SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Romans 3

Every Mouth Closed, Then — But Now — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-09 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God stays true when every man is found a liar, and His Law closes every mouth — the religious man's first. But now God gives His own righteousness as a gift, through faith in the Christ who was set out in the open as our mercy seat, so that He is just and the justifier, and no one gets to boast but in Him.

00 The Text

ROMANS 3 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

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

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

3 What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?

4 May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, "THAT YOU MAY BE JUSTIFIED IN YOUR WORDS, AND PREVAIL WHEN YOU ARE JUDGED."

5 But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.)

6 May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world?

7 But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner?

8 And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), "Let us do evil that good may come"? Their condemnation is just.

9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;

10 as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

13 "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS";

14 "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS";

15 "THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,

16 DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,

17 AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN."

18 "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."

19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may

be closed and all the world may become ⚠ accountable to God;

20 because by the works of the Law ⚠ no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

21 ⏲ But now ⏲ apart from the Law the ⟲ righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

22 even the ⟲ righteousness of God through ⟲ faith in Jesus Christ ☆ for all those who believe; for ⏲ there is no distinction;

23 for ⚠ all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24 being △ justified as a gift by His grace through △ the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

25 whom God displayed publicly as △ a propitiation in His blood through ⟲ faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in △ the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;

26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be △ just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

27 ⚠ Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of ⟲ faith.

28 For we maintain that ☆ a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

29 Or is God the God of Jews only? △ Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,

30 since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by ⟲ faith and the uncircumcised through ⟲ faith is one.

31 Do we then nullify the Law through ⟲ faith? ⟲ May it never be! On the contrary, ⏲ we establish the Law.

Marked in the text

- **v2** “the oracles of God” — God — His character & actions
- **v3** “the faithfulness of God” — God — His character & actions
- **v4** “let God be found true” — Command / instruction
- **v4** “every man be found a liar” — Sin / warning
- **v9** “all under sin” — Sin / warning
- **v10** “THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE” — Sin / warning
- **v11** “THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD” — Sin / warning
- **v13** “THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE” — Sin / warning
- **v18** “THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES” — Sin / warning
- **v19** “every mouth may be closed” — Sin / warning
- **v19** “accountable to God” — Sin / warning
- **v20** “no flesh will be justified in His sight” — Sin / warning
- **v21** “But now” — Time / place / contrast
- **v21** “apart from the Law” — Time / place / contrast
- **v22** “for all those who believe” — Promise / blessing
- **v22** “there is no distinction” — Time / place / contrast
- **v23** “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” — Sin / warning
- **v24** “justified as a gift by His grace” — God — His character & actions
- **v24** “the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” — God — His character & actions
- **v25** “a propitiation in His blood” — God — His character & actions
- **v25** “the forbearance of God” — God — His character & actions
- **v26** “just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” — God — His character & actions
- **v27** “Where then is boasting” — Sin / warning
- **v28** “a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law” — Promise / blessing
- **v29** “Is He not the God of Gentiles also” — God — His character & actions
- **v31** “we establish the Law” — Time / place / contrast
- **v4** “May it never be” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v5** “righteousness of God” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v22** “faith” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

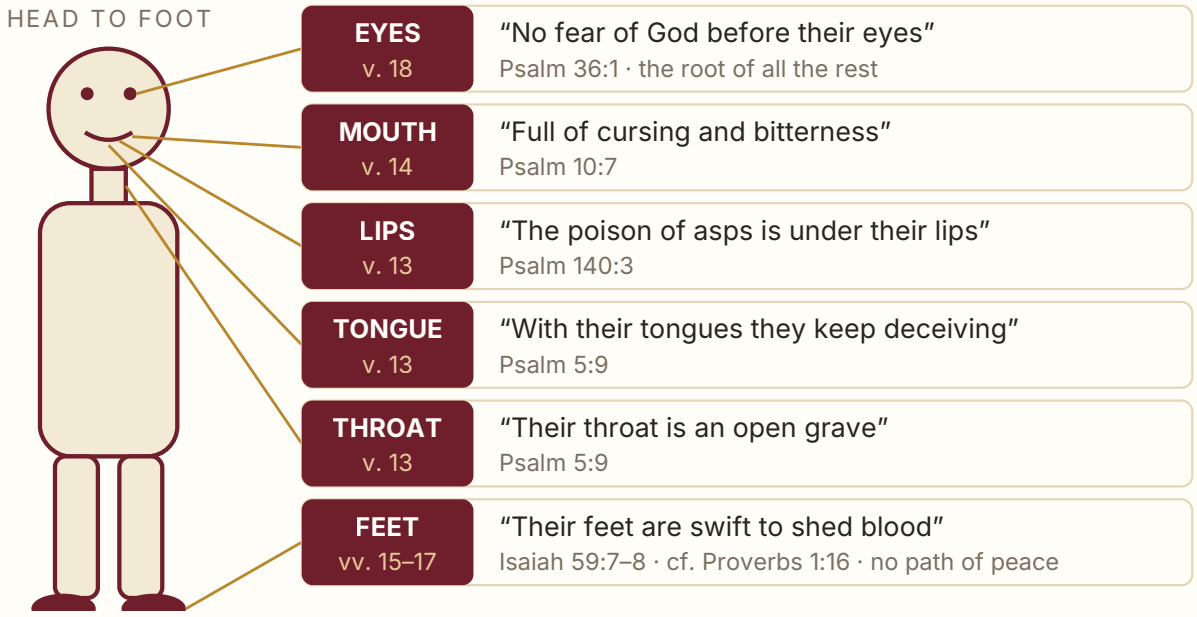
KEY VERSE · ROMANS 3:19

"Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that ⚠every mouth may be closed and all the world may become ⚠accountable to God;"

FIGURE · THE X-RAY FROM HEAD TO FOOT (3:10–18)

VV. 10–12 · WHO WE ARE — Psalm 14:1–3 · 53:1–3 · cf. Ecclesiastes 7:20

None righteous · none understands · none seeks God · all turned aside · none does good



Paul's chain of texts first names what we are (vv. 10–12), then walks down the body — eyes, mouth, lips, tongue, throat, feet — and every witness he calls is from Israel's own Psalms and prophets.

Setting. Paul has just told the Jew that real circumcision is of the heart (2:28–29). Chapter 3 picks up the obvious objection — then what good was it to be a Jew? — and answers it in debate style before drawing the whole indictment of 1:18–3:20 to a close. Then, at v21, the letter turns.

Structure:

- vv1–8 — **four objections answered:** (1) What advantage has the Jew? Great — they were entrusted with the oracles of God (vv1–2). (2) Does their unbelief nullify God's faithfulness? May it never be — let God be found true though every man a liar (vv3–4, quoting Ps 51:4). (3) If our unrighteousness shows off God's righteousness, is God unjust to inflict wrath? May it never be — how else would He judge the world (vv5–6)? (4) If my lie makes

His truth abound, why am I judged — why not "do evil that good may come"? Slander; their condemnation is just (vv7–8).

- vv9–18 — **the verdict and the witnesses:** Jews and Greeks are all under sin (v9). The catena: what we are (vv10–12 — none righteous, none understands, none seeks, all turned aside, none does good), what we say (vv13–14 — throat, tongue, lips, mouth), what we do (vv15–17 — feet, paths), and why (v18 — no fear of God before their eyes).
- vv19–20 — **the courtroom falls silent:** the Law speaks to those under it so every mouth is closed and all the world is accountable to God; no flesh is justified by works of the Law; through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.
- vv21–26 — **"But now":** a righteousness of God apart from the Law, witnessed by the Law and Prophets (v21); through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe, no distinction (v22); all have sinned (v23); justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus (v24); God displayed Him publicly as a propitiation in His blood (v25); so that He is just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (v26).
- vv27–31 — **what follows:** boasting excluded by a law of faith (v27); justified by faith apart from works of the Law (v28); one God of Jews and Gentiles (vv29–30); the Law not nullified but established (v31).

Repeated words, with counts (NASB95):

- **God** ×19 — in 15 of the 31 verses; three times in v29 alone.
- **Law / law** ×11 — vv19 (2), 20 (2), 21 (2), 27 (2), 28, 31 (2). Every one of them falls after v18: the Law is silent while the witnesses speak, then it does all the talking.
- **faith** ×8 — vv22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30 (2), 31. Not once before v22.
- **justified / justify / justifier** ×6 — vv4, 20, 24, 26, 28, 30.
- **righteousness** ×5 — vv5, 21, 22, 25, 26 (plus "unrighteousness" in v5 and "righteous" in v10).
- **"there is none"** ×4 — vv10, 11 (2), 12; with "not even one" ×2 (vv10, 12).
- **all**, of people ×5 — v9 "all under sin," v12 "all have turned aside," v19 "all the world," v22 "all those who believe," v23 "all have sinned."
- **"May it never be"** ×3 — vv4, 6, 31.
- **demonstrate / demonstration** ×3 — vv5, 25, 26.
- **works** ×3 — vv20, 27, 28.

Contrasts: God true ⟷ every man a liar (v4). Our unrighteousness ⟷ the righteousness of God (v5). "None righteous" (v10) ⟷ "the righteousness of God … for all those who believe" (vv21–22). "All have sinned" (v23) ⟷ "being justified as a gift" (v24) — the same "all." Works ⟷ faith (vv27–28). Nullify ⟷ establish (vv3, 31). Every mouth closed (v19) ⟷ boasting excluded (v27) — the mouth shut in guilt stays shut to pride. God "passed over" sins (v25) ⟷ God "demonstrated" His righteousness (vv25–26).

Shape of the chapter: a dialogue (1–8), a chain of witnesses (9–18), a silent courtroom (19–20), two words — "But now" (21) — and the verdict of grace (21–26), then three short questions with three short answers (27–31).

Chapter theme (my words): Everyone is guilty, and the Law can only prove it. But God, who never lies and never winks at sin, has given His own righteousness to everyone who believes in Jesus — paid for at the cross, so that He is just and the One who justifies.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 3:25

"whom God displayed publicly as △a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in △the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;"

FIGURE · THREE PICTURES OF ONE SALVATION (3:24–25)

JUSTIFIED v. 24	REDEMPTION v. 24	PROPITIATION v. 25
		
The courtroom	THE CHAIN BROKEN ***The slave market***	***The mercy seat***
dikaioō · G1344	apolytrōsis · G629	hilastērion · G2435
The Judge declares the guilty righteous	A ransom paid, the captive set free	Wrath satisfied by blood sprinkled on the lid
ANSWERS GUILT "accountable to God" · 3:19	**ANSWERS BONDAGE** "all under sin" · 3:9	**ANSWERS WRATH** "the wrath of God" · 1:18

Paul puts the courtroom, the slave market and the tabernacle side by side: each picture answers a different part of the sinner's plight — guilt, bondage and wrath.

What advantage, then (vv1–2)? The Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God — Trapp's line, in Guzik, and Henry's both: they were "library-keepers." Sproul: Paul's "first of all" means first in importance — "There is no greater advantage for any person in the world than to be within earshot of the Word of God." Henry adds the guard rail: "The Jews had the means of salvation, but they had not the monopoly of salvation." Privilege is a trust, not a guarantee.

Does unbelief cancel God (vv3–4)? No. *Katargeō* — make idle, nullify. Israel's unbelief cannot put God's faithfulness out of work. Paul quotes David's confession (Ps 51:4): when the sinner owns his sin, God is justified in His sentence. Spurgeon (No. 2255): truth is not settled by a vote of the whole human race — "The gospel is no failure."

Is God unfair to judge sin that serves His glory (vv5–8)? Paul calls this "speaking in human terms." Sproul: "It's because God is righteous that He is wrathful" — wrath is His justice in action, and a God who could not judge could not judge the world (v6). Guzik points to Judas: God used his treachery, but the sin was still Judas's own. Henry:

"The sin has never the less of malignity and demerit in it though God bring glory to himself out of it." And the slander of v8 — "let us do evil that good may come" — shows Paul preached grace so freely that people accused him of licensing sin. Real grace always draws that charge; real grace never deserves it.

All under sin — the catena (vv9–18). A chain of Israel's own Scriptures: Ps 14:1–3 / 53:1–3 (vv10–12), Ps 5:9 (v13a), Ps 140:3 (v13b), Ps 10:7 (v14), Isa 59:7–8 (vv15–17), Ps 36:1 (v18). Guzik, after Wiersbe: "An X-ray study of the lost sinner, from head to foot." Henry sorts it into habitual sin (none righteous, none seeking) and actual sin (tongue, lips, feet), and finds the root in v18: "The root of all this we have: There is no fear of God before their eyes." Sproul presses "none seeks": "No one seeks after Christ until they have first been found by Christ."

Every mouth closed (vv19–20). The Psalms were read over "those who are under the Law" — the religious Jew cannot hand the indictment to the Gentiles. *Hypodikos* (accountable) is a courtroom word: the defendant has lost his case. The Law's job is diagnosis. Spurgeon: "The law of the Lord is like a looking glass" — "you cannot get rid of the spots by looking in the glass." Guzik (quoting Phillips): the straight-edge shows how crooked we are.

"But now" (v21). Guzik: "the most glorious transition from the judgment of Romans 3:20 to the justification of Romans 3:21." The righteousness of God here is not only God's own character but a righteousness *from* God given to sinners — apart from the Law, yet witnessed by it (Gen 15:6; Hab 2:4).

"Through faith in Jesus Christ" (v22). The Greek *pisteōs Iēsou Christou* can be read "faith in Jesus Christ" (NASB95) or "faith of Jesus Christ" (KJV); some modern scholars read "the faithfulness of Jesus Christ." Either way, the next phrase — "for all those who believe" — makes our believing the means of receiving it.

Justified as a gift (v24). Sproul: "Justification is that act by which God judicially declares a person to be righteous in His sight" — declared, not made righteous by degrees; the ground is an alien righteousness, Christ's, credited to us. *Dōrean* is the word of John 15:25, "without a cause." Spurgeon (No. 126): "The sacrifice of Calvary was not a part payment." Free to me, costly to Him — redemption "has the idea of buying back something, and involves cost" (Guzik).

Propitiation (v25). *Hilastērion* is the mercy seat in Heb 9:5 and in the Greek Old Testament (Lev 16:15). Sproul defends both propitiation (wrath satisfied — toward God) and expiation (sin removed — toward us): "Do not ever get rid of the words propitiation and expiation." Guzik, Spurgeon and Henry all hear the mercy seat. Henry: "Faith is the bunch of hyssop, and the blood of Christ is the blood of sprinkling."

Passed over, then demonstrated (vv25–26). *Paresis* — God held back the full sentence on Old Testament sins in His forbearance. The cross proves He never looked the other way. Sproul: "Beloved, God never negotiates His own righteousness." Spurgeon (No. 255): "when justice once is satisfied it were injustice if it should ask for more." Henry: God will not "demand the debt of the principal when the surety has paid it."

Boasting excluded; the Law established (vv27–31). Guzik: "Grace absolutely refuses to recognize his (imagined) merits." Lenski, in Guzik: "Since all works of law are barred out, faith alone is left." Sproul: faith is not a virtue that earns — "Faith is simply that which links you to Christ" — and "The law was never given as a way to justify anyone." Henry: faith "is a depending, self-emptying, self-denying grace, and casts every crown before the throne." One God (Deut 6:4) means one way for Jew and Gentile. Faith establishes the Law because it agrees with the Law's verdict and rests on a Christ who paid the Law's penalty — and chapter 4 will show Abraham and David as proof.

Word study (Greek):

- **oracles — *logia* (G3051):** divine utterances; only 4× in the NT (Acts 7:38; Rom 3:2; Heb 5:12; 1 Pet 4:11).

- **nullify — *katargeō* (G2673):** make idle, render ineffective; v3 and v31 bookend the chapter.
- **May it never be — *mē genoito* (G1096):** "may it not come to be," Paul's strongest denial; vv4, 6, 31.
- **become useless — *achreioō* (G889):** only here in the NT — spoiled, gone bad (Ps 14:3 LXX).
- **closed — *phrassō* (G5420):** stopped, fenced in; the mouths of lions in Heb 11:33.
- **accountable — *hypodikos* (G5267):** under sentence; only here in the NT.
- **justified — *dikaioō* (G1344):** to declare righteous, acquit — a verdict.
- **as a gift — *dōrean* (G1432):** freely, without cause (John 15:25).
- **redemption — *apolytrōsis* (G629):** release by a ransom paid.
- **propitiation — *hilastērion* (G2435):** the mercy seat (Heb 9:5); the place where wrath is turned away by blood.
- **passed over — *paresis* (G3929):** only here — a letting-go for the time, not final forgiveness.
- **excluded — *ekkleiō* (G1576):** shut out; only here and Gal 4:17.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. The first advantage is the Word itself (v2).
2. Unbelief cannot nullify God; faith does not nullify the Law — the same verb (vv3, 31).
3. Grace has always been slandered as license; Paul answers, it is condemned (v8).
4. Every line of the catena is Israel's own Scripture, aimed at "those under the Law" (vv10–19).
5. The root of all sin is a missing fear of God (v18).
6. The Law is a mirror, not a washbasin (v20).
7. "But now" is the hinge of the letter (v21).
8. Justified means declared righteous, on Christ's righteousness, through faith (vv22–24).
9. The mercy seat moved from behind the veil into the open at the cross (v25).
10. God is just and the justifier — justice satisfied in a Substitute (v26).

Cross-references: Ps 51:4 · Ps 14:1–3 · Ps 53:1–3 · Ps 5:9 · Ps 140:3 · Ps 10:7 · Isa 59:7–8 · Ps 36:1 · Ps 143:2 · Gen 15:6 · Hab 2:4 · Lev 16:15 · Heb 9:5 · 2 Cor 5:21 · Gal 2:16 · Eph 2:8–9 · 1 John 2:2 · Deut 6:4

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 3:24

"being △justified as a gift by His grace through ☆the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;"

FIGURE · "BUT NOW" — THE HINGE OF ROMANS (3:21)



Everything from 1:18 to 3:20 closes the mouth of the world; from 3:21 on, God opens His own — and the same word "righteousness" that condemned now comes as a gift.

Command to obey — let God be found true (v4). When my opinion, my feelings, or the whole room says one thing and God's Word says another, I side with God. That starts with the hard sentences — the ones about me. David said "against You, You only, I have sinned … so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge." I want to stop arguing with God's verdict on me and start agreeing with it.

Sin to confess — my mouth and my feet (vv13–18). I read the X-ray and I see myself. My throat, my tongue, my lips: lies I told to cover, the bitterness I let out on people who loved me. My feet: how fast I ran to the places that destroyed me, and how I never knew the path of peace. And under it all, my eyes — no fear of God. I confess that it was not just bad habits. It was a heart that did not fear God.

Sin to confess — boasting (v27). I am tempted to boast in my record now — my clean time, my Bible knowledge, my service. Henry says faith "casts every crown before the throne." My mouth was closed in guilt (v19); I don't get to open it again to brag. Boasting is not managed in the gospel; it is shut out.

Promise to trust — justified as a gift (vv24–26). I am not on probation. God has declared me righteous — not because I improved, but because Christ paid "to the utmost farthing." The mercy seat is not behind a veil anymore. If God has accepted the payment, I will not try to pay it again with guilt, and I will not let the enemy tell me the bill is still open. He is just *and* the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus — and that is me.

Example to follow — Paul with the objector (vv1–8). Paul did not dodge hard questions; he answered them with Scripture and with "May it never be!" When the men I walk with throw objections — "If God is good, why …?" "If grace is free, why not keep sinning?" — I want to answer the way he did: honestly, from the Word, and without watering grace down.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Paul says the chief advantage of the Jew was the Word of God (v2). What advantages have you had with the Word, and what have you done with them? *(3:1–3; Heb 5:12)*
2. Read the catena aloud (vv10–18). Which body part on the X-ray do you recognize in your own life before Christ — or this week? *(3:13–18; James 3:6)*
3. Why does Paul aim the Psalms at "those who are under the Law" (v19) — the religious people? Where do church people most often exempt themselves? *(3:9, 19; Luke 18:11)*
4. Justified, redeemed, propitiated (vv24–25). Which of the three pictures speaks most to where you have been — guilt, bondage or wrath? *(3:24–25; Heb 9:5)*
5. How can God be both "just and the justifier" (v26)? Explain it in a sentence you could say to a man who thinks he is too far gone. *(3:26; 2 Cor 5:21)*
6. Where does boasting still creep into your faith — your record, your recovery, your Bible knowledge (v27)? *(3:27–28; Eph 2:8–9)*

Worship. I praise God who is true when I am not; who never negotiates His righteousness and never stopped loving me; who set His Son out in the open as my mercy seat. I worship the Judge who became my Justifier.

Prayer. Father, Your Word has closed my mouth. I have nothing to plead but Jesus. Thank You that "but now" is my story — that while I was guilty, in bondage, and under Your wrath, You justified me as a gift, bought me back, and covered me with the blood of Your Son. Put the fear of God back in my eyes. Guard my tongue and turn my feet to the path of peace. Keep me from boasting in anything but Christ, and make me a man who tells other men the same good news. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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