

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study through the Epistle to the Romans – Part 8

I. Exposition of Chapter Three.

A. Verses 1-2 - The advantage of the Jewish people.

1. **Verse 1** – “**What advantage then has the Jew...**” - Paul has carefully explained in chapter 2 that the possession of the law or circumcision will not save a Jewish person. If this is the case, then what is the advantage of being a Jew? After all, if there is no partiality with God (2:11), what good is it to be Jewish?
2. **Verse 2** - “**Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.**” - Paul knows there are many advantages God gave to the Jewish people. The word “**chiefly**” could be translated “**first of all**” or “**first and foremost**”. The “**oracles of God**” is referring to the Word of God. God entrusted the Jews with His written revelation in the Old Testament. It is consistently used in this same sense in the New Testament (cf. Acts 7:38; Hebrews 5:12; I Peter 4:11).

B. Verses 3-4 - Jewish unbelief does not make God wrong.

1. **Verse 3** – “**For what if some did not believe?**” The fact that the Jewish people as a whole, had rejected the Gospel did not mean that God’s faithfulness to them was in vain. It did not mean that God’s work was futile or “**without effect**”. Note what Dr. Utley says about the words, “**without effect**”; “**This word is translated so many different ways but its main meaning is to make something useless, null and void, inoperative, powerless**”¹
2. **Verse 4** – “**Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar...**” – The words “**certainly not**” is the strongest negative expression in the Greek. Of course God CANNOT be unfaithful to His promises or in any other way!! (cf. Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18)
 - a. Just because the Jew or anyone else doesn’t believe, doesn’t make what God says untrue!! Sometimes people today say, “**If Christianity were true, more people would believe it.**” This is not how truth works! The Word is true no matter who does or doesn’t believe it.
 - b. “**As it is written: ‘That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged.’**” – Paul quotes this section from Psalm 51. It basically is an expression stating that God is right and we, as sinners, are wrong. This psalm is not only a confession of sin by David but also reveals the very heart of the problem of sin. This Psalm shows that everyone was conceived and born in sin (v. 5).

C. Verse 5 – “**But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say?...**” - Paul anticipates some who would argue: “**If my unrighteousness will demonstrate God’s righteousness, how can God judge me? My sin ultimately serves to bring Him more glory, and that is good!**”

“**But,** some might say, ‘**our sinfulness serves a good purpose, for it helps people see how righteous God is...**’”
Romans 3:5a - New Living Translation

1. “**Is God unjust who inflicts wrath?**” - Paul was familiar with the line of thinking that says, “**God is in control of everything. Even my evil will ultimately demonstrate His righteousness. Therefore God is unjust if He inflicts His wrath on me, because I’m just a pawn in His hand.**” Of course we know that God is NOT in control of everything!! This gets back to the issue of free will. God may use a person’s wickedness (e.g. Judas Iscariot) but this doesn’t mean that God ordained it or willed it!! He just foreknew it!
2. When Paul says “**I speak as a man**”, he isn’t trying to imply that he no longer speaks by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He is explaining that only a fallen human being would think this way. Again referring to the New Living Translation which states: “**(This is merely a human point of view.)**”

D. Verses 6-8 - Paul’s answer to this Objection.

1. **Verse 6** – “**Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world?**” - Paul dismisses the question of his opponent easily. If things were such as his opponent suggested, then God could judge no one!
2. For both Paul and his readers it was known and understood that a judgment day was coming, when some would be acquitted and some condemned. He didn’t need to contest this point.
3. **Verse 7** – “**For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still**

¹Robert James Utley, *The Gospel according to Paul: Romans*, vol. Volume 5, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 1998), Ro 3:3.

- judged as a sinner?”** Paul re-states the objection of an imaginary questioner: “If God will glorify Himself through my lie, how can He judge me, since I seem to indirectly increase His glory?”
4. **Verse 8** – “**And why not say, ‘Let us do evil that good may come’**” - This was a perversion of Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith, and an extension of the objection of his imaginary questioner. If you take the thinking of Paul’s adversary far enough, you end up saying, “**Let’s sin as much as we can so God can be glorified even more.**” This shows us that one way to examine a teaching is to extend its meaning and consequences and see where you end up.
 - a. Of course, “**let us do evil that good may come**” was **not** Paul’s teaching. He makes it clear that “**...we are slanderously reported...**” to teach this. Still, it is possible to see how this accusation came as Paul freely preached forgiveness and salvation by grace through faith in Jesus, not works.
 - b. “**Their condemnation is just.**” - Paul will not even answer such a twisting of his Gospel. He simply says of those who would teach such things or accuse Paul of teaching them, that their condemnation is just. In other words, God rightly condemns this kind of teaching.
 - c. The true Gospel of Jesus Christ is not a license to sin but power over sin.

E. Verses 9-20 – The Divine Verdict – All the World is Guilty!

1. **Verse 9 - The guilt of both Jew and Gentile before God.**
 - a. “**What then? Are we better than they? Not at all...**” - Paul was Jewish by birth and heritage (**Philippians 3:4-6**), when he says “**we**” he means “**we Jews.**” The point is that by nature, the Jewish person is no more right with God than the pagan or the moralist. Paul has demonstrated that the pagan, the moralist and the Jew are all “**under sin**” and therefore, under condemnation.
 - b. “**Under sin**” is a powerful phrase. It speaks of our **slavery to sin**, literally meaning “**sold under sin.**” By nature every person knows what it is like to be a slave to sin, **both Jews and Greeks.**
2. **Verses 10-18** – This is a collection of passages from the Old Testament which Paul used to both affirm the universality of sin (**verses 10-12**) and showed its inroads into all areas of individual and corporate life (**verses 13-18**).
 - a. **Verses 10-12 – from Psalm 14:1-3**
 - b. **Verse 13a – from Psalm 5:9**
 - c. **Verse 13c from Psalm 140:3**
 - d. **Verse 14 from Psalm 10:7**
 - e. **Verses 15-17 – from Proverbs 14:16 and Isaiah 59:7-8**
 - f. **Verse 18 from Psalm 36:1**
3. **Verse 10** – “**There is none righteous, no not one**” – Obviously, this is understood in its context that no one is righteous in and of themselves and therefore need the righteousness of God.
4. **Verse 11** – “**There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.**” – Not understanding is referring to spiritual dullness or, in other words, a lack of spiritual perception or insight. Sin blinded the mind and understanding of man in relation to spiritual things. (**II Corinthians 4:4**). The statement that “**there is none who seeks after God**” means that no one seeks God without God prompting him or her to do so (**cf. John 6:44-46**). It does not mean that people are constitutionally incapable of seeking God. People can and should seek God (**Acts 17:26-27**), and they are responsible for not doing so.
5. **Verse 12** – “**They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.**”
 - a. “**Turned aside**” means; “**gone astray**” (**Isaiah 53:6**.)
 - b. “**...become unprofitable...**” – means; “**useless**” or “**unserviceable**”.
 - c. “**There is none who does good...**” – How can man “**do good**” if he is not good within?