

Romans 3:1-8; Bible Study

The Apostle Paul has just finished exposing the false assurance of salvation the Jews had. He now outlines the common objections the Jews had to the gospel message. Their objections come from their false assurance of salvation based on their identity as Jews and their belief they could be righteous enough by obeying the law. As such, their objections were centred on the free offer of grace to all and everyone's need of it, including themselves. In Paul's response to their objections, we also learn that we cannot be righteous enough for salvation, but that salvation requires repentance from sin for forgiveness producing the desire to live free from sin.

Having just explained that the Jews are no different than the Gentiles in their need of salvation, he answers the questions that would naturally flow from this: ***Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?*** Since the Jews were the chosen people of God whom He chose to reveal Himself and His plan of salvation, Paul gives the answer: ***Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.*** The oracles of God is a reference to Scripture - the Old Testament which God entrusted to them (*Deuteronomy 4:8; Psalm 147:19-20*). This is where God revealed Himself, gave His commands, and His plan of salvation.

Read: Exodus 34:6-7; Deuteronomy 6:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:14-15

This is the advantage the Jews had over the Gentiles: They had the revelation of God, His commands, and plan of salvation.

Circumcision was a sign of God's covenant with Abraham (*Genesis 17:9-14*) that He would make him a great nation and bless all the families of the earth (*Genesis 12:1-3*). This blessing to all the families of the earth, including the Gentiles, would come through the gospel of Jesus (*Galatians 3:7-9*). Thus, their circumcision was to represent their faith in God and His covenant to provide salvation to mankind. This revelation, signified by circumcision, was of great advantage to the Jews. The problem is that they considered being a Jew and circumcision as a guarantee of salvation. They centred their focus on their identity as Jews and their righteousness, rather than on faith.

So, although they were ***entrusted*** with Scripture, they failed that trust. They treated the Word of God with negligence, carelessness, and disdain - even replacing it with their own self serving wisdom and traditions (*Mark 7:13*), which only served to give them a false assurance of salvation though obedience to the law (by their own standards).

Read: Mark 7:6-8

This puts the Jews in the same position as the Gentiles as sinners needing a Saviour - which is what Paul just finished writing about. However, the Jews held strongly to their false security of salvation based on their nationality and righteousness

as they defined it. This caused them to vehemently oppose anyone who taught the true means of salvation by recognizing their unrighteousness and receiving God's righteousness by humbly repenting of their sin for forgiveness through Jesus.

>

How can we today have a false assurance of salvation?

By relying on our nationality/family and works. Many think they are saved because they were born in Canada or into a Christian family, are essentially good - having done nothing really bad (or as bad as others), were nice to people, were christened/baptized in the church, brought up in the church, said a prayer, believe certain things about God, attend church, or developed their own ideas of God and salvation according to their wisdom, traditions, and righteousness. Unless we recognize and agree with God about our sinfulness, and mourn over and repent of our sin for forgiveness from Jesus, we do not have salvation.

>

Paul was accustomed to dealing with human rationale and philosophies in rejecting the gospel message. He now launches into a series of rhetorical questions to answer some of the common objections he received from the Jews in their rejection of the gospel, which he will expand on much more later in his letter: ***What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? 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."***

The Jews knew they sinned, but did not believe it would keep them from salvation. Since God promised to ultimately save Israel, they claimed Paul was preaching that God would be unfaithful for not saving them due to their unfaithfulness. Paul answers that just because the Jews failed, it does not mean their unfaithfulness nullified the truth about and faithfulness of God in keeping His covenant to them. God's faithfulness does not rely on man's faithfulness. He remains faithful and true no matter the sinful man is (see *Romans 9-11*). Any man who says otherwise is a liar.

Paul quotes *Psalms 51:4* to reinforce this. This Psalm is written by David after his sin with Bathsheba and arranging for the death of her husband.

Read: Psalm 51:1-10

God showed Himself to be righteous and true in punishing David for His sin, and faithful to forgive and preserve him upon his repentance. God showed His truth, righteousness, and faithfulness in punishing His own Son for our sins so that we may be forgiven and given eternal life - all in fulfillment of His covenant. This is the covenant for which the Jews were to be circumcised. Faith for salvation was always required (*Hebrews 11*). Today, we are baptized as a symbol of having this same faith. This is

what circumcision of the heart means (*Romans 2:29; Deuteronomy 30:6*). The Jews must come to this same faith as the Gentiles in order to be saved. It is through repentance from sin that God demonstrates His faithfulness in forgiving sin (1 John 1:9).

>

Side discussion: **It is common today for people to point to the failures of man as an argument against the truth about God and His faithfulness. What are some examples of this?** Fallen leaders, individual Christians, hypocrites, evil in the world, ...**Why do people question the truth and faithfulness of God when bad things happen?** They refuse to look at their sin. God will accomplish His purposes despite the weakness of man. We cannot allow the failures of man or evil in the world to be used as excuses to blame God, or as reasons to reject God. We must direct man to his own sin as the reason for all that is wrong in the world. God's faithfulness will be demonstrated in forgiving sin and giving new and eternal life.

>

Paul continues with his rhetorical questions: ***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.) By no means! For then how could God judge the world?*** Those opposing Paul are claiming he is teaching sin is good because it shows the righteousness of God, which means that God would be unrighteous for judging sin. This is an attempt to charge Paul with impugning the holiness of God's character by saying he is preaching a gospel which condones sin in order to make God appear more righteous. This, of course, is absurd. It is an example of the human reasoning ("speaking in a human way") used by those relying on their righteousness in the rejection of the gospel of grace. Paul simply responds that if this was true, then God could not judge the world - which is what he repeatedly preached as the foundation for the gospel message.

Paul continues to show how absurd human reasoning can get in the final section of this passage: ***But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.*** This is a similar argument as the previous one. Here it is being claimed that Paul is saying he could not be considered a sinner for lying, because his lying would glorify God by showing the truthfulness of God. This is all akin to saying that we should intentionally sin in order to show the goodness of God.

They charge that Paul is preaching the grace of God gives license to sin...that he is promoting and encouraging sin so that grace may increase. This charge they are levelling against Paul is what we today call antinomianism. This is the belief that we are free to sin because of grace. Paul has already given his defence to this charge in his

emphasis on the *obedience of faith* in his introduction (*Romans 1:5*) in contrast to God's wrath on sin (*Romans 1:18-2:29*), and will continue to build on this later (*Romans 9-11*). In fact, in all his letters he continually taught the pursuit of holiness as a result of receiving grace.

(Again, this charge against Paul was made in an attempt to justify themselves by their own righteousness in obeying the law. They are defending their position that salvation is gained through the law. They don't think sinners (those not righteous as they are) should be saved.)

Paul gives a simple a brief response to this latest objection: ***Their condemnation is just***. Their ludicrous reasoning in claiming the gospel of Jesus promotes sin (and that they could be righteous enough) is sufficient to condemn them, since Jesus came to free them of sin....and will judge sin.

>

Antinomianism is rampant in the church today. Are we to be indifferent to sin because of grace? No. This is the reason many have a false assurance of salvation. People are thinking they can live their lives however they wish, because they are under the grace of God through performing some act (we have already discussed).

Read: Romans 6:1-2

You can't die to sin and still live in it. Indifference to sin reveals you never died to it in the first place.

Read: Jude 1:3-4

When a professing Christian lives in continual unrepentant sin, it means he is not a Christian. It shows he never understood grace. And if he never understood grace, he never received grace. We can't promote sin because of the gospel if the gospel came to remove sin.

Our Christian walk begins with faith in Jesus and leads to a life of faith in Jesus. The desire for cleansing of all unrighteousness that draws us to Jesus causes to live pursuing righteousness until we are made perfect in Heaven.

All those who seek to pervert the gospel as an excuse to sin will be condemned (*Galatians 1:6-9*).

Read Matthew 18:3-6

Discuss in closing:

Today, many "conversions" are people who are simply responding to the free offer of Heaven. Who wouldn't want to go to Heaven? It is kind of like taking the free

offer of a new house by simply raising their hand, coming to the front of the church, or asking for it. This is not the gospel. If you accepted this gospel, then you are condemned. Instead, you must be cut to the heart over your sin (which permeates your whole life). You must hate your sin and cry out to God for forgiveness. This leads to a life of resisting sin and future glorification free from sin. There is no hope or joy in Heaven free from sin for the person who loves their sin in this life.