

Week of June 17-June 23

## **GUILTY AS CHARGED**

**Scripture Reading:** Read Romans chapter 3

For two chapters in Romans, Paul, like a prosecutor presenting his case, has masterfully laid out the argument for humanity's sinfulness. In chapter 1, it's the Gentiles who are guilty. In chapter 2, it's the self-righteous Jews who have failed to meet God's standards. Now, in chapter 3, Paul makes his closing argument (primarily by quoting from the Old Testament) that the whole world stands guilty before God: *"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."* Again and again, Paul makes plain the universality of sin by use of the phrase "no one" and the word "all." There are no exceptions: *"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."* We are, as they say in court, **Guilty as Charged!**

To compound matters, there is no way out of the situation. We can't avoid the penalty by volunteering to do "community service" in lieu of payment to atone for our sin. Paul asserts, *"Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin."* Bottom line, according to Paul, we're guilty of sin and we can't do enough good deeds to measure up to God's holy standard. So, what's the solution to the sin predicament? Paul turns to the cure: **God's gracious gift of righteousness by faith through Jesus Christ** is the only answer! When we place our faith in Jesus, God gives us the gift of right standing with him. We are forgiven of our sins and made righteous in his sight.

Some might ask how it's fair for someone else to take our place. We did the crime but Jesus does the time? That doesn't seem fair and it most likely wouldn't work in our justice system so how does it work in God's? The difference is that God was the One we sinned against. It was to Him that we owed the debt for our sin. For example, if I loaned you \$1,000 and you couldn't repay me, I have three options: I can extend the loan but keep you in debt; I can take you to court to make you pay; or I could forgive the loan. If I forgive the loan, it still got paid, in a way, but was done so by me. I absorbed the loss. Since it was my money, I have the legal right to forgive the loan by paying the price myself.

This is what God did for us. When Jesus came to earth, he was God in the flesh: fully God and fully human. So, the One to whom we owed the debt was willing to absorb the debt we owed. The **Guilty as Charged** verdict is legally addressed because Jesus, God's Son, took our place. By sending Jesus as our substitute, God is able, then, to be both just and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus (3:26). In other words, God's justice is served because the penalty was paid for our sin and God's grace was extended because **He** paid the penalty by the death of His Son. All room for boasting is, therefore, removed (3:27) since it's all a gift of grace through faith!

**Action Step & Prayer Focus:** Have you acknowledged your sin before God? Have you come to a point in your life where you are finally willing to admit what Paul says about you in Romans 1-3? If not, you're guilty as charged but can be forgiven in Christ. If you have received God's gift of salvation, then spend some time today giving God thanks.

**Take-a-way:** *The penalty was paid when on Jesus, God's Son, my sin was laid.*