

Sermon or Lesson: Romans 3:20 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Limits To The Functions Of The Old Testament Law

INTRO: Have you ever had a legal matter to take care of with a government agency, like completing all of the paperwork to register an automobile you just purchased? Using the information you have plus what you have been told, you accumulate and fill out all of the documents you think are necessary. Then you take off from work, go to the government office, and sit in their waiting area for several hours until your number is called, finally allowing you to proceed to their service window. You hand your documents to their clerk, who shuffles through your documents, frowns, and then informs you that you do not meet their requirements in some way. Despite your best efforts and preparations, you found out in the end that you have not met their strict requirements for being approved and accepted.

Sadly, this same type of preparation scenario with a corresponding rejection outcome is what occurs for most people when they die because they have not met God's requirements for being accepted by Him. Let's closely examine and consider what God has to say about this important topic.

READ: Romans 3:20, with vv.10-12, 19 for context

BACKGROUND:

- - In previous verses 10-12 is the discussion by God that we humans each in and of ourselves are devoid of righteousness and goodness.
 - - And furthermore, we are totally depraved and corrupted by the sinfulness and evil we speak and do. (vv.13-18)
 - - These two aspects thereby automatically render each of us rejected by God, worthless and useless for His righteous purposes. (vv.12,10)
 - - And we are entirely incapable of generating the perfect sinlessness and perfect righteousness that are required by God to be accepted by Him. (vv.10-12)
 - - Worse yet, God uses the Old Testament Law He has given us to hold each person accountable to Him and guilty for every single sin we commit in our life. (v.19)
- - Now in verse 20, additional information is presented that delineates limits to the functions of the Old Testament Law specifically pertaining to this serious predicament we each face of being corrupt and thereupon rejected by God.

READ: v.20a - "**Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law;**"

[Lesson Question: What is implied here in verse 20a about us in regard to being righteous?]

SECTION POINT: We humans are not accepted by God because we are corrupted by our sins and thereby do not have the perfect holiness and righteousness that He requires.

"righteous" - Strong's #1344 "will be made right; to render (i.e. show or regard as) just or innocent"

- - We may think (v.20) and claim (v.19) that we have a right condition and right standing with God (v.20).
 - - But due to God's inherent extreme perfect holiness and righteousness and goodness and justice, God cannot and will not accept us in our condition and state of being corrupt with sin. (Psalm 18:30; Romans 3:10-12)
 - - As implied in this verse 20 and surrounding verses 9-26, in order to be accepted by God, He stringently requires and even demands that we have absolute perfection in righteousness.
 - - Therefore, we need the same perfect holiness and righteousness and goodness that God has in order to be accepted by Him - we need absolute perfection just like God has.
-

[Lesson Question: Drawing from verse 19, what is the design and function of the law, and how does that affect us being righteous?]

SECTION POINT: Contrary to making us righteous, the design and function of the law is to hold each of us humans accountable to God for every sin we each commit, thereby actually convicting us of being unrighteous.

- - God gave the law to us corrupt humans, which looks like it solves our need-for-perfection problem but in actuality does not solve this problem and instead makes this problem even worse for us.
 - - The design and function of the law is to hold all of us humans comprehensively "accountable to God" (v.19) for every single aspect of our depravity - which includes our corrupt speaking (vv.13-14) and our corrupt actions (vv.15-18).
 - - Because the law is designed to enforce accountability, it brings guilt to everyone who breaks it in any way. (James 2:10)
 - - "Therefore" the law does not have the function or capability to bring a declaration of innocence and being perfectly righteous. (cf. Hebrews 7:18-19; 10:1)
 - - Instead, the law is contrarily functioning to bring accountability with accompanying guilt to everyone due to the reality that our entire race "has turned away" from God's "righteousness" and "goodness". (vv.12,10)
 - - So, "observing the law" or keeping its commands is good but the law was not and is not designed to provide us with the acceptable perfect sinlessness and righteousness that God requires.
-

[Lesson Question: From verse 20a, what are some implications and corresponding ramifications in regard to our efforts to make ourselves acceptably righteous in God's sight?]

SECTION POINT: God rejects all of our efforts to make ourselves acceptably righteous in His sight.

- - We humans cannot make ourselves perfectly innocent of sin and perfectly righteous.

- - And God will not give us those perfections based on our efforts to make ourselves perfectly innocent and perfectly righteous.
 - - God clearly pronounces here that "no one", not any human person, will be declared righteous by God on the basis of observing or keeping the law.
 - - By extension, the invalidity of 'observing the law' includes: being religious; or achieving any religious rank, position, or title; or going through a religious ceremony; or regularly completing a religious practice such as confession of sins or taking communion; or being good; or having done more good in life than bad; or having a special or privileged ancestral heritage; and etc. (cf. Ephesians 2:8-9)
 - - So, all of us humans are stuck or held hostage in our corruption, unable to make ourselves uncorrupted no matter what we try to do by our own actions or means.
-

[Lesson Question: By implication, what is the law **not** designed and able to do?]

SECTION POINT: By design, the law does **not** provide a way for us to be made acceptably righteous in God's sight.

- - The law and observing the law cannot provide or give the needed perfect righteousness to any person because the law does not provide any way to get rid of our sin corruption we already have with its deserved adverse consequences.
 - - By design, God intentionally did not build into or insert into the law a means by which we can achieve perfect innocence and perfect righteousness. (cf. see v.21)
 - - The reality is that the effect of the law upon us humans in our condition and state of being corrupt is the irrefutable enforcement of accountability, which automatically brings a judgment of guilt with a sentence of being condemned to suffer punishment eternally.
-

READ: v.20b - "**rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.**"

[Lesson Question: From verse 20, what other function does the law accomplish and for what purposes?]

SECTION POINT: The law does function to create in us awareness of our sins.

"conscious" = Strong's #1922 "full knowledge; recognition, i.e. (by implication) full discernment, acknowledgement"

- - While being incapable of providing or giving us the perfect righteousness we need to be accepted by God, the law does function to bring awareness of sin - what sin is, how and when we commit sin.
- - The law creates in us and gives us "full knowledge, full discernment, recognition, and acknowledgement" of our sin. (Strong's #1922 - "conscious")
- - In a sense, the law educates us about our own sinfulness.
- - Whether we want to admit it or not, we all know what sin is and our having committed it. As evidence, we are quick to scream in objection when someone else sins against us.

- - This full awareness of sin makes us solidly guilty for judicial purposes - we cannot successfully argue in defense that we did not know we were sinning and therefore we are not liable or culpable. (cf. "every mouth may be silenced" v.19)

- - This functioning of the law to make us conscious of our sins suggests God has a purpose for making us aware of our sins and aware that we cannot solve our sin problem in and of ourselves.

- - By implication, God wants to make us aware of our need for His rescue help, and point us to that rescue help, which is described in the next verses 21-26.

BIG IDEA: God's law in the Old Testament does not provide any way in which we humans can achieve the perfect righteousness we need to be accepted by God.

APPLICATIONS:

- - What have you been trusting in to make you accepted by God?

- - Are you relying on and trusting in your own actions to somehow make you accepted by God?

- - Or are you relying on your religiousness?

- - Or are you hoping that the good things you have done in your life will outweigh the bad things?

- - Do you now see that God refuses to accept anyone based upon their own efforts to make themselves acceptably righteous in His sight?

- - Are you now starting to realize and understand that in order to become acceptably righteous in God's sight, you need perfect sinlessness and perfect righteousness just like that which God has?

- - How are you going to acquire this needed and required perfect sinlessness and perfect righteousness just like that which God has?

- - Obviously, this is a very serious predicament we humans face.

- - Come back again next time, when we will continue our study in Romans chapter 3 to learn more.

- - Specifically, we will be studying a solution to this predicament we all face of automatically being rejected by God and unable by our own actions or means to make ourselves qualified to meet God's perfection requirements for being accepted by Him.

- - God wants to make you aware that you need His rescue help.

- - And He wants to point you to that rescue help, which we will examine next time we meet. So, come back again next time.

Works Cited:

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

"Strong's Greek Dictionary." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

Copyrights:

Scriptures taken from Holy Bible, New International Version[®], NIV[®]
Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc[®]
Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Copyright © 2016 Mel W. Coddington, and permission is hereby granted that this document may be used, copied, and distributed non-commercially to non-profit organizations, individuals, churches, ministries, and schools worldwide, provided the copies are distributed at no charge and retain this sources documentation as supplied herein. This document is not for sale, resale, or for use as a gift or premium to be offered in connection with solicitations or contributions.

File name: Romans3_20-SermonOrLesson.____ (.htm, .doc, .pdf)

Translation used: NIV, quoted or referred to in various places within this document

Source: www.BelieverAssist.com