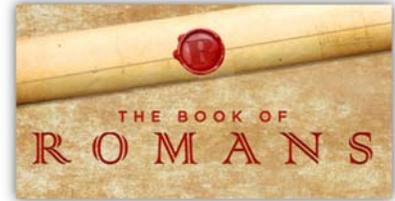


We continue this morning in a series we have called SPEAK TRUTH. Sometimes when you speak truth it's hard. Paul writes a letter to the church at Rome and he spends the first section, first several pages, speaking truth that's hard. But the reason he does is because he has been so profoundly transformed by the Gospel, by Jesus Christ. It became an incredible turning point in his life. He writes to a church that he has never been to but that he wants to minister to; that he wants to share the Good News of what had so transformed his life. He wanted to share that with that church. It was a church that was made up of Jews and Gentiles. He himself was a Jew. He had served at the highest levels of leadership. He referred to himself as one who had been a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He was, when Stephen was stoned, he was standing we're told holding the coats of those who were involved that day.¹ He was in charge. So he understands their mindset; he understands what they are thinking about. And I would say that he has credibility because of where he's been and what he knows and what he understands to speak to this audience of both Jewish people and Gentile people who have put their trust in Jesus.



So everything that we have studied up until now, as we looked at the first two chapters of the book of Romans, we could sum much of it up into these words: We've all sinned. We're all subject to God's judgment – everyone of us – and it's right of God to do so. In chapter 3 of Romans, and I hope you have your Bibles with you today. I was talking to someone yesterday who was explaining to me their experience of sitting out there [Café], which I don't get a whole lot, and they said it's awesome because everyone either has their Bible open or their phone on to the Scripture. Because we're a people that really know that this Book is the book that's going to guide us and lead us and we believe that it is absolute truth. So Romans chapter 3, verse 19 says:

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

~ ROMANS 3:19-20

It was never to be the law that was to get us to God—it was just meant to show us that we can't get there on our own. And so through that teaching Paul lets us know that we are all guilty before God.

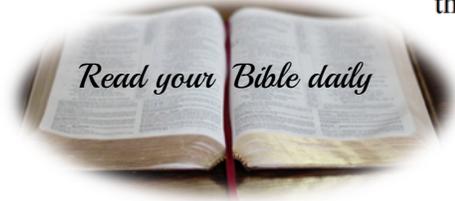
It was never to be the law that
was to get us to God—
it was just meant to show us that
we can't get there on our own.

Here's the deal: We want to skip this. This is not popular teaching. This isn't the kind of thing that just keeps people coming back to hear *I'm guilty, I'm guilty*. In fact, popular belief in our time, you want to write an article that will get read, it would be the belief that God would send no one to Hell. But if that is the case, then Jesus didn't have to die. There's nothing we need to sing about in here to worship a God who loved us so much as to send His Son to this earth. Unless I realize that I am guilty and that I have been sentenced, then I have no need of a pardon. Unless I understand God's judgment that is on me, I

¹ *And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.* ~ ACTS 7:58b

have no need for God's grace and mercy. And if we just read the first two chapters of this book we may come to the conclusion that God is mad at us, that He doesn't like us.

Let me explain this to you, let me just lay this out there for you to hear: He does not hate us. He does not hate you. He is not mad at you. He hates sin. And so Paul goes to incredible lengths to lay this foundation of what sin has done to each one of us personally, to understand what sin has done to our world that we live in today. And here's what chapters 1 & 2 want to do, they want to show us, he's trying to show us in a very logical format, that because of that sin we need salvation. So again, back to our book, the Bible, I am a firm believer that we need to be reading this. And I just keep on telling you that because as you do this it's going to change your life.



And one of the things I think is so important is for us to be reading big chunks of the Bible, reading it in context. If all you read was the first chapter, all you read was the second chapter of the book of Romans, you wouldn't understand the rest of it that begins to unwind and explain to you the good news of Jesus Christ. So it was meant to be read. You think about a letter, this book of Romans was meant to be read together. We're coming each week and grabbing a little chunk, and so you can leave here going, "Oh, wow. Where's the rest?" We want you to be reading ahead. We want you to be reading more. And my hope and my prayer is, is that as we share on a day like today that it begins to help us understand some of the details so that it begins to make more and more sense. And I would encourage you each week, would you just keep on reading what we've read already? We've read already the first two chapters, and read ahead a little bit and allow this to begin to sink into your heart and mind and change your life.

So here's what we're going to do. We're going to go right to Romans chapter 3, which is where we're at next, and in Romans chapter 3 the Apostle Paul after having explained to them you're guilty, you deserve judgment, and it's the right thing for God to do, he thinks ahead as to what their questions may be. Because he knows their minds, he knows what they're thinking, this is what any good person putting forth an argument would do would be to think *but I bet what you're thinking is this*. And so here in chapter 3, verses 1 through 8, what we want to do today is lay out three questions that the Apostle Paul poses and says *I know this is probably where you're at, what you're thinking*.



I'm gonna read the text and I'm gonna give you just a little bit of explanation on it, and then I'm just gonna come back and I'm gonna reword those three questions in a context that may be questions similar to what we may ask and that may affect us directly. One of the things you always have to realize when you're reading Scripture—who is this written to, and what specifically was the original author trying to get across to those who are writing? And then we can back up a little bit and ask the question: What's God trying to say to me in the midst of this? So if you have your Bible open. Romans chapter 3, verse 1, here's the question: So then what advantage is it that you're a Jew, or what value would circumcision be?

If you were watching the news this week, the word "Jew" is all over the place. Crazy thing for a country that is as small as Israel. It's a constant conversation and a constant discussion even in current culture. I find that interesting.

So you take the word Jew and you ask yourself the question: Where did that come from? Where did that begin? And the first time in the Bible that you find the word Jew is in 2nd Kings chapter 25,

verse 25, where it is mentioned the first time.² Originally, these were God's chosen people known as the Hebrews. In fact, in Deuteronomy chapter 7, verse 6 and all the way up through 8, God explains to them; He says to them, hey, you know what? You are a holy people, holy to the Lord, set apart for the Lord (the Jewish people). And He says I didn't pick you just because, you know, you were the biggest and the best. He says I chose you.³ And so you begin to recognize that this is a very special group of people that God has picked out, that God has chosen.

When they settle in the Promised Land they become known as the Israelites. When they eventually get taken out of the Promised Land, into captivity, you may remember that the largest tribe, Judah, was the one that ended up in Babylon, and when Judah comes back from Babylon it is then that Judah, the name is shrunk down to “Jew” is referred to as the Jews. And eventually all the tribes of Israel become known as Jews. And that word specifically means “praise to God.” Because remember, God had made for Himself a people and He had placed them at the center of the world to bring attention and praise to God Himself for His glory.

Judah was the largest tribe and now all the groups become known as Jews. Eventually one of the tribes, a man from the tribe of Benjamin, you may remember this from the book of Esther, her uncle Mordecai in the book of Esther is referred to and really, this is probably only the second or possibly third time depending on what translation you're reading in your Bible, that the word Jew is mentioned in the Bible [see End Note ¹]. You read Mordecai the Jew⁴ and it became a very important thing to be oftentimes added onto a name because they were very proud of their advantage, of their status, of their chosen place with God, and it was seen as an honor.

One of the reasons I really felt when I read these words—What advantage has it to be a Jew?—I really felt like it would be important for us to just drill down on this a little bit this morning. I think oftentimes when we read our Bible we don't understand the beginnings of where this word comes from or even why the Jews are someone special. You may remember that God says to a man by the name of Abram, He says I want you to take up your tent, I want you to begin walking, I am going to do something amazing in your life.⁵ I'm going to do something big. I'm gonna give you a promise and I'm gonna create for you a people, and I'm gonna create for you a great nation. And it's out of that that this Jewish nation, these chosen people, the Hebrews, the Israelites, come out of it and these are the people that God works in and through that you read about here in the Bible.

Do realize that when God speaks to Abram back in Genesis chapter 12, verse 3, He says I will bless those who bless you, I will curse those who curse you:

³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

~ **GENESIS 12:3**

² *But in the seventh month, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, son of Elishama, of the royal family, came with ten men and struck down Gedaliah and put him to death along with the Jews and the Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah. ~ 2 KINGS 25:25*

³ *“For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.” ~ DEUTERONOMY 7:6-8*

⁴ *Now there was a Jew in Susa the citadel whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjaminite, ~ ESTHER 2:5*

⁵ *Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.” ~ GENESIS 12:1-2*

And that is why we are so careful to bless God's chosen people. I'm not speaking of necessarily their specific politics. I'm not speaking of their specific decisions. We know that many of their decisions, even their decisions through the Bible that we read were wrong, so we don't necessarily say that those decisions that they've made are right but these are God's chosen people. His Scripture over and over says that He will bless those that bless His children.

Isaiah chapter 62, verse 6, he says that on the walls of Jerusalem He has placed a watchman to protect and watch over Jerusalem:

⁶ On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the Lord in remembrance, take no rest, ⁷ and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth.

~ **ISAIAH 62:6-7**

Numbers chapter 24, verse 9, again it says whoever blesses Israel will be blessed, and whoever curses Israel will be cursed.

⁹ . . . Blessed are those who bless you, and cursed are those who curse you.”

~ **NUMBERS 24:9b**

In fact, in the New Testament of our Bible—so you might say, “Well, where do we go when we get to the New Testament Bible?” John chapter 4, verse 22, Jesus’ very words, Jesus says, “*Salvation is from the Jews*”:

²² “You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.”

~ **JOHN 4:22**

And we know that they rejected that, and we'll talk about this here in a moment that there is yet a time coming; God has not removed His promise from them. And so we as a church, we as a people, we support God's chosen people. But when they make choices God through His Word, God through the Apostle Paul here in the book of Romans, spoke very specifically to them and in no way is it what we see happening in the horrors of the Holocaust or even in some of the ongoing always coming up against Israel that we see in the world around us. So he says:

¹ Then what advantage has the Jew?

— because they saw lots of advantage in that, they wore that like a prize —

Or what is the value of circumcision?

~ **ROMANS 3:1**

We defined this last week as that outward mark of the flesh that very much signified them as a Jew. It was a false teaching system at the time where the teaching was this: Being circumcised, thus having the outward mark of a Jew, was your guaranteed pass to Heaven. That was a false teaching. That is not what the Bible had said. That is what they had come to teach and to pass on. In fact, I read somewhere where a prominent rabbi at the time said that Abraham sat by the gates of Hell to make sure that no one that was circumcised was able to get into Hell.⁶ I'm not sure if I like the picture of that very good. So they asked, “Well, what's the advantage of being a Jew? And hey, what's the value of circumcision if

⁶ Rabbi quote found in article at <https://thetorah.com/abraham-circumcision/>

everything you've been saying up until now indicates that hey, I'm guilty – then so what? Why would I be a Jew and why would I get circumcised?” And then he answers it in verse two. He says:

² *Much in every way.*

— and then he say —

To begin with,

Other translations⁷ it'll say, “First of all.” What's interesting, if you'll read down through this text, you don't find a second and a third which is interesting because normally you expect to see a list of things when it says “To begin with.” Maybe he forgot to list the other things that were of value here, but what I would say that this means is to begin with, Number One and Number One only, the priority. Listen to this, he says:

the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

~ ROMANS 3:2

And in the Scripture when the oracles are spoken of—by the way, that's speaking of God's Word, the Scriptures. But more specifically when the oracles are spoken of it's speaking of the verbal Word of God. So in Acts chapter 7, verse 38, when it's talking about Stephen it says there that he was speaking of Moses on Mount Sinai,⁸ you know, when the law is being given, and it said he was receiving the living oracles to give us. And then he says, “but our forefathers refused to obey,” which continues to be this ongoing problem. We have the truth, we actually have the oracles of God, God's spoken Word. When God says this is what I want, this is how I want my people to respond, when you read words like “thus says the Lord,” all of us ought to stand back go, “Talk to me. Okay, now I'm hearing from God. I want to hear from God.” And yet we hear that there was disobedience.

The bottom line is this: They asked the question, What advantage is it if I'm a Jew – so what, based on what you're saying? If I'm circumcised – so what, based on what you're saying? He says, “Oh, you have every advantage. You have God's Word which will lead you to salvation.” And so just because God has blessed us more it doesn't mean that we should get something special for that. That's what they were thinking, God's blessed us so much we ought to get a special pass. We ought to be grandfathered in. And he says no, just because you've given more blessing actually that means you have *more responsibility*. But they wanted to just be blessed based on some real specific facts and given a free pass.

He goes on in verses 3 & 4 to the second question. So again, he's pre-thinking what's going on. He's pre-thinking what they might say back to him. He goes:

³ *What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?*

~ ROMANS 3:3

And here's what's so important, when God makes a promise—and so you think about that promise that He makes to Abram, “I'm going to make you a great nation.” When God makes a promise He fulfills that promise. When God says, “I'm going to bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you,” God makes a promise. Does He fulfill that? And they're going, “Wait a minute. Okay, so, wait a

⁷ ASV, CEB, CEV, GW, ISV, TLB, MOUNCE, NOG, NASB, NET, NIRV, NIV, NIVUK, NLV, NLT, TLV, WEB – drawn from search of Romans 3:2 in all English translations at <https://www.biblegateway.com/verse/en/Romans%203:2>

⁸ *This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us. Our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned to Egypt, 40 saying to Aaron, 'Make for us gods who will go before us.'* ~ ACTS 7:38-39a

minute. You've been saying to us that we're sinners and that we're guilty, that we deserve judgment, so is that just going to cancel out God's promises?" And he answers in verse 4:

⁴ By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged."

~ ROMANS 3:4

And then we were reminded that God forgives, but just because God forgives sin is no less of an issue, and he wants to get that across to them. No, God won't forget His promises. God's not going to back out on what He promised you. But yes, sin is still a big deal. Let's not take that lightly. And then we come to the third thing, verse 5. Verse 5 says this, and this is the question that he perceives they're gonna ask:

⁵ But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.)

— he says —

⁶ By no means! For then how could God judge the world? ⁷ But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? ⁸ And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

~ ROMANS 3:5-8

This one's a little bit hard to understand. I found this one difficult to wrap my brain around because I don't know that I understand everything that was going through *their* minds to specifically ask this question, but let me take a stab at it for a moment. Basically what they're saying and you'll see this later on in Romans, if this whole grace thing is true, well then why would I try to live right? Why wouldn't I just keep on going on sinning? I mean, what he's saying is that when we sin and the grace of God is up here [*he gestures*], we are actually utilizing that grace of God. So every time we sin the grace of God is put on display for all to see and it really makes God look good, which is what he's saying here. And their question I find a little bit shady. It's sort of like this: "Well, why then would we want to make God look good?" And I don't feel real comfortable, but we find ourselves oftentimes in that mode where we're asking huge questions of God, which is what they're doing.



Grace of God is up here...

God in His grace and His mercy and His love says listen, the law condemns you. You have sinned but despite your sin the grace and the mercy and the love of Jesus Christ forgives you of that sin – live in it! And they want to ask, "Does God have some sort of other motive? That's all He's trying to do is look good?" And he goes stop, guys, I'm not comfortable with this line of reasoning.

Question

1

Let me rewind the tape for a moment. I'm gonna ask these questions in a very current up-to-date today way. So if I was to look at this passage and I was asked these three questions I would put as the first line this, and I think it will help you understand each of the questions: If I am such a big sinner — and you've been in that mode, *If I'm so bad then why...* — If I am such a big sinner, why then would I do any of the good stuff I've been doing? Because we continue to struggle with this mindset that somehow my works are getting me closer to God. I think oftentimes our mindset is that I get saved by grace, I can't do anything to save myself, but then as soon as I get saved I have to do all

sorts of works to keep saved or to get more saved or to stay close to God. And so that's their question, Why would I do all this good stuff? Why would I keep on doing all this stuff that I've been doing? For them it had to do with this nationalistic thing of being a Jew that was highly prized. For them it had to do with this outward act of circumcision which was highly prized; they felt like that was God's thing to give them a free ticket into Heaven. Here's what I want to throw at us: We might say, "Why should I do all the stuff I'm doing? If it's by grace, why would I want to get baptized? Why would I want to serve? What's the value of coming to church on a Sunday? Why would I want in a few moments want to put a gift in the bucket and tithe?" And that was their question, and their belief and what oftentimes our belief is is that I have this special status with God and He's just going to let me into Heaven because of what I've done, and it is hard for us to hear.

Listen, it isn't those things. We're gonna have baptism in two weeks. If you want to get baptized, write it on a card because we believe that when you shout out, "God's done this inside of me" and we tell everyone, when we live according to God's ways, it's a blessing. We love it when you jump in and serve. We love it when we get a card on a Monday morning that says, "Where do you need help? "Where can I serve? I want to get involved in serving God's people." We love that. We love it when people say hey, listen, I've just decided I'm gonna start tithing. I was just talking to someone just this morning, he said, "I can mark the day we started tithing when my business finally started taking off and we have never struggled since, but we were struggling up until that day." But here's what we know: That doesn't save us. Baptism doesn't save us. Serving doesn't save us. Tithing doesn't save us. It's living according to the way God wants us to live, but it is by the grace of God that we are saved.

**Question
2**

The second question that we just went through: Well if I'm such a sinner—that's the question that we always like to lead this into—if I am such a sinner, what happens to God's promises to me? A few moments ago during communion I read from Psalm 51. You remember that whole story of David and Bathsheba, I mean, it doesn't get much worse. We're looking right after his terrible sin to

Bathsheba. He has sinned and yet what we read there in that passage was is God forgave him even though He judged him and He dealt with him, but He forgave him. And if He can forgive David, an adulterer and a liar and a murderer, he can forgive us. And yes, He does – He does keep His promises.

**Question
3**

Now we ask the final question: If I am such a big sinner, should I do evil so that something good can come of it? And the answer is no. And that's this ongoing push and reminder in this passage, sin is desperately wicked. It's the thing we need to remember. It will destroy us. It'll keep us longer than we wanted to stay. It will take us further than we wanted to go. We need to realize

how awful sin is, but we recognize that we have a God who loves us so much that His grace and mercy overcomes that—but we never presume upon that. We don't say, "Well, I'll just keep on sinning more because in that, that grace and that mercy will show more and more."

**S
I
N**

*It will destroy...
It will keep us longer than we wanted to stay...
It will take us further than we wanted to go...*

We have this tendency to grade our sins. You know, this is a really bad sin, and this is a really good sin, and we even have this way of justifying our sins. "Well, I know I shouldn't have done that but this good thing actually came out of it. And you know, if that wouldn't have happened, if I wouldn't have done that, this good thing wouldn't have come out of it." Sin is always sin. And yes, we have a loving God who is just amazing on how He takes broken things and heals them and restores them and redeems them.

We are a showcase of those broken things restored and redeemed if you've put your trust in Jesus. We don't presume upon that. We don't say, "I'm just gonna keep on sinning." We realize that brokenness hurts the heart of God, but we sit here as a group of people today, we come into this room as a group of people today going, "Thank you, Jesus, for your mercy and your grace and your love."

It mattered that truth was spoken. Paul spoke truth—said we are under judgment, we are sinners. But the truth comes very clear as we enter into chapter 3—we are loved, we are pardoned, we are forgiven. We are objects of God's grace and mercy and He looks at us and He says, "I've restored you unto myself and I love you."

Before I walk off I want to just ask this: Have you received that love of Jesus? I think we need to be sober-minded and realize I'm a sinner. I just am. We don't like to admit that. We like to quickly go to all the excuses: *Actually, I'm not that bad* –and– *If I'm such a bad sinner, then why am I doing all these good things?* –and– *If I'm such a bad sinner* — skip all that noise and just recognize and agree with God, I'm a sinner, and then shift to realizing He and His love and His mercy and His grace has forgiven you and reaches out and wants to restore you. So if you're sitting out here today and you feel like you're falling apart, like you've blown it, like you've failed, I don't want you to leave here in that failure. I want you to leave here in the grace and the love and the mercy of Jesus. If you have never received that ever in your life, I want you to put your trust in Jesus today. I want you to turn to Him.

We were singing that song *Jesus at the Center*, put Jesus at the center of your life. Let the forgiveness of the cross forgive you your sins and accept His life, accept His forgiveness, and trust in Him. I don't want you to leave here without that opportunity and I'm just gonna ask you for a moment just to bow your head. This is between you and God, I would love for you to tell someone afterwards, but just say: *Jesus, I'm a sinner. I get it. I believe it. I'm making no excuses. But when I hear about your grace and your mercy and your love and your forgiveness, I read of You cleansing with hyssop, washing me whiter than snow, I am so desirous of that, Jesus, that is so attractive to me. I want that. I know only You can do that.*

And the Word of God says that by the power of the cross and the blood shed there, you are reaching out and trusting in that. You are forgiven if you will accept that and believe in that right now. Say: *Jesus, I do, I believe in that, I want to trust You right now.* And the Scripture says you have moved from death into life, you've moved from darkness into light.⁹ You are a new creation, old things have passed away, all things become new in just this moment.¹⁰

If you made that decision today, God keeps His promises. That's was the question they were asking.

Lord God,

I just pray that each person in here who has prayed that prayer in the past will be reminded You're keeping that promise today and that You forgive them and You love them. And may we just grab out and reach onto You and say Jesus, forgive me of my sins. I know You've made that promise and I trust You for it. I thank You for forgiving me and loving me.

Lord God, as we give our gifts and our tithes and our offerings right now we are reminded that that is not our path to Heaven. We are reminded that we are not working our way to You, but we

⁹ *"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." ~ JOHN 5:24*

¹⁰ *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ~ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17*

*give it out of a full heart of love just being so ridiculously thankful for what You've done for us.
So receive these gifts to your honor and glory we ask right now in Jesus' Name. Amen.*

Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/322628158>

YouTube: <https://youtu.be/Jb8t0aXpm-s>

END NOTES

¹ Verses that mention the word "Jew" in the Old Testament (keyword search conducted on BibleGateway.com):

2 Kings 25:25

1 Chronicles 4:18

Ezra 4:12, 4:23, 5:1, 5:5, 6:7, 6:8, 6:14

Nehemiah 1:2, 2:16, 4:1, 4:2, 4:12, 5:1, 5:8, 5:17, 6:6, 13:23

Esther 2:5, 3:1, 3:4, 3:6, 3:10, 3:13, 4:1, 4:3, 4:7, 4:13, 4:14, 4:16, 5:13, 6:10, 6:13, 8:1, 8:3, 8:5, 8:7, 8:8, 8:9, 8:11, 8:13, 8:16, 8:17,
9:1, 9:2, 9:3, 9:5, 9:6, 9:10, 9:12, 9:13, 9:15, 9:16, 9:18, 9:19, 9:20, 9:22, 9:23, 9:25, 9:27, 9:28, 9:29, 9:30, 9:31, 10:3

Jeremiah 32:12, 34:9, 38:19, 40:11, 40:12, 40:15, 41:3, 43:9, 44:1, 44:20, 52:28, 52:30

Daniel 3:8, 3:12

Zechariah 8:23, 9:16

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