

Romans Session 37

The Advantage of being a Jew Part 4

Romans 3:5-8 (NASB)

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.

In our study of the letter to Romans, we have already talked about the objections of the Jews were several and loud and they accused Paul of heresy.

Their first objection was that Paul attacked God People, and Paul has counteracted that and explained His preaching as being couched in the truth of Salvation by Grace and Faith alone and that Faith must be in Jesus Christ the Messiah and in no other thing or event or tradition.

Then they objected and said Paul was attacking the Promises of God to Israel.

Paul again counters with the reality of the state of the Jew without Christ and that being a Jew and knowing the promises and having the statutes could never bring him into the kingdom of God. All the promises were based on obedience of the Law and Faith in God. And again Paul reiterated that man, Jew or non-Jew could not get into heaven in any other way than by faith in the Messiah Jesus Christ. All must come the same way. And the promises themselves could not get them there simply by possessing them.

The third objection is that Paul attacked God's Purity.

He was accused of attacking the Purity and the Holiness of God.

Their arguments would go something like this.

If God is glorified by the sins of Israel, being shown faithful Himself despite the unfaithfulness of his chosen people, then sin glorifies God.

In other words, Paul, you are saying that God is like a merchant who displays a piece of expensive gold jewelry on a piece of black velvet so the contrast makes the gold appear even more elegant and beautiful.

You are charging God with using man's sin to bring glory to Himself, and that is blasphemy.

You are impugning the righteous purity of God.

Not only that, but if man's unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say about God's judgment?

If what you say is true, why does God punish sin? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous is He?

Now, in fear of the possibility of the readers of his letter thinking that Paul is expressing his own thinking, Paul immediately adds the parenthetical explanation that he was speaking inhuman terms,, that is according to human logic of the natural mind.

In other words he was saying, in effect, don't think for a minute that I believe such perverted nonsense. I am only paraphrasing the charges that are often made against me.

And then to intensify the disclaimer, Paul says again, **May it never be!**

Obviously God does not encourage, or condone sin in order to glorify Himself, **for otherwise how will God judge the world?**

If the Jews knew anything about God and His nature it was that He is a perfect judge.

From the earliest part of the Old Testament He is called, "***the judge of all the earth***" **Gen 18:25**

The Psalmist repeatedly refer to Him as a judge, "***Psa. 50:6, 58:11, 94:2***)

A major theme of virtually all the prophets is that of God's judgment

Past as well as present, imminent as well as in the distant future.

Paul's very obvious point is that God would have no basis for equitable, righteous, pure judgment if He condones sin.

In verses 7 and 8 the Apostle reiterates the false charges against him in somewhat different terms.

Romans 3:7-8 (NASB)

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

This was clearly a charge of antinomianism (disregard of God's Law) of the worst sort.

The critics were accusing Paul of teaching that the more wicked a person is, the more he glorifies God, the more faithless a person is, the more faithful he makes God appear; the more a person lies, the more he exalts God's truthfulness.

Those were not hypothetical misrepresentations, as Paul makes clear in the next statement; ***"And why not say (as were are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say). "Let us do evil that good may come?"***

Paul's enemies obviously had repeatedly charged that his gospel of salvation by grace through faith alone not only undermined God's law but granted license to sin with impunity in effect, they accused him of saying that, in God's eyes sin is as acceptable as righteousness if not more so.

Although the scribes and Pharisees were themselves sinful and hypocritical to the core, they loved to condemn other for breaking the Mosaic Law and the rabbinical traditions even in the smallest degree.

Their religion was legalism personified, and the idea of divine grace was therefore anathema to them, because it completely undermined the works righteousness in which their hope was founded.

The same legalism characterized the Judaizers, supposed Jewish converts to Christianity who insisted that Christians had to maintain all the Mosaic laws and ceremonies.

The charges by these converts were identical to those of the scribes and Pharisees.

The Apostle therefore was attacked in much the same way both from within and without the church.

It is therefore probable that Paul was addressing his arguments both to the Jewish leaders without and to the Judaizers within.

One of the most obvious characteristics of fallen human nature is its amazing ability to rationalize sin.

Even small children are clever at giving a good reason for doing a wrong thing.

That is essentially what Paul's opponents charged him with doing, rationalizing sin on the basis that it glorified God.

Later in the epistle Paul deals in detail with this same issue.

After saying that "***where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,***

He quickly counters with the false conclusion he knew many people would jump to, "***what shall we say then? Are we to continue to sin that grace might increase? May it never be!***"

(Rom 5:20-6:1-2)

With all the forcefulness he could muster, the apostle denounced the charge that he condoned any kind of sin.

Least of all would he presume to justify sin by the spurious and vile argument that it brought glory to God.

It is possible of course, that some of Paul's accuser wrongly associated his teachings with that of libertines in the church, such as those who were a blotch on the church at Corinth.

Jude wrote;

Jude 1:4 (NASB)

⁴ For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

For a professed Christian to live in continual, unrepentant sin is a certain mark that he is not saved.

To be a Christian is to be under the lordship of Jesus Christ and genuinely desire to serve Him.

As Jude makes indisputably clear, the person who tries to justify his sin by presuming on God's grace is ungodly and denies Christ.

Paul's final response to his slanderous critics was short but pointed. Although he was not the least guilty of teaching antinomianism, he fully concurred that for those who do teach it, **their condemnation is just.**

THE GUILT OF ALL MEN

Romans 3:9-20 (NASB)

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.*

Men like to believe they are basically good and that belief is continually reinforced by psychologists, counselors, and a great many religious leaders.

But deep in his heart man knows there is a problem with the way he is.

Something is wrong.

No matter whom or what he may try to blame for that feeling, he cannot escape it. He feels guilt, not only about things he has done that he knows are wrong but also about the kind of person he is on the inside.

A popular newspaper advice columnist wrote,

One of the most painful, self-mutilating, time and energy consuming exercises in the human experience is guilt.

It can ruin your day, or your week or your life if you let it.

It turns up like a bad penny when you do something dishonest, hurtful, tacky, selfish, or rotten. Never mind that it was the result of ignorance, stupidity, laziness, thoughtlessness, weak flesh, or clay feet.

You did wrong and the guilt is killing you. Too bad. But be assured, she concluded, the agony you feel is normal.

Remember, guilt is a pollutant and we don't need any more of it in the world. (Per Ann Landers Encyclopedia (New York; Doubleday, 1978)

The ancient Roman Philosopher Seneca wrote that every guilty person is his own hangman. No matter how often a man tells himself he is good, he inevitably sees that the he cannot help thinking , saying, and doing wrong things and feeling guilty about it.

Guilt drives people to alcohol, drugs, despair, insanity, and more and more frequently to suicide.

After playing psychological games about blaming his environment or other people or society in general, man still cannot escape the feeling of his own guilt. In fact, societies with sophisticated psychological services seem even more guilt ridden.

People want to get rid of their guilty feelings but they do not know how. And the more they probe for solutions, the guiltier they feel.

Men feel guilty because they are guilty. The guilt feeling is only the symptom of the real problem, which is sin.

All of the psychological counseling in the world cannot relieve a person of his guilt.

At best it can only make him feel better superficially and temporarily by placing the blame on someone else or something else.

And that intensifies the guilt, because it adds dishonesty to the sin that caused the guilt feeling in the first place.

Man's guilt has only one cause, his own sin. And unless his sin is removed, his guilt cannot be.

Paul has declared already that both Jew and Gentile are sinful before God condemned.