

GOD JUSTIFIED, THOUGH MAN BELIEVES NOT

NO. 2255

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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“For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, and every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.” — Romans 3:3,4.

THE seed of Israel had great privileges even before the coming of Christ. God had promised by covenant that they should have those privileges; and they did enjoy them. They had a revelation and a light divine, while all the world beside sat in heathen darkness. Yet so many Jews did not believe, that, as a whole, the nation missed the promised blessing. A great multitude of them only saw the outward symbols, and never understood their spiritual meaning. They lived and died without the blessing promised to their fathers. Did this make the covenant of God to be void? Did this make the faithfulness of God to be a matter of question? “No, no,” says Paul, “if some did not believe, and so did not gain the blessing, this was their own fault; but the covenant of God stood fast, and did not change because men were untrue.” He remained just as true as ever; and he will be able to justify all that he has said, and all that he has done, and he will do so even to the end. When the great drama of human history shall have been played

out, the net result will be that the ways of God shall be vindicated notwithstanding all the unbelief of men.

I am going to talk of our text, at this time, first, as giving to us *a sorrowful reminder*: “For what if some did not believe?” It is sad to be reminded that there always have been some who did not believe. Next, here is *a horrible inference*, which some have drawn from this grievous fact, that is, because some did not believe, it has been hinted that their unbelief would make the faith of God or the faithfulness of God without effect; to which, in the third place, the apostle gives *an indignant reply*: “God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justifies in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.”

Well now, first, we have here A SORROWFUL REMINDER. There always have been some who have not believed.

When God devised the great plan of salvation by grace; when he gave his own Son to die as the Substitute for guilty men; when he proclaimed that whosoever believed in Jesus Christ should have everlasting life; you would have thought that everybody would have been glad to hear such good news, and that they would all have hastened to believe it. Christ is so suitable to the sinner. Why does not the sinner accept him? The way of salvation is so simple, so suitable to guilty men, it is altogether so glorious, so grand, that if we did not know the depravity of the human heart, we should expect that every sinner would at once believe the gospel, and receive its boons. But, alas, some have not believed!

Now, *this is stated very mildly*. The apostle says, “For what if some did not believe?” He might have said, “What if many did not believe?” But he is talking to his Hebrew friends, and he wishes to woo them; so he states the case as gently as he can. Remember, dear friends, the carcasses of all but two who came out of Egypt fell in the wilderness through unbelief. Only Joshua and Caleb entered the promised land; but the apostle does not wish to unduly press his argument, or speak so as to aggravate his hearers; and he therefore puts it, “For what if some did not believe?” Even in his own day, he might have said, “The bulk of the Jewish nation has rejected Christ. Wherever I go, they seek my life. They would stone me to death, if they could, because I preach a dying Savior’s love;” but he does not put it so; he only mentions that some did not believe. Yet this is a very appalling thing, even when stated this mildly. If all here, except one person, were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it was announced that that one

unbeliever would be pointed out to the congregation, I am sure we would all feel in a very solemn condition. But, dear friends, there are many more than one here who have not believed on the Son of God, and who, therefore, are not saved. If the unconverted were not so numerous, there is all the greater need for our tears and our compassion.

The terms of Paul's question suggest *a very sweet mitigation of the sorrow*. "What if some did not believe?" Then it is implied that some *did* believe. Glory be to God, there is a numerous "some" who have believed that Jesus is the Christ; and believing in him, have found life through his name! These have entered into a new life, and now bear a new character, "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Beloved, we do thank God that the preaching of the gospel has not been in vain. Up yonder, more numerous than the stars are they that walk in white robes which they have washed in the blood of the Lamb; and down here, despite our mourning, there is a glorious company, who still follow the Lamb, who is to them, their only hope.

Looking at the other side of the case, it is true that, *at times, the "some" who did not believe meant the majority*. It must be admitted that, sometimes, unbelievers have preponderated even among the hearers of the precious Word. Read the story of Israel through, in the Books of Kings and Chronicles, and you will be saddened to find how again and again they did not believe. The history of Israel, from the moment they became a nation, is a very painful one. It is full of the mercy of God; but it is also full of treachery of the human heart. In the days of the judges, the people served God while a good judge ruled over them; but as soon as he was dead, they went astray after false gods. I almost think that the Christian church is in the period of the judges now. When the Lord raises up, here one and there another, to preach his Word faithfully, the people seem to take heed to it; but when the faithful preachers are gone, many of their hearers turn aside again. Blessed be to God, we expect the coming of the King soon; and when the King comes, and the period of the judges shall have ended, then we shall enter upon a time of rest and peace. It may be that, even among hearers of the gospel, those who do not believe preponderate over those who do believe. My text sounds like a solemn knell, and there is something terribly awful about it, like the deep rumbling of underground thunder.

Now, dear friends, this unbelief has usually been the case throughout all ages *among the great ones of the earth*. In our Savior's day, they said, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him?" The gospel has usually had a free course among the poor and among those who some call "the lower orders", though why they are said to be lower than others, I do not know, unless it is because the heavier and more valuable things generally sink to the bottom. The church of God owes very little to kings and princes and nobles. She owes far more to fishermen and peasants. Jesus said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.: I suspect that, until the King himself shall come, we shall still find that the common people will gladly hear the gospel; and that, while Christ the Lord will choose for his own some from all ranks and conditions of men, it will still be true that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called."

I think we may also say, with deep solemnity that *some who have not believed have belonged to the religious and to the teaching class*. In the days of our Lord and his apostles, the scribes and Pharisees were the greatest haters of the doctrine of Christ. Those whom you might have supposed, being most familiar with the Scriptures, the scribes, would soonest have recognized the Messiah, were the men who would not acknowledge him. So it was with the priests, even the chief priests, the men who had to do with the sacrifices and with the temple. They rejected Christ, although they were the religious leaders of the people. Do you suppose it is very different now? Alas, my friends, we may be preachers, and yet not preach the gospel of Christ; we may be members of the church, and yet not savingly know the gospel; we may go in and out of the house of God, and seem to take part in its holy service, and yet, all the while, we may be strangers and foreigners in the presence of the Most High. Believers are not always those whom you would suppose to be believers. The Lord often brings to himself, as in the case of the centurion, of whom we read this morning, far-off ones, rough soldiers, who were not thought likely to feel the power of such gentle teaching as the doctrine of the cross; and they bow before the Savior. But alas! Alas! Among those who appear to be the children of the kingdom, brought up in the worship of God, there are some, yea, many, who have not believed on Christ; and, saddest of all,

even among those who are the teachers of others in the things of God, there are some that have not savingly believed.

Now, dear friends, if we take the whole range of *the nations favored with the gospel*, we shall have to say, and say it, as it were, in capital letters, "SOME DO NOT BELIEVE," and that "some" is a very large number.

The question of the apostle is, "What if some did not believe?" Well, if I had to ask and answer that question, at this time, I would say, "What if some do not believe?" Then they are lost. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." There still remains, to those who hear the gospel, the opportunity to believe; and, believing in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." There still remains, to those who hear the gospel, the opportunity to believe; and, believing, they shall find life through the sacred name. Let us pray for them. If some do not believe, let us, who do believe, make them the constant subject of our prayers; and then let us tell them what is it to be believed, and bear our witness to the saving power of the gospel. When we have done that, let us scrupulously take care that our life and conduct are consistent with the doctrine that we teach, so that, if some do not believe, they may be won to Christ by the example of those who believe in him. Oh, that every Christian here would seek to bring another person to Christ! I pray you, beloved, if you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, be not barren nor unfruitful. If you know the great secret, tell it to others. Tell it out; tell it out; we all want stirring up to this blessed work; I am sure we do. I heard of a Christian who always spoke about Christ to, at least, one person every day. I commend the example for your imitation. How many of us could say that we do that? I know there are some here who do ten times as much as that. It has grown to be a habit with them to speak of Christ to every one they meet; but it is not the habit even of all who believe. It takes some Christians a long time to begin to say anything for their Lord. Let us try and labor hard, that, if some people do not believe, we may bring them to the Savior, that God may have praise from them also.

But now I advance a step further, and dwell upon A HORRIBLE INFERENCE drawn from the fact that some did not believe. The inference was, that their unbelief had made the faith of God, or the faithfulness of God, altogether without effect. I will translate what Paul said without dwelling on his words.

Some will say, "If So-and-so, and So-and-so do not believe the gospel, then *religion is a failure*." We have read of a great many things being failures nowadays. A little time ago, it was a question whether marriage was not a failure. I suppose that, by-and-by, eating our dinners will be a failure, breathing will be a failure, everything will be a failure. But now the gospel is said to be a failure. Why? Because certain gentlemen of professed culture and supposed knowledge do not believe it. Well, dear friends, there have been other things that have not been believed in by very important individuals, and yet they have turned out to be true. I am not quite old enough to remember all that was said about the introduction of the steam-engine, though I remember right well going to see a steam-engine and a railway-train as great wonders when I was a boy. Before the trains actually ran, all the old coachmen, and all the farmers that had horses to sell, would not believe for a moment that an engine could be made to go on the rails, and to drag carriages behind it; and in parliament they had to say that they thought they could produce an engine that could go at the speed of eight miles an hour. They dare not say more, because it would have been incredible if they did. According to the wise men of the time, everything was to go to the bad, and the engines would blow up, the first time they started with a train. But they did not blow up, and everybody now smiles at what those learned gentlemen (for some of them were men of standing and learning) ventured then to say. Look at the gentlemen who now tell us that the gospel is a failure. They are the successors of those who have risen up, one after the other; whose principal object has been to refute all that went before them. They call themselves philosophers; and, as I have often said, the history of philosophy is a history of fools, a history of human folly. Man has gone from one form of philosophy to another, and every time that he has altered his philosophy, he has only made a slight variation in the same things. Philosophy is like a kaleidoscope. The philosopher turns it round, and exclaims that he has a new view of things. So he has; but all that he sees is a few bits of glass, which alter their form at every turn of the toy. If any of you shall live fifty years, you will see that the philosophy to today will be a football of contempt for the philosophy of that period. They will speak, amidst roars of laughter, of evolution; and the day will come, when there will not be a child but will look upon it as being the most foolish notion that ever crossed the human mind. I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet; but I know what has befallen many of the grand discoveries of the great philosophers of the past; and I expect that the same thing will happen again. I have to say, with Paul, "What if some did not

believe?" It is no new thing; for there have always been some who have rejected the revelation of God. What then? You and I had better go on believing, and testing for ourselves, and proving the faithfulness of God, and living upon Christ our Lord, even though we see another set of doubters, and another, and yet another *ad infinitum*. The gospel is no failure, as many of us know.

Is the gospel to be disbelieved because some people will not receive it?" I trow not, dear friends. As I have already said, many other things have been believed, although some people have not believed them; and the believers have had the best of it, and so they always will. Has the gospel changed your character? Has the gospel renewed you in the spirit of your mind? Does the gospel cheer and comfort you in the day of sorrow? Does it help you to live, and will it help you to die? Then do not give it up, even though some do not believe it.

Again, dear friends, *has God failed to keep his promise to Israel* because some Israelites did not believe? That is the point that Paul aims at, and the answer is, "No." He did bring Israel into the promised land, though all but two that came out of Egypt died in the wilderness. He did give that promised land to Israel, albeit that, through their unbelief, God smote them, and they were destroyed; yet a nation came up again from their ashes, and God kept his covenant with his ancient people; and to-day he is keeping it. The "chosen seed of Israel's race" is "a remnant, weak and small"; but the day is coming when they shall be gathered in, and we shall then rejoice; for then shall be the fullness of the Gentiles, also, When Israel has come to her own Lord and King. God has not cast away his people, whom he did foreknow; nor has he broken his covenant made with Abraham, nor will he while the world standeth, even though many believe not on him.

Will God fail to keep his promise to anyone who believes on him? Because some do not believe, will God's promise therefore fail to be kept to those who do believe? I invite you to come and try. When two of John's disciples enquired of Jesus where he dwelt, he said to them, "Come and see." If any person here will try Christ, as I tried him, when yet a youth, as miserable as I could be, and ready to die with despair, if they shall feel in believing such joy as I felt, if they shall experience such a change of character as passed over me when I believed in Christ, they would not tolerate a doubt. What they have known, and felt, and tasted, and handled of the good Word of

God, will prove to them that, if some believe not, yet God abideth faithful, he will never deny himself. One said that she believed the Bible because she was acquainted with the Author of it, which is an excellent reason for believing it. You will believe the gospel if you are so acquainted with the Savior who brings that gospel to us. Personal dealings with God in Christ, personal trust in the living Savior, will put you out of reach of this strange inference that God will be unfaithful because some do not believe in him.

I am going a step further. *Will God be unfaithful to his Son* if some do not believe? I have heard sometimes, a fear expressed that Christ will lose those for whom he dies. I thank God that I have no fear about that. "He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." I never come to you, and, *in forma pauperis*, ask you to accept Christ, begging and praying you to take Christ, because otherwise he will be a loser by you. It is you who must beg of him. He giveth grace as a king bestows his favors; nay more, he lovingly condescends to entreat you to come to him. Suppose that you wickedly say, "We will not have Christ to reign over us." If you think that you will rob him of honor, and bring disgrace upon him by your rejection, you make a great mistake. If you will not have him, others will. If you who are so wise will not have Christ, there are plenty, whom you reckon to be fools, who will take him to be their "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." If you who are so gay and frivolous will not have my Lord, you will die in your sins; but there are others who will have him. Do not think that you can by any possibility rob him of his glory. "For what if some did not believe?" This word shall yet become true. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." If myriads reject him, there will be myriads who will receive him, and in all things he shall have the preeminence; and he will return to his Father not defeated, but more than a conqueror over all his foes.

To put the question in another shape, "For what if some did not believe?" *Will God alter his revealed truth?* If some do not believe, will God change the gospel to suit them? Will he seek to please their depraved taste? Ought we to change our preaching because of "the spirit of the age"? Never; unless it be to fight "the spirit of the age" more desperately than ever. We ask for no terms between Christ and his enemies except these, unconditional surrender to him. He will bate not jot of tittle of his claims; but he will still come to you, and say, "Submit yourselves; bow down, and own me King and Lord, and take me to be your Savior. Look unto me, and

be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and besides me there is none else." If you wait till there is a revised version of the gospel, you will be lost. If you wait till there is a gospel brought out that will not cost you so much of giving up sin, or so much of bowing your proud necks, you will wait until you find yourself in hell. Come, I pray you, come even now, and believe the gospel. It cannot be altered to your taste; therefore alter yourself so as to meet its requirements.

Now suppose that these men, who will not believe, should all concert together to proclaim new views in order to upset the gospel. You see, up to the present time, they never have agreed. One wing of Satan's army of doubters always destroys the other. Just now the great scientists say to the modern-thought gentlemen, and say to them very properly, "If there is no serpent, and no Eve, and no Adam, and no flood, and no Noah, and no Abraham. As you tell us now that all this is a myth, then your whole old Book is a lie." I am very much obliged to those who talk thus to the disciples of the higher criticism. They thought that they were going to have all the scientists on their side, to join them in attacking the ancient orthodoxies. There is a split in the enemy's camp; Amalek is fighting Edom, and Edom is contending against Moab.

But suppose they were all to agree. Well, what would happen then? I thought I saw a vision once, when I was by the seaside. To my closed eyes, there seemed to come down to the beach at Brighton a huge black horse, which went into the water, and began to drink; and I thought I heard a voice that said, "It will drink the sea dry." My great horse grew, and grew, till it was such a huge creature that I could scarcely measure it; and still it drank, and drank, and drank. All the while the sea did not appear to alter in the least, the water was still there as deep as ever. By-and-by the animal burst, and its remains were washed up on the beach, and there it lay dead, killed by its own folly. That will be the end of this big black horse of infidelity that boasts that it is going to drink up this everlasting gospel.

I remember that Christmas Evans put this truth rather roughly on one occasion. He said, "There was a dog on the hearthrug, and there was a kettle of boiling water on the fire. As the kettle kept puffing out steam and hot water, the dog sat up and growled. The more the kettle kept on puffing, the more the dog growled; and at last he seized the kettle by the throat, and of course the boiling water killed him." Thus will unbelievers do with the gospel. They growl at it to-day; but if they ever join together,

and really make an attack upon it, the gospel will be a savor of death unto death to those who oppose it, as it is a savor of life to those who receive it.

Now I close by speaking very briefly upon AN INDIGNANT REPLY to this horrible inference.

In reply to this question, “Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?” Paul give *a solemn negative*: “God forbid.” All the opponents of the gospel cannot move it by a hair’s breath; they cannot injure a single stone of this divine building. It remains ever the same. Let them do what they may, they cannot alter it.

Then Paul utters *a vehement protestation*: “Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.” Can you picture this great host? Here they come, all the men who ever lived, unnumbered millions! They come marching up; and we stand like the inspecting general at a review, and see them all go by; and as every man passes, he shouts, “The gospel is not true. Christ did not die. There is no salvation for believers in him.” The apostle Paul, standing as it were at the saluting-point, and seeing the whole race of mankind go by, says, “God is true, and every one of you is a liar.” “Let God be true, but every man a liar.” You know the way that we have of counting beads, and if the majority goes in a particular direction, we almost go that way. If you count the heads, and there is a general consensus of opinion, you are apt to say, “It must be so, for everybody says so.” But what everybody says is not therefore true. “Let God be true, but every man a liar.” It is a strange, strong expression; but it is non too strong. If God says one thing, and every man in the world says another, God is true, and all men are false. God speaks the truth, and cannot lie. God cannot change; his word, like himself, is immutable. We are to believe God’s truth if nobody else believes it. The general consensus of opinion is nothing to a Christian. He believes God’s word, and he thinks more of that than of the universal opinion of men.

Paul next uses *a Scriptural argument*. Whenever he gets thoroughly redhot, and wants an overwhelming argument, he always goes to the divine treasury of revelation. He quotes what David had said in the fifty-first Psalm, “That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.”

God will be justified in everything that he has said. You may take every line of the Word of God, and rest assured that God will be justified in having directed the sacred penman to write that line.

God will also be justified when he judges, and when he condemns men. When he pronounces his final sentence upon the ungodly, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:" he shall be justified even in that dreadful hour.

A very startling expression is used here: "That thou mightest overcome when thou art judged." Think of this enormous evil; here are men actually trying to snatch the balance and the rod from the hand of God; and presuming to judge his judgments, and to sit as if they were the god of God. Suppose that they could be daring enough to do even that, the verdict would be in God's favor. It would be proved that he had neither said anything untrue, nor done anything unjust. We are confident that, although some do not believe God, he will be justified before men and angels, and we shall have nothing to do but to admire and adore him world without end.

Now, I could say much more; but I will not except just this, I want those who are the Lord's people to be very brave about the things of God. There has been too much of yielding, and apologizing, and compromising. I cannot bear it; it grieves me to see one truth after another surrendered to the enemy. A brother writes to me, saying, "You do not put so much mirth into your preaching as you used to do. When the captain at sea whistles, then all the sailors feel more cheerful." My friend adds, "Whistle a bit." I will do so. This is my way of whistling to cheer my shipmates. I believe in the everlasting God, and in his unchanging truth; and I am persuaded that the gospel will win the day, however long and stern the conflict rages. Therefore, my brethren, be not ashamed of the gospel, nor of Christ your Lord, who died that he might save you eternally. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." Even if it did come to this, that every other man in the world were against the truth of God, stand you to his word, and say, "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

The other word that I have to say is a message to the unsaved. If you are opposed to God, I beseech you give up your opposition at once. The battle cannot end well for you unless you yield yourself to God. He is your Maker and Preserver; every argument we can use ought to convince you that you should be on his side. I pray you remember that, for you to

contend with God, is for the gnat to contend with the fire, or the wax, to fight with the flame. You must be destroyed if you come into collision with him. Then yield to him at once. “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.” What is it to kiss the Son? Why, to accept the Lord Christ as your King and Savior. To ask him to be your peace and your salvation. Ask him now, before that clock ceases striking. I pray that some may at this moment say, “I will have Christ, and I will be Christ’s.” The Lord grant it! This great transaction done now, it shall be done forever; and you and I will meet on the other side of Jordan, in the land of the blessed, and eternally praise him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God. The Lord be with you, for Jesu’s sake! Amen.

Portion Of Scripture Read Before Sermon — Romans 3.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 166, 675, 674

EXPOSITION

ROMANS 3

Verse 1. *What advantage then hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision?*

If, after all, both Jew and Gentiles were under sin, what advantage had the Jew by the covenant under which he lived? Or what was the benefit to him of the circumcision which was his distinctive mark?

2. Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

The Jews were God’s chronicle-keepers. They had to guard the holy Books, “the oracles of God.” They had also to preserve the knowledge of the truth by those divers rites and ceremonies by which God was pleased to reveal himself of old time.

3. For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

Did he not, after all, bless the Jews though among them were unbelievers? Could it be that their unbelief would turn God from his purpose to bless the chosen people? Would their want of faith affect God's faithfulness?

4. God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou are judged.

However faithless men might be, God was still true and faithful. Paul quotes the Septuagint, which thus renders David's words.

5. But if our unrighteousness comment the righteousness of God, what shall we say?

If it so turns out, that even man's sin makes the holiness of God the more illustrious, what shall we say?

5. Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)

Paul spoke as a mere carnal man might be supposed to speak. If ever we are obliged, for the sake of argument, to ask a question which is almost blasphemous, let us do it very guardedly, and say something to show that we really do not adopt the language as our own, just as Paul says, "I speak as a man." If the very sin of man is made to turn to the glory of God, is God unjust in punishing that sin?

6. God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?

God will judge the world; and he does judge the world even now. There are judgments against nations already executed, and recorded on the page of history. If God were unjust, how could he judge the world?

7. For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?

If God has even turned the opposition of evil men to the establishment of his truth, as he has often done; why, then, are men punished for it? These are deep, dark questions, which come out of the proud heart of man, and Paul ventures to answer them.

8. And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? Whose damnation is just

We never said, we never even thought, that we might do evil that good should come; nay, if all the good in the world could come of a single evil action, we have no right to do it. We must never do evil with the hope of advancing God's cause. If God chooses to turn evil into good, as he often does, that is no reason why we should do evil; and it is no justification of sin. The murder of Christ at Calvary has brought the greatest possible benefit to us; yet it was a high crime against God, the greatest of all crimes, when man turned deicides, and slew the Son of God.

10. *What then? Are we better than they? No, in no vain: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are under sin; as it is written.*

Paul had already proved in the Epistle that both Jews and Gentiles were guilty before God. Now he quotes a set of texts from Israel's own holy Books, to show the universal depravity of men. Notice how he rings the changes on the words "all" and "none."

11. There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

This is the character of all unregenerate men. It is a true description of the whole race of mankind, whether Jews or Gentiles. In their natural state, "there is non righteous . . . there is none that seeketh after God . . . there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

13. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:

Paul does not use flattering words, as those preachers do who prate about the dignity of human nature. Man was a noble creature when he was made in the image of God; but sin blotted out all his dignity.

14. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law:

The Jews are comprehended here, for they are specially “under the law.” The whole chosen seed of Israel, highly privileged as they were, are described in these terrible words that we have been reading, which Paul quoted from their own sacred Books.

19. That very mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

That is the true condition of the whole world, “guilty before God.” This is the right attitude for the whole human race, to stand with its finger on its lip, having nothing to say as to why it should not be condemned.

20. 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.

All the law does, is to show us how sinful we are. Paul has been quoting from the sacred Scriptures; and truly, they shed a lurid light upon the condition of human nature. The light can show us our sin; but it cannot take it away. The law of the Lord is like a looking-glass. Now, a looking-glass is a capital thing for finding out where the spots are on your face; but you cannot wash in a looking-glass, you cannot get rid of the spots by looking in the glass. The law is intended to show a man how much he needs cleansing; but the law cannot cleanse him. “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” The law proves that we are condemned, but it does not bring us our pardon.

22. 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 them that believe:

We have no righteousness of our own; but God gives us a righteousness through faith in Christ; and he gives that to everyone who believes.

23. For there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

There are degrees of guilt; but all men have sinned. There is no difference in that respect, whatever gradations there may be in sinners.

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

Dear hearers, are you all justified, that is, made just, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus? You are certainly all guilty in the sight of God; have you all been made righteous by faith in the redemption accomplished on the cross by Christ Jesus our Lord? I beg you to consider this question most seriously; and if you must truthfully answer, "No," may God make you tremble, and drive you to your knees in penitence to cry to him for pardon!

25. 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;

God holds back the axe which, were it not for his forbearance, would cut down the barren tree. He still forbears, and he is ready to pardon and blot out all the past if you will but believe in his dear Son.

27. To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.

Where is it? It is to be found in a great many people. It is common enough; but where ought it to be? Where does it get a footing? It is shut out/ There is no room for boasting in the heart that receives Christ. If a man were saved by works, he would have whereof to glory; boasting would not be shut out. But as salvation is all of grace, through faith in Christ, boasting is barred out in the dark, and faith gratefully ascribes all praise to God.

27. It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles, also: seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Whether Jews or Gentiles, there was no salvation for them by the works of the law; the only way in which the circumcised or the uncircumcised could be justified was by faith. This principle does not make void God's law; on the contrary, it establishes it, and sets it on the only right and solid foundation. The gospel of the grace of God is the best vindication of his law.