

## 32. The Book of Romans 3:5-9

### *Paul's Epistle to the Romans*

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(11-22-23)

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Tonight, we find ourselves in chapter 3 where Paul is answering a series of hypothetical questions and objections that he anticipates his Jewish readers would raise after his claims that their heritage, the Law and the rite of circumcision wouldn't and couldn't make them righteous in God's eyes.

These 3 things gave the Jews a tremendous feeling of security and safety from God's judgment.

And so, in this section Paul sets about to systematically destroy this false security which the Jews had wrapped themselves in, peeling off layer after layer of false righteousness in 2:17-29.

Paul knew that this would immediately lead to a series of questions and objections from the Jews that he anticipates and verbalizes in verses 1-9 of chapter 3.

#### Question/Objection #1

**Romans 3:1 (NKJV)**

**<sup>1</sup> What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?**

*"If all you have said (in 2:17–29) is true, and Jews are no better than Gentiles since all are guilty of violating God's laws. If our Jewish heritage, our knowing and teaching the Mosaic law, and our following Jewish rituals such as circumcision do not make a Jew righteous before God—'then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?'"*

**Paul's answer—**

**Romans 3:2 (NKJV)**

**<sup>2</sup> Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.**

Being a Jew has many special privileges and blessings attached to it—not the least of which being that they were entrusted with the '**oracles of God.**' In other words, the Old Testament Scriptures were given to the Jews by God for them to—protect, copy, teach and preserve for future generations. (verse 2)

But as James tells us in chapter 1 of his epistle—just because a person or a people has the Word and hears it preached every week in synagogue or church is meaningless if you don't do what it says (James 1:22—*"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."*)

In fact, it's worse than that—if you don't keep the Word of God, it can actually work in reverse and be a liability (a basis for judgment).

**“...or what *is* the profit of circumcision?”**

Circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant which brought the Jews into this special relationship with God—which contained many blessings, but also carried with it many responsibilities as well!

Paul goes on—*“But how have the people of Israel responded to this tremendous privilege? —For the most part, they have demonstrated an appalling lack of faith.”*

This led to another question—

## **Question #2**

**Romans 3:3 (NKJV)**

**<sup>3</sup> For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?**

Paul imagined that some would be thinking—

*“Well, granted that not all Jews have believed, so does that mean that God will go back on His promises to the nation to bring the Messiah to rescue the Jewish people from Gentile dominion and oppression and establish the Kingdom?”*

**Paul’s answer—**

**Romans 3:4a (NKJV)**

**<sup>4</sup> Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar...**

As we said last week, God made an unconditional covenant with the Jewish people thru Abraham—called the Abrahamic Covenant. This was a unilateral, unconditional covenant that couldn’t be broken through their unfaithfulness—even the unfaithfulness of rejecting their own Messiah!

The New Covenant God made with us through Jesus,  
like the Abrahamic Covenant,  
is unilateral and unconditional.

God promised us eternal life if we put our faith in Jesus—but that promise isn’t dependent on our faithfulness in keeping the law (God’s commandments). In other words, we don’t *earn* eternal life through our obedience to what God has commanded (Jesus did say if we love Him keep His commandments) but obedience is always the *result* of salvation never the prerequisite for *earning* salvation.

The point is that in the New Covenant we receive God’s promise of eternal life by believing in and receiving Jesus as our Lord and Savior—

**John 1:12 (NKJV)**

**<sup>12</sup> But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:**

If the New Covenant was a bilateral covenant dependent upon God to keep His part (give us eternal life) if we keep our part of the covenant (keep the law perfectly)—none of us would be saved.

**Romans 4:16 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup> Therefore *it is* of faith that *it might be* according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

- If the promise of salvation was based on us perfectly keeping the law—that promise would be worthless because it would be based on conditions that no one would be able to meet.
- If God said, “*I promise to give you eternal life—if you jump across the Grand Canyon*”—that promise would be worthless because no one could meet that condition.
- The same would be true if God promised to give a person eternal life if they lived a sinless life—again that would be a worthless promise because no one could meet that condition.
- But if God said (which He did) to you and me, “*I promise to give you eternal life—if you believe in My Son, based on what He did and not on what you do.*”

Well, that promise is attainable by everyone—because everyone can believe in Jesus!

That’s why God could promise us eternal life the moment we put our faith in Jesus (1 John 5:13)—because it’s based on what He did for us and not on what we do for Him (which is why Jesus said, “*It is finished*” from the cross right before He died).

If salvation was by our works, He couldn’t have promised us eternal life (uninterrupted life for all eternity) from the moment we put our faith in Jesus—all He could have done was to say, “*We’ll see if you live a good enough life to earn the eternal life I’m offering—and if you’re good enough and work hard enough when you die, you’ll receive it*” (bad illustration because salvation requires sinless perfection).

You see the fact that God promised it to us instantly and forever the moment we put our faith in Jesus testifies to the fact it is by grace and not by our works.

**Question #3****Romans 3:5 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? *Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.)*

*“If our unrighteousness causes the righteousness of God to shine more gloriously, how can God judge us for wrongdoing by bringing His wrath upon us? (Paul notes here that in saying these words, he is using a typically human argument.)”*

**Paul’s answer—**

**Romans 3:5–6 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? *Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.)* <sup>6</sup> **Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world?**

**In other words, Paul is saying—**“*Such an argument is unworthy of serious consideration. If God condoned sin just because it brought Him glory by making Him look all the more holy and righteous by comparison to fallen sinners (give the illustration of a diamond sitting on a piece of black velvet)—He would have no righteous basis for*

*judging the world for its sin. I mean, if the only purpose for sin was to make God look good—that would basically mean sin was good. And if sin is good then sinners couldn't be rightfully judged for basically doing what brings God glory—for that is a good thing!"*

This line of thinking continues to be put forth by Paul as a hypothetical—

**Romans 3:7 (NKJV)**

**<sup>7</sup> For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner?**

**The question turns to an objection—***"If my sin brings glory to God, if my lie vindicates His truth—then how can He find fault with me as a sinner?"*

One author said with regard to this—

*"The argument here is that if this particular sin merely enhances the glory of God and the grace of God, then all sin would do the same. Therefore, God would not be able to judge the world for sin—and make no mistake about it, He will judge this sinful world someday."*

Another author put it well—*"In theory, the most dramatic example of someone who might ask this question (Romans 3:7) is Judas. Can you hear Judas make his case? "Lord, I know that I betrayed Jesus, but You used it for good. In fact, if I hadn't done what I did, Jesus wouldn't have gone to the cross at all. What I did even fulfilled the Scriptures. How can You judge me at all?" The answer to Judas might go like this: "Yes, God used your wickedness, but it was still your wickedness. There was no good or pure motive in your heart at all. It is no credit to you that God brought good out of your evil. You stand guilty before God."*

So, this kind of thinking gave birth to a perverted philosophy which Paul mentions some had attributed to him—

**Romans 3:8 (NKJV)**

**<sup>8</sup> And why not say, "Let us do evil that good may come"?—as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.**

**Question #4**

*"Why wouldn't it be logical to say, 'Let us do evil, that good may come'?"*

**Paul's response—***"Let me interrupt to say that some people actually accuse us Christians of using this argument, but it is nothing more than slander! All I can say is that the condemnation of people who talk like that is well-deserved."*

Pastor Chuck Smith—

*"The redemption through Jesus Christ is wonderful. And it's especially glorious when a person whose life has been so totally destroyed by sin, where they are really at the bottom of the barrel—gets saved! It's glorious to see the grace of God extended to such a person and their lives transformed miraculously. It's wonderful to see God take someone whose life is worthless according to the world's standards and make of them an instrument of His glory. We call them trophies of grace! And we look to what God has wrought and we rejoice together.*

*We see so many of our pastors of Calvary Chapels who God rescued from the junk heap. And God has raised them up and is using them mightily now in ministering the gospel around the world. And we see these men whom the grace of God has just been magnified because they were so low, and God has lifted them from the pit, out of the miry clay, and has established their feet upon the Rock and now they are being such a power for God!*

*Does that mean that I should go out and just really destroy my life with sin and take all of the drugs that I can*

*get hold of and all? So that then I can be saved and then God's grace might be demonstrated as we say, 'Oh, praise God, look at what he did for that poor soul!'—No, no, no! But you see this is the kind of foolish reasoning that sometimes people have. Paul is saying, those who say, "Let us do evil that good may come"—their judgment is richly deserved!"*

Folks, make no mistake about it—this is nothing more (the logic of verses 7-8) than legalism's attack on God's grace.

Paul's message was that we are saved by grace (getting what we don't deserve—salvation is a gift not the result of works) and so the legalists Paul was dealing with mocked the whole notion of being saved by grace—mocking it with sarcasm!

They went around saying that if what Paul was saying is true, that salvation isn't dependent upon how good you are and how well you keep the law—then sin doesn't matter (like the judge who has someone who is guilty of 'J-walking' and another that is guilty of robbing a bank both standing before him...).

The Judaizer's were mocking Paul's preaching—they were saying that Paul is going around telling people that, *"Sin is irrelevant! That it doesn't matter because God gives salvation as a free gift to anyone who believes in Jesus no matter how wickedly they've lived. In fact, in Paul's way of thinking, the more a person sins the more God receives glory for saving them (it proves He's even more loving, kind, merciful, gracious etc.) and therefore sin is actually good in Paul's way of thinking not bad! Because how can something be bad that makes God look so good?!"*

Paul fires back—*"That's ridiculous. I have never and would never assert such a wicked premise. Those who say such things deserve the judgment they have coming!"*

Now at this point, Paul enters into his closing arguments on the guilt and condemnation that the whole world and everyone in it is under apart from Christ.

#### **Romans 3:9 (NKJV)**

**<sup>9</sup> What then? Are we better *than they*? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.**

*"What is the advantage of being a Jew—much in every way—but it doesn't mean that we are righteous while they are unrighteous. The Jews are no better and no worse than the gentiles—all are sinners."*

That leads up to and parallels the next question in Paul's presentation.

He has shown that the heathen are lost; the self-righteous moralists (whether Jews or Gentiles), are lost; the Jews are lost—now he turns to the next question he anticipates his readers will be asking themselves:

#### **Question #5**

*"Are all then lost?"*

#### **Paul's answer—**

*"Yes, we have already charged that all people are under the power of sin (singular not plural)."*

He is talking about our nature—not the individual sins we commit. We are sinners by nature, and we sin everyday proving that we are sinners.

Sinning doesn't make us sinners—it simply proves that we are sinners.

(Illustration of a car thief stealing cars, stealing cars doesn't make him a car thief it just proves that he is one.)

This means that Jews are no different from Gentiles in this respect—all people are born with a sin nature which everyday brings forth the 'fruit' of sin. (See 1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

Now at this point Paul is going to use these final verses from verse 9 through verse 20 of Chapter 3 to close out this first section of the book that we've entitled, "**Condemnation**" which runs from Chapter 1:18 thru Chapter 3:20.

This whole section is based on Paul's assertion that there are no good, moral, or righteous people in the world apart from Jesus Christ.

**Romans 3:9–12 (NKJV)**

**<sup>9</sup> What then? Are we better *than they*? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. <sup>10</sup> As it is written: "*There is none righteous, no, not one;* <sup>11</sup> *There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.* <sup>12</sup> *They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.*"**

This statement runs contrary to what most people think about themselves—that they are basically 'good people.' The Bible acknowledges this—"*Most men will proclaim each his own goodness*" (Proverbs 20:6)

Back in 1981, Rabbi Harold Kushner wrote a book entitled, "*When Bad Things Happen to Good People.*"

His book struck a chord with the public because it shot up to the top of the N.Y. Times bestseller list practically overnight and stayed there for over a year—and since it was first published has sold over 4 million copies.

Apparently, a lot of people wrestle with this problem because they see themselves as 'good' people so much so that when bad things happen to them they lash out at God for being unfair to them—"*I'm a good person, this shouldn't be happening to me!*"

Instead of examining themselves—they want to find fault with God.

In general, they hear us Christians talk about the God of the Bible being a God of love, Who is righteous and good—but then they see a world full of evil and injustice, of war and disease—and they can't reconcile the two.

This forces people to conclude that either there is no God—or that He isn't a good and loving God after all.

The conclusion that Rabbi Kushner came to in his book as to why bad things happen to good people was—"*God is limited. He is loving but not all powerful. There are some things God doesn't control because He can't control them. He is not perfect, and we must forgive Him for not making a better more perfect world for us to live in.*"

But there's a third possibility which is the one the Bible sets forth—that a good, loving, all-powerful God created a good world for mankind to live in—a world free of sin, suffering, corruption, evil and death.

He gave man a good thing called *'free-will'* (because He didn't want robots)—but it was man who exercised it in rebellion against his Creator. At that moment the Fall occurred, and sin entered the world through the sin of Adam and Eve which then was passed down through their descendants.

The result was the corruption of God's good creation.

**Some ask, "*Did God create evil?*"—and the answer to that is NO!**

Evil is a corruption of what was created good—it's like rust to a car or rot to a tree.

**God didn't create evil—evil came about through man's sin.**

However, God isn't opposed to using evil to bring about His ultimate purposes (the redemption of sinners and the establishment of His Kingdom).

Norm Geissler—

*"The only way for Israel to get to the Promised Land was thru the wilderness. The only way to form diamonds is to put pressure on coal. The only way to produce ultimate good is to allow limited evil. If you never allow evil, you'll never be able to defeat it. If you don't allow sin, you'll never have the higher good of forgiveness. If you don't allow tribulation, you'll never produce patience."*

The bottom line is—God doesn't *promote* evil—He permits evil.

We'll have to leave it there and pick up our study next week.

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