

Words of God

Today we start the study of Romans chapter 3. It is an important part of Romans, transitioning from the questions of chapters 2 and 3 to a discussion related to faith. Here are words from Robby Dean.

“This is one of the most important chapters in relation to understanding the nature of man and why the human race is under condemnation from God. Theologically the term that is used to describe this is “total depravity,” but this is a term that is often misunderstood by many people. Total depravity doesn’t mean that everybody is as bad as they could be. The term “total” means that every aspect of our being has been affected by the corruption of sin so that there is nothing that we can do that merits the approval of God, the judicial blessing of God. It does not mean what it is often presented to mean—especially within Calvinist or Reformed circles—total inability. Under the definition of total inability what Reformed theology man is completely incapable, not just of doing anything to please God, which we would agree with, but man does not even have an inclination toward God; he can’t even exercise positive volition toward God; because in a strict Calvinist system volition itself is meritorious. And in that system faith is meritorious. That is why in Reformed theology faith is taken to be a gift.¹”

Romans 3:1 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?

After the foregoing arguments against arrogance in being a Jew, having the Law and being circumcised, one would think that Jews would have no advantage. So Paul must correct that notion. It certainly does not provide salvation to the individual believer. That comes by faith. But the sons of Israel have many advantages.

¹ <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/romans-menuitem/message/2010-romans-030b/read>

Words of God
Romans 3:1-2

““Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?” The issue: If circumcision doesn’t get you into heaven, if it doesn’t solve the righteousness problem, then what value is it? On what basis do you get into heaven? How are you going to solve the righteousness problem? That is a question that everyone has to ask. Paul’s answer is that circumcision was never designed to be the answer to the righteousness problem. He uses two different words here as he asks this question. “Advantage” is the Greek word PERISSOS which has a meaning of something more, something in addition, something beyond the norm, and it is used to refer to something that is extraordinary or advantageous. We could translate this “what more, then, has the Jew.” Or, “what is there left for the Jew?” If circumcision is nothing then what more does a Jew have? Nothing. The word translated “benefit” is OPHELEIA which means advantage, gain, benefit, help, sometimes value. The answer: There is much advantage; they had a lot of advantages. It doesn’t mean that they are justified or that those advantages solved the righteousness problem because they still have the problem of breaking the Law. That is why they had the sacrifices.²”

**Romans 3:2 Great in every respect. First of all,
that they were entrusted with the oracles of
God.**

Entrusted. This is from the word for faith. Almost immediately in chapter 3, the word for faith shows up. But Paul slides it in, not for salvation but for God entrusting the Sons of Israel to be the custodians of His words to the human race.

Have you ever been prompted by someone who says, “Don’t think of the word “elephant.”” What is the first word you think of? Elephant! So Paul is sneaking in the word faith through the back door.

² <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/romans-menuitem/message/2010-romans-029b/read>

Words of God
Romans 3:1-2

Oracles. Literally the Greek has “words,” plural, (logos in the Greek). So literally we have the “Words of God.” Paul is talking about what we call the Old Testament Scriptures or the “canon” of Scripture. Let us delve into the canon of Scripture as it applies to the Old Testament. That is what Paul is writing about in Romans 3:2.

I. Introduction – Canon of the Old Testament

God communicated to mankind through the Old Testament Scriptures. They were given to the sons of Israel first. Today we call our Bible the “canon” of Scripture. R. K. Harrison explains what that is:

“To speak of a "canon" of Scripture is to employ the Greek term κανών in one of its special senses. The word itself was derived from such Semitic cognates as the Assyrian *qanû*, the Ugaritic *qn*, and the Hebrew *qaneh*. These were borrowed in turn from the Sumerian GI-NA, which originally meant a "reed" (Job 40:21). In this sense the term passed into Greek, Latin, and other languages to indicate something of a reed character or structure. In a figurative sense it implied anything straight and upright, and in Greek it was used, among other things, to describe a rule, standard, paradigm, model, boundary, chronological table, and a tax assessment. The Greek and Latin Church Fathers applied the word κανών in a general sense to Biblical law, an ideal or exemplary man, articles of faith, Church doctrines, a catalog or list, a table of contents, and an index of saints. It is possible that Origen may have used the designation "canon" in the sense of the divinely inspired books of Scripture, although there is no direct evidence that it was applied to the Bible as such any earlier than ca. 352, when Athanasius (d. A.D.

Words of God
Romans 3:1-2

373) used in in this precise sense in the *Decrees of the Synod of Nicea*, No. xviii.³”

There are several important observations to be made concerning the canon of the Word of God. These come from Robby Dean.

1. Authority of the Word of God.

The authority of the Bible comes from the Bible. Men don't give the Bible authority. Men just recognize the authority of the Bible.

2 Timothy 3:14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*,

2 Timothy 3:15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

2 Timothy 3:17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

By the time Jesus is born, the canon of the Old Testament is fixed. It was well known and referred to

³ Harrison, R.K. (1971). Introduction to the Old Testament : including a comprehensive review of Old Testament studies and a special supplement on the Apocrypha. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers. Pages 260-261.

Words of God
Romans 3:1-2

as the “word of truth,” the “Scriptures” and other words. Paul could refer to them as the “sacred writings.” There was a fixed canon even if there was not council of men to declare that.

2. The Bible is self-authenticating.

I am depending upon Robby Dean heavily here. He has gone over this ground extensively. His words are words of a pastor to his flock. So I reuse them with attribution.

“The Scripture conveys such power and authority in and of itself because it is the Word of God, it is self-validating, self-authenticating. If people don't believe the Scriptures it doesn't matter how logical arguments are, how overwhelming empirical data is. The issue is not reasoning, it is not experience, the issue is volition. They have rejected the truth. It doesn't matter because the issues are spiritual, they are not mental, not intelligence, not experience; and they have exercised negative volition; they have rejected the knowledge of God at God-consciousness and have gone on to reject any gospel claims. When giving the gospel our confidence needs to be in the Holy Spirit and in the Word of God, and we should not worry about any inadequacies or lack of knowledge on our part because the issues are not based upon argumentation skills, knowledge or anything else.⁴”

4 <https://deanbible.org/on-going-studies-menu/message/44-the-self-authenticating-witness-of-scripture/read>

Words of God
Romans 3:1-2

3. Trustworthiness

The Word of God is trustworthy. It is inerrant in all it says, even if we don't understand. But as we study it, we learn more and more and come to understand more clearly who God is and what His plan is for the human race and ourselves.

“For the Christian the use of the term “Old Testament canon” signifies that the Old Testament is to be regarded as a closed collection of books, inspired by the Spirit of God (2 Tim. 3:15), having a normative authority, and valid as the rule for faith and life.⁵”

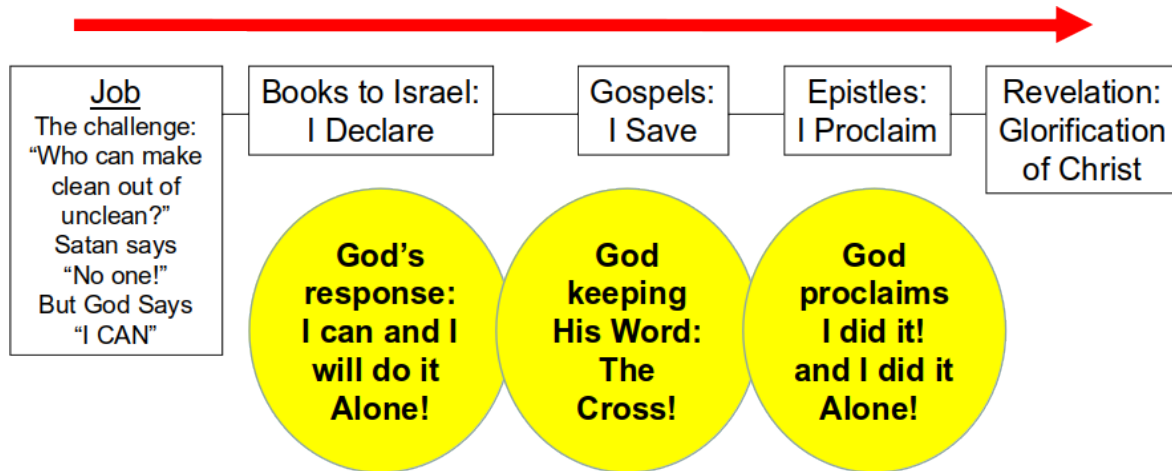
I rely on R. K. Harrison for authoritative information on the Old Testament. He was an expert. His Introduction to the Old Testament is a wonderful source book for those so inclined to delve into some of the details, even if dated.

II. Historical Revelation

Here is an illustration from Herman's teaching on the makeup of the Bible.

⁵ Harrison, R.K. (1971). Introduction to the Old Testament : including a comprehensive review of Old Testament studies and a special supplement on the Apocrypha. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers. Page 262

Words of God Romans 3:1-2



Historically, the first book of the Bible that was written down is the book of Job. For many, this is not something taught in Sunday school. Here are some points from the Anchor Bible Commentary on Job⁶:

1. Rabbinic Opinions Includes a Patriarchal dating
2. Patriarchal background is reflected in the "Prologue-Epilogue"
3. Simple Religious Belief and Practice
4. No Priesthood or Central Shrine
5. Patriarch Himself Offers Sacrifice
6. The Sabeans and Chaldeans are represented as nomadic raiders
7. The unit of money
8. Job's longevity
9. The Prologue-Epilogue literary features and motifs

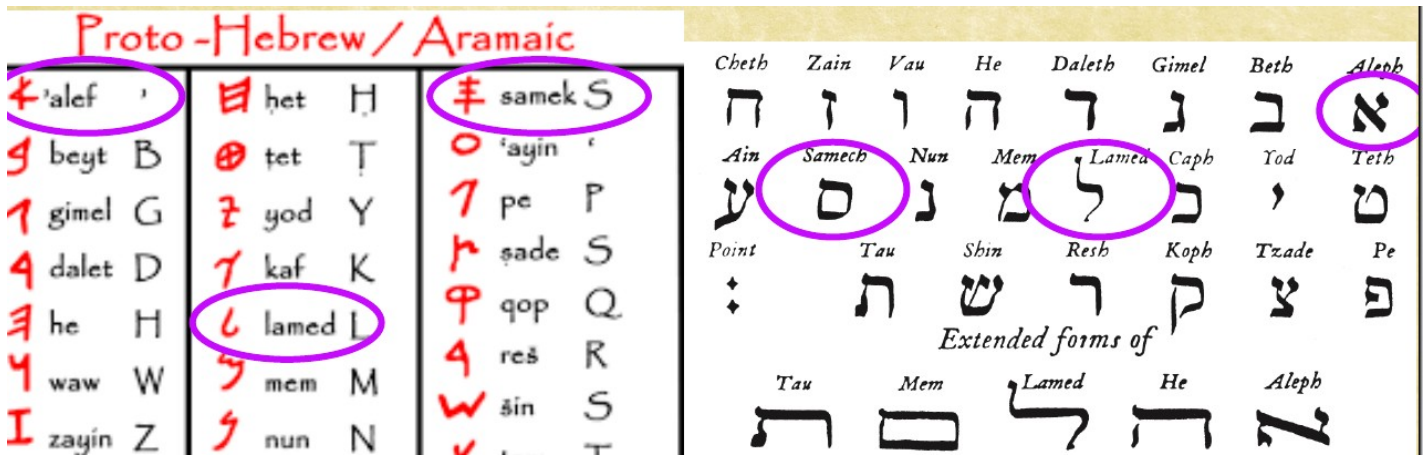
The Torah, or as we often call it, the Pentateuch, was written somewhere around 1400 B.C. I'm not going to go into dating each and every book. This is not a history lesson.

⁶ The Anchor Bible - Job by Marvin H. Pope Garden City Doubleday & Company Inc.1983 P xxxii-xxxiii

**Words of God
Romans 3:1-2**

III. Available Texts

The Masoretic text has been considered as the most reliable source of the text of the Old Testament by many. But there are other sources to use when there is a question. These include the Septuagint (LXX), the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Before the Babylonian exile, Biblical texts were written using an older alphabet called the Proto-Hebrew alphabet.



Comparing the Proto-Hebrew to Current Hebrew Alphabet⁷

Before the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, the earliest Hebrew text of the Old Testament was the Masoretic text.

A. Masoretic Text

The canon of the Old Testament was known at the time of Christ. However, copies of the Hebrew text from that era were not found until the Dead Sea Scrolls. Until then, the Hebrew text was carefully copied and pass on from generation to generation. Old worn out copies were still sacred and were

⁷ <https://deanbible.org/dbmfiles/slides/2021-HasGodSpoken-09.pdf>

Words of God
Romans 3:1-2

destroyed by burning. Hence, old copies are not available.

However, there was a need to standardize the text and provide pronunciation guides by adding “vowel points,” as well as “cantillation” to aid in the singing or intonation when reading the text. The group of scribes known as Masoretes, primarily in the cities of Jerusalem and Tiberias and in Mesopotamia maintained the text. They enforced accuracy in copying by having controls such as counting letters.⁸

B. Septuagint (LXX)

“The **Septuagint** (*/ˈseptjuədʒɪnt/ SEP-tew-ə-jint*), sometimes referred to as the **Greek Old Testament** or **The Translation of the Seventy** (Ancient Greek: Ἡ μετάφρασις τῶν ἑβδομήκοντα, romanized: *Hē metáphrasis tōn Hebdomḗkonta*), and often abbreviated as **LXX**, is the earliest extant Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible from the original Hebrew. The full Greek title derives from the story recorded in the Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates that “the laws of the Jews” were translated into the Greek language at the request of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–247 BCE) by seventy-two Hebrew translators—six from each of the Twelve Tribes of Israel.”

Since the Septuagint texts available before the Dead Sea Scrolls were older than the Masoretic text, versions of the Septuagint have often been used by

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masoretic_Text

Words of God
Romans 3:1-2

textual critics to supplement an understanding of the Hebrew text.

C. Samaritan Pentateuch

“The **Samaritan Pentateuch**, also called the **Samaritan Torah** (Samaritan Hebrew: אָרָאִן , *Tūrā*), is the sacred scripture of the Samaritans. Written in the Samaritan script, it dates back to one of the ancient versions of the Torah that existed during the Second Temple period. It constitutes the entire biblical canon in Samaritanism.”

“Some six thousand differences exist between the Samaritan and the Jewish Masoretic Text. Most are minor variations in the spelling of words or grammatical constructions, but others involve significant semantic changes, such as the uniquely Samaritan commandment to construct an altar on Mount Gerizim. Nearly two thousand of these textual variations agree with the Koine Greek Septuagint and some are shared with the Latin Vulgate.”

IV. Internal Evidence

A. Old Testament References

Deuteronomy 31:24 It came about, when Moses finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were complete,

Deuteronomy 31:25 that Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying,

Deuteronomy 31:26 “Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you.

Joshua 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

Judges 3:4 They were for testing Israel, to find out if they would obey the commandments of the Lord, which He had commanded their fathers through Moses.

Nehemiah 8:1 And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had given to Israel.

Nehemiah 8:2 Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who could listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month.

Nehemiah 8:3 He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the

presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law.

Nehemiah 8:4 Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam on his left hand.

Nehemiah 8:5 Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up.

Nehemiah 8:6 Then Ezra blessed the Lord the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

Nehemiah 8:7 Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, explained the law to the people while the people remained in their place.

Nehemiah 8:8 They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading.

Daniel 9:2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was *revealed* as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, *namely*, seventy years.

Zechariah 7:12 They made their hearts *like* flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets; therefore great wrath came from the Lord of hosts.

Jeremiah 36:1 In the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying,

Jeremiah 36:2 “Take a scroll and write on it all the words which I have spoken to you concerning Israel and concerning Judah, and concerning all the nations, from the day I first spoke to you, from the days of Josiah, even to this day.

Jeremiah 36:3 Perhaps the house of Judah will hear all the calamity which I plan to bring

on them, in order that every man will turn from his evil way; then I will forgive their iniquity and their sin.”

Jeremiah 36:4 Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord which He had spoken to him.

Jeremiah 36:5 Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, “I am restricted; I cannot go into the house of the Lord.

Jeremiah 36:6 So you go and read from the scroll which you have written at my dictation the words of the Lord to the people in the Lord’s house on a fast day. And also you shall read them to all the people of Judah who come from their cities.

Jeremiah 36:7 Perhaps their supplication will come before the Lord, and everyone will turn from his evil way, for great is the anger and the wrath that the Lord has pronounced against this people.”

Jeremiah 36:8 Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading from the book the words of the Lord in the Lord’s house.

Words of God
Romans 3:1-2

B. New Testament References

Matthew 22:29 But Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God.

John 5:39 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me;

John 10:35 If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),

Hebrews 1:1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

V. Dead Sea Scrolls

Randall Price: “The Isaiah scroll proved to be identical word-for-word to the Masoretic Text in more than 95% of the text. The 5% variation consisted primarily of obvious slips of the pen and spelling alterations, although there were a few textual variants. This was also the case with all of the Qumran biblical texts showing transmission accuracy.”⁹”

9 <https://deanbibleministries.org/dbmfiles/slides/2023-ChaferConf-06-Price-Slides.pdf>