

ROMANS PT. 3

The Advantage is in Christ Alone

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, November 16, 2025
PASSAGES	Romans 2; Romans 3; John 6
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:18:34 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Paul spends two chapters closing every exit until Jew and Gentile are standing in the same corner, equally condemned and equally in need of grace. There is one program, and it is grace through faith in what Jesus alone could do. The advantage you keep hunting for already exists — it just belongs to him, and you are hidden in him.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ When Jesus was asked what work God requires, he named exactly one: believe in the one he has sent. That is the whole assignment.
- ◆ Everyone has received a witness — the Torah, or a conscience — which means nobody gets to plead ignorance and nobody gets an exemption.
- ◆ “The doers of the law will be justified” is not a loophole. Paul had just spent a chapter proving no one is a doer of the law.
- ◆ Israel’s advantage is real but it is not salvific: they were entrusted with the oracles of God. Having the book on the shelf is not the same as believing it.
- ◆ Chasing outward markers earns what Matt calls spiritual person points — and the ticking of boxes never ends, because the boxes are not the standard. The glory of God is.
- ◆ Grace does not make sin unimportant. Sin matters because it damages real people, not because God is keeping score.

- ◆ The mind of the flesh asks what it gets out of Christianity. That question is itself the thing to repent of.
- ◆ We approach God in the name of Jesus, never on the strength of the last three hours. There is nobody to get cleaned up by first.

► 1:19:07

Matt opened where the series began: Paul is eager to write to Rome because Rome is proof of what God intends — that all the *ethnē*, every tribe and tongue and little people group, are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb. Rome, “the USA of classical antiquity.” Tribes in the jungle. Americans. “Texans for sure, but you know what I mean.”

1. What is the work of God that we must do?

► 1:19:59

“He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury... For God shows no partiality.”

ROMANS 2:6–11 ↗

So how badly do you want immortality, honor, dignity, glory — and how is it found? Matt let the question sit as a genuine one. Most answers that come to mind are moral housekeeping: stop stealing, stop lying, stop cheating. Church it up a bit. But somebody asked Jesus this exact thing, and his answer was one sentence — “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

There is only one program, and Matt used the word with visible suspicion — he spent the rest of the message dismantling the idea that this is a program at all. Not grace through faith for most people with a VIP back door for the extraterrestrial or the especially adorable. One way, for Jew and Gentile alike.

2. Everyone has a witness

► 1:22:23

“For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.”

ROMANS 2:12–13 ↗

That last line trips people, and Matt named why: we read in chunklets. Read [Romans 1](#) again and you will find Paul has just finished describing a humanity manifestly incapable of doing the law. “That’s why it’s good to every once in a while binge through the Bible, not just read it in little chunklets.”

► 1:24:49

Nor is Paul saying Gentiles stumble into justification by accident. He is saying they had a conscience — God had already shown them in their hearts that there is a right way to be and a wrong way to be ([Romans 2:14–16](#)). Our habit of condemning other people for injustice is, in Paul’s hands, evidence for the prosecution: you clearly do know right from wrong, so you can die under a law you never had written down. It all runs back to [Romans 1:19–21](#) — God’s invisible attributes have been *clearly perceived*, not chucked out into the void. So who has the advantage in finding immortality, the Jew or the Gentile?

3. The teacher who does not teach himself

► 1:28:10

Paul turns to “you who call yourself a Jew” — and Matt flagged the phrasing. Why not simply “you who are Jews”? His read, offered as a read and not a ruling: Paul is likely addressing Gentile believers in Rome who were taking on Jewish identity markers as a way of being hardcore for Jesus. It is the Galatians fight again. Gentiles do not get better status by becoming Jewish, and Jews do not get more Jesus by adding their own performance of the law on top of trusting Christ.

► 1:31:18

“You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? ... For, as it is written, ‘The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.’”

ROMANS 2:21–24 ↗

The quotation is [Isaiah 52:5](#), which sits just before “how beautiful are the feet” — good news arriving on the far side of a nation’s rebellion. And Matt cut off the obvious misuse of the passage before anyone

could reach for it. This is not the no-judgments Jesus of the internet; the same Lord who said judge not also said judge with right judgment.

“I think the point he’s making is that everything matters and you don’t have an excuse.”

You are scandalized by that guy. Fine — you are right that it matters. You are also a scandalous person, and there is no escape from your need for grace.

4. Spiritual person points

► 1:34:57

Here Matt ran the thought experiment that gave the message its texture. You read your Bible before coffee this morning. You did it yesterday too — that is not just two days in a row, you have been on point for a week. You gave a guy a dollar, and honestly it was your last dollar. Not bragging. “When we seek for advantage in the things that we do or we are, maybe we find joy in it. But are we not also tempted to distraction from where our advantage truly lies?”

Circumcision runs the same way: real value, no leverage (Romans 2:25–27). Which is why the definition lands where it does — “no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly... a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter” (Romans 2:28–29). Outward things are the easy things to accumulate, and once you start ticking boxes you forget you ever needed grace.

5. A real advantage that saves nobody

► 1:38:05

So does Israel have an advantage? “Much in every way” — they were entrusted with the oracles of God, which Matt said could hardly be overstated. Many cultures had a priestly class handing down an inaccurate witness about what God is like. Israel had a true one. And their faithlessness does not nullify God’s faithfulness — “let God be true though every one were a liar.”

“Having a testimony is not the same thing as embracing and believing it. Having that book on your shelf is not the same thing as reading it.”

► 1:40:20

The other bad inference gets closed off too. If our unrighteousness shows off God's righteousness, why not sin more and give him more material (Romans 3:5–8)? Matt's version: I keep the hundred dollars I stole, the man I stole from grows in patience, and I am basically Johnny Appleseed with the fruit of the Spirit. Self-evident madness — and perfectly logical to a mind set on the flesh, because that mind is only ever computing its own advantage.

6. No, not one

► 1:41:52

“None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

ROMANS 3:10–12 ↗

Matt read the rest of it too — open graves, the venom of asps, feet swift to shed blood — and refused to trim it (Romans 3:13–18). True of every tribe and tongue. No sociologist has ever come back from the field with news of the tribe that simply does not lie. He mentioned starting Desmond Morris's *The Human Zoo* and putting it down over the claim that prehistoric tribal humanity had no crime. The very first family in the Bible produced a murder, in the first generation of people ever born.

► 1:44:53

If that reads bleak, Matt argued the diagnosis is the good news, because it puts everyone in one bucket. “Some people think the Bible's kind of like a Debbie Downer, but the Bible is actually a lamp to our feet. It's the landscape of reality that's the Debbie Downer.” You would not carry a flashlight into the woods and blame it for the brambles.

7. The righteousness of God, apart from the law

► 1:45:52

“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it — the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

ROMANS 3:21–24 ↗

Matt lingered on the phrasing. Paul does not say we fall short of almost-there, or short of better-than-average — those are livable standards, and the first one is genuinely tempting. The standard is the glory of God. And the gift language is not decorative: faith is the only mechanism by which a thing can stay a gift.

8. Why grace still calls you to repent

► 1:48:06

The mind of the flesh has one objection left: if I do not have to, why would I? Matt's answer was not a rule but a person. God does not care about our sin because he is bored and holding a clipboard. He cares because sin is real and it damages actual people — “our sin damages people, it damages ourselves, it's offensive before God. It matters because it's real.” When your eyes are opened and you meet the risen Lord, that circumcision of the heart changes how you see everything, down to the bugs and the animals, and then chiefly people: these matter, and this was never only about what I get.

► 1:50:57

Which is why God names himself the way he does. He could have introduced himself as overlord issuing instructions. Instead: father, friend, comforter, bridegroom. He embraced prostitutes and tax collectors and zealots — and called them to himself, not to a set of magic words. “This isn't programmatic.” So yes, all grace, and yes, repentance in real action, and the two only reconcile once you actually know him.

9. Imagine every advantage

► 1:54:57

Matt came back at the end to the thought experiment he had promised and nearly forgot — a congregant reminded him. Imagine you kept the Sabbath your whole life. Never lied, never stole. Knew when to rebuke and did it without flinching, knew when to comfort and did that too. Never looked at a person lustfully. You fulfilled all the Law and the Prophets. What kind of advantage would you have — what if you were, say, the Jewish Messiah?

“Like a bunch of pirates, we're stuffed to the rafters in the Trojan horse of Jesus the crucified Lord, who says come to me and be hidden in me — and you have the advantage, because that's who Jesus is.”

On his account you can approach the throne room. You have the perfect prayer life of a Spirit who intercedes all day, every day, and the spiritual person points of Jesus Christ, because your identity is hidden in him.

► 1:57:00

So the fight you just had with your spouse, the stupid thing you did in the last three hours — everyone in the room qualifies — is not the basis on which you come. We approach in the name of Jesus. “Who do you think’s going to church you up before you talk to Jesus?” He is the one you should be approaching precisely then, and the throne is a throne of grace.

Matt ended on the reassurance that this forgetting is normal and the remedy is not vigilance. Coming back to Jesus every time is the project, and his goodness and mercy will hunt you down when you have not thought about the gospel in months. “He wants that for you more than you want that for you.” The heart ministry teams came up to pray as the service closed.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- Romans 2:6–11
- John 6:28–29
- Romans 2:12–13
- Romans 1
- Romans 2:14–16
- Romans 1:19–21
- Romans 2:21–24
- Isaiah 52:5
- Matthew 7:1
- John 7:24
- Romans 2:25–27
- Romans 2:28–29
- Romans 3:1–4
- Romans 3:5–8
- Romans 3:10–12
- Romans 3:13–18
- Romans 3:21–24
- Romans 8:26–27
- Colossians 3:3
- Hebrews 4:16

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. If someone asked you what work God requires of them, what would you have said before hearing [John 6:29](#) — and what does your honest answer reveal?
2. Where do you catch yourself collecting “spiritual person points,” and what does that habit promise you that grace already gives?
3. Matt said having the book on the shelf is not the same as believing it. Which part of that ladder — owning, reading, embracing in word, embracing for real — is where you actually live right now?
4. If God is not keeping score, why does your sin still matter? Whose life has been affected by yours?
5. What would change this week if you stopped trying to get cleaned up before you pray, and came in Jesus' name instead?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=41BscB7JprA&t=4714s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.