument, taking the arguments each one at a time rather than taking everything everybody says from a particular position. But others say it's all the law.

I think they have the better of the argument. Biblical texts about doing the law, in Hebrew, work is like the noun form of do. And so, you have texts about doing the law.

The works of the law include anything in the law. It encompasses the whole of the law. However, having said that Jewish distinctives exemplify the case particularly well.

And Paul is going to appeal to those Jewish distinctives, such as circumcision, food laws, and holy days. Such distinctives were what Gentile converts might have to work hardest to adopt. Circumcision is actually a very big issue with some of the people Paul has had to deal with in the past.

You see that Galatians 2:3 through 12, Galatians 5:2 through 11, and Galatians 6:12 through 15. Circumcision is a big issue in Galatia. Paul's solution for everybody.

He's elaborated on the problem. I remember one-time years ago, I said, let's do a, we were deciding what to do a Bible study on. And each week we were going to take a chapter of some book.

And I said, let's do it in Romans. And everybody said that's a great idea. Well, the first couple of weeks were fairly miserable as we spent the whole time talking about human depravity.

But eventually, we got to the more pleasant things because the depravity is just to lay the groundwork for why we all need God the same way, both Jew and Gentile, both people today who are religious and people who are not religious, both people who are from Christian backgrounds and people who are not. God offers salvation to all. I've also, in terms of religion, I've also put it this way sometimes when I've preached.

Keep in mind that the people who produce these videos are not responsible for everything that I say, but Judaism can't save us. Buddhism can't save us. Islam can't save us.

And Christianity can't save us. Only Jesus Christ can save us. God's solution for all, 3:21 to 31.

While he's already argued in 3.9 through 20, that humanity sinned and merited judgment, but God remains righteous and makes a way that he can be both just and the justifier of the person who trusts in Jesus. 3:21 to 31, a similar idea in 3:1 to 8. The law revealed sin, he says in 3.20, but the law didn't make us righteous. That doesn't mean the law is bad.

He emphasized at that point in 7:7 and 14. That's not what the law was intended to do. The law was intended to inform us about right and wrong.

It wasn't intended to transform us. No civil law is meant to change your heart. Civil laws are meant to limit sin.

And, you know, the law did that, but it was never intended to be used as a means of self-justification. For that, we need a relationship with God. We have to depend on God's grace.

The law and the prophets teach the way to be made righteous, he says in verse 21. So, they inform us and they inform us how to be justified. They point us to it, not by boasting of one's achievement, but by faith, that is, by depending on God.

3.27 and 31. And at this stage in salvation history, because God kept, you know, as history kept going, what God was inviting people to believe, there was more to it. I mean, in Abraham's day, God spoke to Abraham, he believed it.

But in Moses' day, you couldn't say, Moses, I don't have to listen to you because I believe the promise that God made to Abraham. I believe that he was going to have a child named Isaac. Oh, indeed he did.

He's our ancestor. I don't have to listen to you, Moses. You could get in serious trouble with God in Moses' day doing that.

In the same way, at this stage in salvation history, faith must be in Jesus because God has climaxed his work of salvation in Jesus Christ with his revelation of Jesus. God's righteousness through faith in 3.21 to 31. Already that theme was introduced in chapter 1 and verse 17, but we have a clustering of it here.

In 3.22, 25, and 26, he's talking about this. Well, ancient rhetoric used repetition to drive home a point. And you actually wouldn't have to be trained in rhetoric to know that.

I mean, you'd hear that enough. You just knew to do that. But repetition would drive home a point.

You have the cognate verb *dikaio* as well as *dikaiousune*, righteousness. You have the cognate verb *justify* or *put right*. It also appears repeatedly, 3:24, 3:26, 3:28, and 3:30. So, this is clearly an emphasis in this passage.

The alternative for the lack of justification provided by the works of the law in 3.20 is something that the law itself points us to, faith in God. And so in verse 22, we read about the faith of Jesus Christ, and also in 3:26. While there are two views on how we should understand this Greek phrase, subjective genitive, Christ's faith or Christ's faithfulness, or an objective genitive, meaning faith in Christ, Christ being the object of the genitive. Genitive, technically, and grammatically, can go either way.

Well, in favor of the subjective genitive, we have the centrality of Christ's work in this context. Also, you have a parallel expression in chapter 3 and verse 3, which I think is one of the strongest arguments for this, God's faithfulness earlier in the chapter. In that case, the faith of God means the faithfulness of God.

You also have a parallel, and this is another fairly strong argument for this, a parallel between being of the faith of Jesus, in 3:26, and of the faith of Abraham in 4:16. This has been argued by a number of scholars. It was argued by Karl Barth and Richard Hayes, Mora Hooker, and quite a large number of scholars, N.T. Wright. It actually is kind of the avant-garde position, and so I really kind of wanted to hold it.

But unfortunately, it looked to me like the evidence pointed in a different way, but you should know that scholarship is divided in this. In favor of the objective genitive, which is where I come down, ultimately, unless somebody changes my mind very soon, faith in Christ. The noun is connected with the verb in 3:22, where it refers to a believer's faith.

It's also true in Galatians 2:16. The cognate verb appears 42 times in Romans. In these times, Jesus is the object rather than the subject or the example of faith. It's not Jesus believing.

It's believing in Jesus. So, if it's believing in Jesus, then chances are the faith is in Jesus. That's what makes, I think, the most sense in the context of Romans.

The verb is used six times in the immediately following context in Romans 4 for believing in Jesus. Well, why use a genitive construction, or to put that in English, why is it faith and then something that's ambiguous enough grammatically that it could be either faith of or faith in? Why use that construction? Possibly because of the construction with which he's contrasting it, namely the works of the law. He uses genitive there, so he uses genitive here.

This was the majority view among the church fathers, including Origen and Augustine, Abelard, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, many, many scholars today, Brendan Byrne, who also wrote a very good commentary on Romans, I mentioned earlier, Jimmy Dunn, Fitzmeyer, Moo, Schreiner, Tobin, and others, both Catholic and Protestant scholars on both sides of the issue. So, I hold the more traditional view on this. Either way, you have a contrast between faith and the law, faith in verse 22, the law in verse 20, that allows Gentiles to be saved like Jewish people, same terms as Jewish people, verse 22, and you can compare 10, 12.

All have sinned, verse 23. Jewish people agreed with that mostly. I mean, they might make an exception.

Some said, well, maybe Abraham never did or something, but all of them agreed that they did. The rabbis agreed that they all sinned. In fact, sometimes they had funny stories for purely homiletical purposes of some rabbis who did some things.

Rabbi Akiba saw Satan disguised as a beautiful woman, and Satan ran up a palm tree, so Akiba climbed the palm tree, got near the top, and Satan took off his disguise and said, if you weren't Rabbi Akiba and so respected by God, I would kick you to your death. Well, probably not a true story, but the point was they illustrated that everybody sinned sometimes, even to the point of climbing palm trees in dangerous circumstances. Thus, since everybody acknowledged that everybody sinned, that wasn't even a matter of controversy among Jewish people.

Thus, righteousness, Paul says, comes only through God's gift in Christ, verses 24 and 25. Now, many see an allusion to Adam in verse 23, because of the aorist tense of sinned. It says, we all sinned, and aorist has sometimes been understood as punctiliar.

So, at one point in the past, this sin occurred. So, this is Adam's sin. However, more recent studies in Greek have suggested that that's not always the way you take an aorist.

It's not always just punctiliar. It can be a way of looking at the action from the outside, and in any case, it doesn't have to be just Adam's sin, although there are reasons for that, because you're going to unfold it later on in terms of Adam. But Paul is speaking of Jew and Gentile together in 2:12, saying that they've sinned, using the same kind of language.

But Paul later does unfold this in terms of Adam in 5:12, 14, and 16. Humanity formed in God's image, lost that glory. 1:23, 1 Corinthians 11:7, and that glory is restored in Christ, Romans 8:18, 21, and 29.

Is there an allusion to Adam? Well, he may be preparing the way for what he's later going to say. And so, we may hear it because of later. I don't think he was emphasizing that point here, and I don't think we get it from the verb specifically.

But in any case, some scholars have argued for pre-Pauline tradition in parts of 24 and 25. Many see it as a creed or a hymn. And I didn't mention this, but back in chapter one, verses three and four, many also saw that as a creedal statement or a hymn.

Many of the terms here are rare in Paul, and you have grammatical elements found in other New Testament creeds. However, these characteristics fit exalted prose sublime rhetorical style in general. When people were talking about deities, there was no sign of meter for a normal Greek hymn.

So, I'm not sure we can say, well, I don't think we can say these are Greek hymns. Now, did Paul compose this himself? He certainly had the rhetorical skills to do so. 1 Corinthians chapter 13 is an example of this.

However, whether he composed it or whether he just used some teaching that was widely circulated in this form, whether it's original with him or not, it reflects Paul's view, and that's why he uses it. Well, as we go on from here, what we're going to see in the rest of three and in four and five is that Jesus is our Savior and that it's through depending on him that we are made right with God.

This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Romans. This is session 5 on Romans 2:1-3:23.