

Text: Romans 3:1-8

Ser# 5194

Title: God's Righteousness and Man's Unrighteousness

Date: Sun, January 2, 2011 **Group:** Romans: The Gospel of the Righteousness of God

Sermon Type: Expository Sermon

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Fallen Condition Focus: People strongly object to the doctrine of human sin, and to the evidence of their personal guilt.

Propositional Statement: Despite your privileges, you have no valid grounds for denying your condemnation and guilt before God.

Introduction:

1. Making excuses for sin

I. The Word of God establishes that he will judge your sin objectively. (1-2)

A. The gospel denies special pleading to anyone on the basis of external relationship.

1. "Then what advantage hath the Jew?" **Explanation:** Paul's strong argument in chapter 2 seems to have been a denial of the Jew's position as a specially chosen people of God. This calls into question God's faithfulness to his word and covenant. Here Paul answers this question.
2. "Much in every way" **Explanation:** Paul clearly acknowledges that the Jew does have many special privileges in the plan and purpose of God. **Argumentation:** Paul's point is that the Jew stands in a position of equality with the Gentile in regard to the judgment of his sin. In this respect his national heritage confers no special benefit. But this is not a negation of the fact that God's choice of and promises to the Jewish nation do give them certain advantages. Paul has affirmed this from the beginning: cp. 1:17 "to the Jew first ..." (see also 2:9-10).
3. **Application:** Many people improperly depend on *relationship* (guanshi) to gain them special treatment from others. But if you count on special treatment from God because of your external relationship with him, then you will soon discover that God does not acknowledge your claim. God never deviates from absolute justice in dealing with the sins of any person.

B. The Word of God brings responsibility to believe and obey it.

1. "the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God" **Explanation:** Paul affirms that The Jews do in fact have privileges. Here he lists only the first one, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God. The rest of the Jewish privileges are not listed until 9:4-5. Possession of the Word of God was the chiefest and foremost advantage of the Jews. The oracles of God are the OT Scriptures. This term specially emphasizes that they are a word of revelation from God containing authoritative words of promise and command for the people of God. The fact that these oracles were "entrusted" to them, demonstrates that *they were not only the custodians of*

God's special revelation in order to preserve it and transmit it, they also stood in a position of responsibility toward it to both believe it and obey it.

2. **Argumentation:** This special privilege of the Jews also determined the degree of their responsibility. Rather than denying the privileges of the Jews, Paul argues that these privileges increased their responsibility and increased their guilt for failing to meet those responsibilities.
3. **Application:** Today we possess all the advantages of living under the NEW COVENANT. Our privileges are also great as the NT people of God. (1) We also have been entrusted with the oracles of God. We have not only the OT Scriptures, but also the NT Scriptures. (2) In addition we also have the indwelling Holy Spirit to illuminate the Word and guide the believer. We must never think that sin is unimportant. We who possess such great privileges will also be held accountable for God's word of promise and command which we possess.

II. The faithfulness of God guarantees that he will judge your sin justly. (3-4)

1. "For what if some did not believe" **Explanation:** Paul uses the word "some" to describe the majority of the Jews who rejected Christ and the gospel. This word also testifies to the remnant concept which he will expound more fully in chapter 11:5ff. In spite of the words of promise contained in the "oracles of God," the Jews disbelieved these words. Thus the Jewish nation as a whole is shown to have failed at the point of their highest privilege and opportunity. **Argumentation:** Some Jews may have argued that if what Paul says about God's judgment of Jews is true, then God's promises in the OT concerning the Jewish nation have apparently failed. Paul answers this problem very briefly here, but spends 3 chapters discussing it fully later in the book (chs. 9-11).
2. "shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" **Explanation:** The faith of God is his *faithfulness*; it is his character of truthfulness, reliability, and unchangeableness with respect to his word. God is faithful because he has all wisdom and benevolence in determining his plan for his people. God is faithful because he has all power to accomplish that which he purposes to do. God is faithful because he nothing unforeseen by him can ever occur to cause him to change his mind. ("God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Num 23:19)
3. "Let God be true ..." **Explanation:** God is true not only in the sense of speaking truthfully (he does not lie, Tit. 1:2), but also in the sense of being true in keeping his word. God's faithfulness not only guarantees that he will keep his promises of blessing, but that he will keep his word of threatening. The OT Law clearly described God's threats against the Jews for disobedience. God's faithfulness ensures that those threats will be carried out.

4. “just as it is written” **Explanation:** This is a quotation of Ps 51:4 in which David is confessing his sin with Bathsheba and acknowledging God’s justice and righteousness in judging his sin. **Argumentation:** Thus Paul shows that God has been faithful in keeping his Word concerning the Jews and that God holds them responsible for their unbelief of his Word and the Messianic promises it contained.

III. The justice of God demands that he judge your sin righteously. (5-6)

1. “but if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God”
Explanation: The history of the Jewish nation is that of sinful failure which time after time serves as a foil to confirm and establish God’s righteousness. Some Jews would argue God’s demonstration of his own righteousness through the sinfulness of the Jewish nation indicates God’s willingness to overlook their sin because of their special covenant relationship with him. cp. Neh 9:33, “Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly:”
2. “Is God unjust who inflicts wrath?” **Explanation:** In the original language this question expects a negative answer: “God is not unjust who inflicts wrath, is he?” Paul quickly adds, “I speak as a man” because he doesn’t want to lend any credence to the possibility that God could ever be unjust.
3. “For then how will God judge the world?” **Explanation:** As the Creator and Judge of all the earth, God alone is qualified to act as judge and He is by virtue of his being a just Judge. God’s justice is a fundamental and foundational truth of theology. It is this justice which demands equal treatment of both Jew and Gentile on the basis of their actions.
4. **Application:** Because God is just we too must expect to be judged on the basis of strict justice regarding our sin.

IV. The sovereignty of God empowers him to judge your sin fairly. (7-8)

A. God gets the glory for judging human sin as well as for justifying perfect human obedience.

1. **Argumentation:** This verse is difficult because Paul takes the objection of his Jewish opponent in his own mouth (“I”). But the point of the Jewish objection is this: since God receives glory through my sin, why should he condemn me for that which brings him glory? The wickedness of this philosophy is obvious. God is never the cause or promoter of sin (Jas 1:13). Sin is the product of man’s sinful heart and is the expression of his self-will in opposition to God. God can sovereignly overrule sin to bring about a good result, but this does not excuse or ameliorate human responsibility for the sin.
2. **Argumentation:** As the sovereign Creator, God has planned and purposed that all of human history will bring him glory. Man brings glory to God in one of two ways: either by obedience to his will or by suffering

punishment for disobedience. When sinners suffer punishment for their disobedience, it brings glory to God by upholding and demonstrating the holiness and righteousness of his character before the universe.

B. God rejects the wicked philosophy that the end justifies the means.

1. “let us do evil that good may come” **Explanation:** This evil accusation was made by the legalistic Jews against Paul’s gospel of grace. They claimed that the gospel allowed a person to continue in any wicked behavior since God would forgive any sin by grace. Paul calls this a “blasphemy” against the gospel. The gospel never permits a person to continue sinning because of grace. On the contrary, Tit 2:11-12 states, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;”
2. **Argumentation:** In fact, it is the Jews themselves who promote such thinking by claiming a special exemption for themselves based on their Jewish heritage. Down through Jewish history, many Jews reflected this concept. For instance the Jews of Jeremiah’s day (Jer 7:8-10). Therefore, Paul doubly rejects their objection, both because it falsely accuses the true gospel of that which they themselves practice.
3. “Whose condemnation is just” **Explanation:** This is the concluding statement of Paul’s argument against the Jews and provides the summary of the whole section. None of the Jewish objections are valid.

Conclusion:

1. **Application:** Today, many in the church take an attitude similar to the Jews of Paul’s day. They think that because they are “Christians” that they can sin without worrying about judgment. While it is true that for the true believer, all of our sin was dealt with at Calvary, it is also true that God holds accountable his children for their sin. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” (Gal 6:8)