**Questions on Romans 1–3**

Romans 1–3 relates to our condemned state. Since people often defend themselves with the five questions below, I answer each in point form. All verses are from Romans unless otherwise noted.

# Questions Often Asked

## **How can a God of love send someone to hell?**

### All people deserve death (1:32), so it is a wonder that God does not send us all to hell since we all deserve it based on what we have done (2:5-6).

### God is justly angry toward sin not because he lacks compassion, but because people reject the innate knowledge that he gives them (1:18).

### Eternal death is the result of man’s sin—not God’s arbitrary judgment (6:23).

### Hell was made for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:31), but man’s rebellion shows that he deserves the same penalty.

### God’s desire is for all to repent (2 Pet. 3:9).

### The better question is, “How can a sinful person like me (and you) rightly question the justice of a holy God (2:1-5; 3:19)?”

## **How would you counsel a person from Romans 1–3 who is deeply troubled over a loved one who died without hearing the gospel?**

### All people can see God’s eternal power and divine nature in creation (1:20), so we know that the person was not without a witness.

### God also gave this loved one a conscience (2:14-15), so perhaps this person responded to God based on conscience.

### I would not directly say that person is under God’s wrath since I don’t really know if he or she repented, but what I do know is that God is just (2:6).

### Those of us still living should make sure we are not ashamed of the gospel, so share the good news that God’s righteousness is available now by faith (1:16-17).

## **Don’t all religions lead to heaven? What matters is to be sincere in what you believe.**

### We should ask God if *He* thinks all of our man-made ways to reach him are valid. He says that observing our laws is not enough (3:19-20).

### Idolatry in religions is not evidence of *seeking* God, but of *rejecting* him (1:25).

### Our main problem is with sin, but religions offer no substitute for our sin (3:25).

### Sincerity is no substitute for truth. Millions are sincerely wrong about medical matters and some die from the wrong medicine—even though they take it sincerely.

## **I am a good person. Doesn’t Romans 2:7, 13 assure me of heaven?**

### All people know about God but are foolish in their thinking (1:21) since each has sinned (3:23) to the extent that not even one of them is a good person (3:10).

### We deceive ourselves into thinking that we are good by comparing ourselves only with people who are worse than us when we must get our assessment from God, not man (2:29).

### Since God says the needed standard is His perfection offered to us, we must get perfection directly from him by faith in Christ (3:22).

### The person who claims to be a good person condemns himself by not even living up to his standard, let alone God’s (2:1-2).

### The “people” of Romans 2:7, 13 who achieve salvation by good works is only hypothetical since Romans 1–3 clearly shows that these persons do not exist.

## **I’ve been a church member for ten years. Doesn’t that mean I will go to heaven?**

### Where in the Bible can we find the concept of church membership, let alone it being the requirement for salvation?

### Membership is only an outward rite, whereas true righteousness comes by faith apart from rites such as the law (3:21, 28).

### Church attendance at best hints that we *hear* God’s commands, but “it is not those who *hear* the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who *obey* the law who will be declared righteous” (2:13).

### The main way to obey God’s law is to accept the Savior that he has provided since salvation comes only by believing in Jesus Christ (3:24; cf. John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

# Do You Agree or Disagree?

To explore your own ideas on this vital subject, please circle one of these three responses to each of the following questions: (A) Agree, (U) Unsure, or (D) Disagree.

 1. A U D Mentally capable people today who have never heard about Jesus go to hell/hades.

 2. A U D Mentally capable people today have to place their faith in Christ to go to heaven.

 3. A U D Every person will either go to heaven or hades/ hell immediately after death (there is no such thing as purgatory or another temporary waiting place).

# Conclusion

God did not give us the responsibility to invent our way of getting to him. Our man-made plans never address our key problem of sin anyway. Rather, God lovingly tells us that the way to heaven is by simple trust in his plan of sending his son, Jesus Christ. Why insist that we have a “better” way by claiming that we must become good enough to reach him while at the same time rejecting the way he has already revealed?