

INTRODUCTION

As we are going through the book of Romans, it is important for us to keep in mind the historical context of the book. You know, we don't do that very well in the twentieth century. We are very poor students of history, or we don't really appreciate history the way we should. In fact, I have some excerpts here. They are actually hilarious, but also a little bit sad. Here are some actual answers given on history exams—both Bible history and secular history—either in high school or in college. I am reading you the answers some students put on their essay tests describing history.

1. "Moses led the Hebrew slaves to the Red Sea where they made unleavened bread, which is bread without any ingredients."
2. "Moses went up on top of Mt. Cyanide to get the Ten Commandments. He died before he ever reached the land of Canada."
3. "Solomon had 300 wives and 700 porcupines. The Greeks were a highly sculptured people, and without them we would not have history. The Greeks also had many myths. A myth is a female moth."
4. "Ancient Egypt was inhabited by mummies and they all wrote in hydraulics. They lived out in the Sarah dessert and traveled by camelot."
5. "Socrates was a famous Greek teacher who went around giving people advice. That's what killed him. He died from an overdose of wedlock."
6. "In the Olympic Games Greeks ran races, jumped and hurled the biscuits, and threw the java. Eventually, the Romans conquered the Greeks. History calls the people Romans because they never stayed in one place very long."
7. "Julius Caesar extinguished himself on the battlefields of Gaul, but he was killed by his friends because they thought he was trying to be king. As he was dying, he said these words, "Tee hee, Brutus."
8. "Nero was a cruel tyrant who would torture his subjects by playing the fiddle to them."
9. "It was an age of great inventions and discoveries. Gutenberg invented the Bible. Another invention was the circulation of blood."
10. "Sir Walter Raleigh is an historical figure because he invented cigarettes and started smoking."
11. "The greatest writer of the Renaissance was William Shakespeare. He was born in the year 1654 supposedly on his birthday. He wrote tragedies, comedies and hysterectomies. Another great author was John Milton. Milton wrote, 'Paradise Lost,' then his wife died and he wrote 'Paradise Regained.'"
12. "Abraham Lincoln became America's greatest precedent. Lincoln's mother died in her infancy, and Lincoln was born in a log cabin that he built with his own hands. Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves by signing the Emasculation Proclamation. On the night of April 14, 1865, Lincoln went to the theater and got shot in his seat by one of the actors in a moving picture show. The believed assassinator was John Wilkes Booth, an insane actor. This ruined Booth's career."

I'm sure those of you who teach college and high school, you have to laugh at that because you know people just do not have a good grasp of history.

I want to remind you of the historical context in Romans, chapter 3. Paul grew up in the Jewish religion. He was an expert on it. For many years he served as the chief prosecutor and persecutor of Christianity. He went around making sure Christians were put to death. Then, he was converted and he became a Christian, and instead of being the prosecutor of Christianity, he became the greatest defender of the Christian faith. In chapter 1, he talks about how man without any kind of religious background, pagan Gentiles, are terribly sinful. That’s what chapter 1 is all about. As he was writing those words, I am sure the Jewish Christians in Rome were saying, “That’s right, Paul. Give it to them, those terrible, old Gentile pagan people...” Then in chapter 2, he really comes down hard on religious people about those who are trusting a Jewish religion or in our case, a Baptist religion, or a Protestant religion, and he aims his biggest guns at religion.

In chapter 3, he synthesizes these two, and is trying to make a definite point. Look at Romans 3:9, he brings his conclusion to the light. “What shall we conclude then? Are we, [Jews] any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.” That’s the point he has been trying to make and he is going to develop it in the next few chapters. Having said all of that in the preceding eight verses, the apostle, Paul, does something a little unusual. Because he has a brilliant legal mind, as he is defending Christianity, he also steps into the role of the people who have objections to Christianity, people who have objections against believing all people are sinners, and that they need a Savior. He anticipates all the questions, presents the objections, and overrules the objections. That’s why today the title of the message is “Objection Overruled.”

When I was a kid, “Perry Mason” was a weekly television show. Do you remember that lawyer? He would stand up in the heat of a trial, and would say something like, “Objection, your honor.” and he would say why he was making an objection. The judge, as he would say on TV and as he would say today, would say, “All right.” Either, “Objection, sustained.” Or “You are correct in your objection.” Or, “Objection Overruled.” Today, the apostle, Paul, is looking at three objections even people today make about their sinful condition, and he overrules them. Let’s look at all three of those objections and the ruling of the heavenly supreme court.

OBJECTION #1: THERE IS NO VALUE IN BEING “RELIGIOUS!”

Some people say there is absolutely no value in being religious. Well, let’s look at verses one and two and see how he answers this objection. First of all, he poses the question and then he answers it. “What advantage then is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision?” We could say, “What value is there in going to church? What value is there in reading the Bible? What value is there in going to Sunday School?” Here’s the answer, verse 2. Is it valuable? “Much in every way!” First of all, they—meaning the Jews—have been entrusted with the very words of God. Now, the question or the objection is this. “Okay, I believe you, being religious will never get anybody into heaven. You convinced me last week, pastor, and Paul, you convinced me in chapter 2. Being baptized, that’s religious. It won’t get you into heaven. Walking down an aisle and filling out a form, that’s a religious act. It won’t get you into heaven. Going to church on Sunday morning, that’s a religious deed. It won’t get you into heaven. So, if none of that can save you, what’s the value of it? Why don’t we just drop out all together? Why don’t we just shut down all the churches? Why don’t we, like some people who are out there who never darken the door of a church? Why don’t we say, “Well religion is vain,

it's empty, it's worthless. What value is there in being religious?" Paul says, "You have been given God's word." Here's the ruling he makes from heaven.

**Ruling: God has given you His written word
Therefore, you cannot claim ignorance of His will**

Going to church will never get anyone into heaven. "Well, why do I go to church? Why do I go to Sunday School?" Well, I'll tell you at least one good reason: You're exposed to the Bible. You're exposed to the word of God in Sunday School, and in church we open the Bible Sunday after Sunday, and say, "This is what God says." Paul is saying the Jewish people have the words of God. If you have a King James Bible, it says, "the oracles of God." It's a special word that means the finished, written down, revelation of God. There is nothing spiritual or holy or supernatural about this book. It is just letters on pages, but what's inside this book, the life of it, is the very word of God! It's written down and it's complete, by the way. There are some people who say you need to add a "new testament" to the Bible, as our Mormon friends say, but I disagree. I think all you ever need to know about God is found right here in the Old Testament and in the New Testament we hold in our hands. I believe this Bible is all any of us needs today to know God's will for our lives, for how we ought to live, how we ought to behave.

Look at Romans, 15:4. This is what the Bible says about itself. "For everything that was written in the past, was written to teach us so that through endurance and the encouragement of scriptures, we might have hope." We couldn't have church if we did not have a Bible. I could not stand up and teach you anything if we didn't have a Bible. We couldn't have a Sunday School if we didn't have a Bible because we are not here to express man's *opinions*. We're here to teach the inspired word of God.

Have you noticed the flak that's been associated with the Southern Baptist Convention the last week or so? The Southern Baptist Convention changed the charter to include a statement about marriage that says husbands ought to lovingly lead their families, protect them and provide for them, and it says wives should graciously submit to their husbands as unto the Lord. It is almost a direct quotation from Ephesians, chapter 5. That has caused such an outcry in America! This week I was watching a little bit of "Larry King Live." He was interviewing a lady from NOW (National Organization of Women) who said, "Well, of course that's what the Bible says." She didn't disagree the Bible said that "but" she said, "that was written for a different century, for a different culture, and for a different civilization," and she says, "It has absolutely no impact on the American culture today." There are some people who believe that. Obviously, she is one of them. I'm here to tell you, I'm not one of them. I believe this Bible is all we need to have to learn how to live today, to have a successful marriage, to have a successful family, to have a successful church. It's found in the Bible. So, you want to know what the value of being religious is. At least we have the word of God written down. Do you really hunger for this word? Do you really want to study it and read it? How many Bibles do you even have at your house? One, two, fifteen, twenty. Do you even read them?

As I was preparing for this message I came across a book by Robert Sumner written at the beginning of this century called *The Wonder of the Word of God*. In this book about the Bible, he tells a story about a man in Kansas City who was injured in an explosion. The explosion blinded

him and terribly disfigured his face. Even his arms and hands were burned. Suddenly, he realized he could not read. Braille had not been around too long, but he decided he wanted to learn Braille so he could read the Bible for himself. He had no feeling in the tips of his fingers, so he couldn't even read Braille. He heard about a woman in England who read Braille with her lips, and so he tried that, but he didn't even have any nerve endings in his lips. This man was so desperate to study the word of God for himself that he used his tongue to learn Braille so he could read the Bible. Robert Sumner says the man read the Braille Bible through four times with his tongue before he died. I don't know about you, but that's a conviction to my heart. I have two eyes, I have two hands and I have plenty of Bibles. Are we hungry for the word of God? That's what religion does. It can't save you, but it exposes you to the word of God. That's objection number one. Objection overruled!

OBJECTION #2: GOD HASN'T BEEN FAITHFUL TO ME. THAT'S WHY I SIN!

Here's objection number two: Some people say, “God hasn't been faithful to me so that's why I sin. I am a sinner because God let me down. He has failed me.” Well, that's exactly what Paul says. Look at verses 3 & 4. Here's the question “What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness?” Here's the answer: “Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar, as it is written: ‘So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge.’” That last quotation is from Psalm 51 when King David had been convicted of adultery and murder and said, “God I have sinned against you. I have been unfaithful to you, but you have been faithful to me.”

Here's the objection Paul is addressing. There are some people even today who say, “You know the reason I don't go to church? You know the reason I don't have any time for God or room for God in my life? It's because God has let me down.” I've heard that. People have said to me, “I had a little child that was 6 or 7 years old and the child contracted a disease. I prayed, ‘Dear God. Heal my child!’ but my child died. I'm here to tell you I cannot believe in a God who would let a 6 or 7-year-old child die.” I've also heard people say, “My daddy was sick with cancer. I prayed, and I said, ‘Dear God. Heal my daddy!’ but God didn't heal my daddy, and he died. I have no time or no room for a God like that.” Some people are like the man who ran into my office one time after his teenage son died in a wreck. He hit my desk as hard as he could, and looked at me, and he said, “Where was God when my son died?” I said, “He was the same place he was when his son died.” There are actually some people who honestly think God let them down so they have no room for God, and that's their objection. The ruling Paul makes here, or the way he overrules this objection is

Ruling: God is faithful and true

Therefore, you cannot blame your sin on Him

God is faithful it says in verse 3, he is true in verse 4, therefore, you cannot blame your sin on him. God has always been faithful to keep his promises to us. He has never failed on one of his promises. Think about faithfulness. We are not faithful to God. We try to be characterized by faithfulness, but think about this: Faithfulness is an “all or nothing” proposition. You cannot be partially faithful, can you? For instance, here's a wife who says to her husband, “Honey, have you been faithful to me all throughout our marriage? And he says to her, “Why, yes dear. I've

been faithful to you 80% of the time." That's not faithfulness. Or, "Yes, honey, I have been faithful to you 95% of the time." That's still not faithfulness. "I have been faithful to you 99% of the time." That's not faithfulness. You cannot be *partially* faithful. God's character is described as faithful.

Can you think of one time in your past, when you thought God let you down? When he was not faithful to keep his promise? Some of them have had answers for me. "Yeah, this was the time." The only thing I can say to you is one day when you understand things the way God understands things, you'll understand he was faithful to you. The only reason you don't think he was faithful is because of our own lack of understanding at this time. When it comes to eternal reality, you and I can only see about 2% of it. When we see the other 98% even though you think God has been unfaithful to you, you'll realize he is faithful and true, and he has never let you down.

Have you ever noticed that's a tendency with people? We try to excuse our sins. We try to blame God for making us the way we are. Look at James 1:13. "When tempted no one should say, 'God is tempting me' for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone, but each one is tempted when by his own evil desires he is dragged away and enticed." All that means is when you sin and I sin, we cannot blame God. We can't say, "God, you made me that way so it's your fault, God." That is human nature to try to justify our behavior, to try to excuse our sinfulness. An excuse is the skin of the truth stuffed with a lie. We always try to make excuses. I had a friend in my last church who was a state trooper. He used to tell me about all the different excuses people gave him when he stopped them for speeding. "My cruise control was set." or "My speedometer was broken." or "I was just driving the same speed as everybody else around me. Why are you picking on me?" He said, "But, there was one excuse he never heard before, and has never heard since, and it is absolutely the best one." He stopped someone a sweet-looking, little old lady and said, "Ma'am, did you know you were driving 60 miles an hour?" She looked at him and smiled, and said, "That's impossible, sonny. I haven't even been gone an hour." He said he thought about that for a moment, and said, "Bless your heart, slow down and keep going." He didn't even give her a ticket. You might try that some time. That is human nature to try to excuse our behavior. "It's not my fault."

That's exactly what Adam and Eve did. Remember in the Garden of Eden, God put them in a perfect environment. He said, "Enjoy yourself, have fun, eat, be fruitful, multiply, but by the way I am reserving an area of my holiness that I do not want you to transgress." That's what God does. He reserves areas for himself, and that's exactly what Eve did. She was tempted by the serpent, but she stepped over the line. She ate the forbidden fruit, and then she influenced Adam, and he ate the forbidden fruit. That's when sin entered the human race, and that's why we have a whole heap of trouble! Do you remember how they responded when God confronted them with their sin? The same way most of us respond when we're confronted with guilt. We blame somebody else. God talked to Adam, and he said, "Adam why did you do this?" Adam pointed his finger at Eve. "It's not my fault, God. It's the woman that you gave to me. It's her fault." Ladies, do you ever wonder why your husband says it's never his fault, it's always your fault. It came from Adam. That's where it started, right there. "It's not my fault. It's the woman you gave me. It's not my fault, it's her fault. If it's not her fault, God, it's your fault because you're the one who gave me this woman." Then God confronted Eve and she said, "It's not my fault, it was that old snake, and God, you created that serpent. It's not my fault!" Everybody tries to pass the

blame. Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the snake, and the snake didn't have a leg to stand on. Isn't that right? So, we always try to pass the buck, blame somebody else. That's what Paul is saying. You can't blame anybody else for your sin. You have to admit, "I'm a sinner. I was made this way." It's not God's fault.

OBJECTION #3: THE MORE EVIL I DO, THE BETTER GOD APPEARS IN COMPARISON!

Objection number three is people actually say, "The more evil I do, the better God appears in comparison." Look at verses 5-8. Here are some questions he says people are asking. "But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God unjust in bringing his wrath upon us? (I'm using a human argument here)" That lets us know this is not the divine word of God he is sharing, he is using a human argument for this objection. "Certainly not, if that were so how could God judge the world? Someone might argue, 'If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?'" Let me just paraphrase that. Some people say, "God's so truthful and I'm such a liar, every time I lie it just makes God that much better. Right?" He says that's ridiculous! "Why not say—as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say—'Let us do evil that good may result.'" Here's Paul's opinion of that. "Their condemnation is deserved."

There are some people who think they don't have to live by any rules or laws. They think they can do whatever they want, and it just makes God look better in comparison. The only problem is you don't compare yourself to God. God has a totally different value standard than we do. You make a mistake if you compare yourself to anybody else. That's like the little boy who had a puppy. One day he said to his mother, "Mom, I'm going to sell my puppy this morning." She said "Well, okay. How much are you going to ask for him?" He said, "Well, he's a pretty nice puppy. I think I'm going to ask ten thousand dollars for him." She just smiled, and said, "Good luck!" Well, he comes back before lunch and he doesn't have his puppy anymore. He said, "I sold my puppy." She said "Did you have to come down on the price any?" He said, "Not at all." She said, "You mean you got ten thousand dollars for him?" He said, "Well, sort of. I traded him for two five thousand dollar cats." That's the problem with comparing yourself to God or comparing yourself to anybody else. It's a totally separate set of values.

Some people say, "Well, every time I lie, it just makes God look that much more truthful." Have you ever noticed when a jeweler brings out a diamond, they don't just put it up on the glass counter? No, they put it on a piece of black velvet, so against the backdrop of the black velvet, the beauty and the color of the diamond is enhanced. When someone is selling beautiful white lace they don't just lay it down on the counter, they put it on black velvet so all the details of that lace are enhanced by the black background. That's the argument Paul is refuting. There are some people who say, "God's goodness is enhanced when you look at it against the backdrop of my wicked behavior. So, live it up. I'm doing God a favor by sinning." Paul says, "That's ridiculous. That's a lame excuse."

Those of you who know history or theology will recognize this term. Since the first century there has been a movement that has been called, antinomianism, which means no laws. *Nomos* is the Greek word for law; "anti" meaning *against*. There were people in Paul's day just as there are

today who say, “I don’t have to live by any rules. I don’t have to live by any standards. I can live any way I want to.” That’s called antinomianism. We have those people today. Although you don’t see people walking around saying, “I confess. I’m an antinomian, and I go to antinomian anonymous.” Instead, they wear t-shirts that say, “No rules!” or “No fear”. “No limits” “I can live any way I want to I don’t have to live by anybody’s standard. Not God’s standard, the Bible’s standard I’ll live any way I want to.” That’s the people that are around today. Here’s the ruling Paul makes against that:

**Ruling: God is righteous. He can't become more righteous
Therefore, unless you repent you will not escape condemnation**

He says, “God is righteous. He can’t become more righteous. You can’t make him any more righteous! That’s part of his character. Therefore, unless you repent, you will not escape condemnation.” All that means is you cannot justify or validate your sinful behavior by blaming it on God or something else.

The question the writer of Hebrews asks is the question all of us ought to be considering: How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? Here’s the bottom line! God is holy, and he must punish sin. We are sinful and in one way or another, we’re going to have to deal with the punishment of God against sin. If there was ever a time in history that God perhaps would have been tempted to go easy on his judgment against sin, I suppose it would have been when Jesus was hanging on the cross. Don’t you think? When he was on the cross, at that moment Jesus became my sin and your sin. The Bible says God laid on him the iniquities of us all. He bore our sins in his body on the tree, the Bible says. At that moment when Jesus took my sin and your sin if God had ever been tempted to go easy on sin, I think that would have been it. I think perhaps God could have thought, “Hey, that’s my son. That’s my only begotten son. That’s my beloved son. So, just this one time, I’m going to take it easy with sin.” But, no, he didn’t. He turned his back on his son and he allowed his son to suffer in agony and blood until he died. That’s why as Jesus was hanging on the cross he said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” The answer to that question is because God is holy and Jesus became sin. You will either face the judgment of God on your own, or you will face the judgment of God standing where Jesus stood at the cross.

CONCLUSION

This is a great story some of you may have heard before, but it is the best way to describe how you can escape God’s judgment against sin. When the pioneers were moving westward and setting up farms out on the prairies, they were often devastated by wild fires raging sweeping out of control across the plains. The settlers would see the wild fire coming and wouldn’t know what to do. The only thing they knew to do was pack up the few belongings they could find, and run in front of the fire to escape. The fire would ravage everything they had built and burn it to the ground. But soon, the pioneers discovered a way they could endure the fires. As soon as they saw the horizon covered with smoke and flames sweeping toward them, they immediately went outside and fought fire with fire. They set fire to the property around their home, barn and livestock, and they quickly controlled the burning and then put it out. That way there were already burned out areas around their homes and barns. Then, as the wildfire swept toward them,

they simply stood in the place where the fire had already burned, and when they stood where the fire already burned, the wildfire couldn't touch them. The point of that is this: Throughout all of history the only place the fire of God's judgment against sin has already fallen is at the cross of Jesus. You and I need to stand at the cross of Jesus and accept what he took for our sins. If we do that, we will escape God's judgment. My friend if you don't do that, you'll have to face it on your own. So, we are all sinners, but God loves us and has made provision for us to escape his judgment against sin by trusting his son Jesus. Have you done that? I'm not talking about being religious. I'm not talking about joining a church. Have you personally put your faith in Jesus Christ, and said, "Jesus, I believe you died for me and I am trusting what you did on the cross to get me into heaven. I'm not trusting how good I am.

OUTLINE

OBJECTION #1 (vv. 1-2): THERE IS NO VALUE IN BEING “RELIGIOUS!”

Ruling: God has given you His written Word

Therefore, you cannot claim ignorance of His will

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. *Romans 15:4*

OBJECTION #2 (vv. 3-4): GOD HASN'T BEEN FAITHFUL TO ME. THAT'S WHY I SIN!

Ruling: God is faithful and true

Therefore, you cannot blame your sin on Him

When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. *James 1:13-14*

OBJECTION #3 (vv. 5-8): THE MORE EVIL I DO, THE BETTER GOD APPEARS IN COMPARISON!

Ruling: God is righteous. He can't become more righteous.

Therefore, unless you repent you will not escape condemnation

...how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? *Hebrews 2:3a*



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes