

The Oracles of God – Romans 3:1-20

So far in the Book of Romans, Paul has written to the church in Rome, exposing the sin of the Gentiles (Chapter 1) and the Jews (Chapter 2). Both have been seeking their own path to happiness and purpose and pleasure. In different ways, but both have strayed from God. Paul is writing to bring everyone back on to the path God has laid out. Having just said to the Jews their observance or the sacrifices; their circumcision; their heritage; it all counts for nothing, he responds to the question “What advantage has the Jew?”

1) The Word of God our Greatest Privilege

People would visit the wise oracles to gain insight and advice on what to do. Paul is comparing the Scriptures held by the Jews to these oracles. But why?

The Bible is filled with stories and guidance for us. This book contains the pronouncements of God, the Laws, His counsel. Rather than using these words to bring joy, excitement and purpose as intended, they instead use them for cosmetic, surface adjustments.

The Jews had the privilege of holding the Scriptures, the Words of God. We have the privilege of having the Word of God in the Bible. We can be just as guilty of using God’s Word to make superficial changes, without accepting the changes God wants to make to our hearts.

Q. How do we make use of the Oracles of God in our personal lives?

Q. How important is it to share this wisdom with those around us?

2) Power of Sin is Universal

For the Jews hearing the message that Jesus is The Way, it would be easy to get offended. What about all the great men and women of Jewish history who had no opportunity to know Jesus. If my good works mean nothing, what hope did they have? Simply put, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Good News of Salvation, has always been in place. Those who lived before Jesus would be looking forward. The sacrifices, the offerings would be pointing out their need for a saviour. Their faith pointed towards Jesus before he came.

The Jews have an advantage, having the wisdom of God in the Scriptures. However, they are no better off (v9) as this does not put them in better standing. “*None is righteous, not one. No one seeks God*”. Paul highlights, from their own teaching, that all their good works mean nothing. A good deed done to earn favour (either with man or with God) is not as selfless as it may appear. Like using a fork to comb our hair, it is not the purpose.

Q. ‘No one seeks God’ – What motivates us to do good works? What do we expect from it?

Q. What advantage does a Christian up-bringing have? What disadvantages?

3) All in need of a Saviour

Luke 7:36-48 recounts a time when Jesus encountered two people who both needed His forgiveness. One knew her need. The other considered himself righteous and self-important.

Those who know their sin, know their need of a Saviour. Those who think they are good, believe their good deeds outweigh their shame. They don’t want a Saviour, because they don’t feel they need one.

Tim Keller writes “...all you need is need, all you need is nothing, but most people don’t have it.” Our biggest obstacle to approaching God, is our feeling we have earned it and deserve to. Instead, it is given as a gift.

Q. How can our pride affect our acceptance of the gift of Salvation?