

## Jewish Privilege That Condemns

Romans 3:1-8

Our study of Paul's epistle to the Romans brings us now to chapter three. This morning we will be looking at the first eight verses. Romans chapter three verses one through eight. Follow along as I read this text.

Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God. What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, "THAT THOU MIGHTEST BE JUSTIFIED IN THY WORDS, AND MIGHTEST PREVAIL WHEN THOU ART JUDGED." 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.) May it never be! For otherwise how will God judge the world? But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner? And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say), "Let us do evil that good may come"? Their condemnation is just.<sup>1</sup>

Before we examine this text closely, which many believe is one of the most difficult passages in all of Romans to interpret, I wish to draw your attention to the very first phrase, "What advantage has the Jew?"<sup>2</sup> because certainly this was the question that the Jewish people were asking as they heard the gospel and realized that they, too, even though they were Jewish, were under divine condemnation.

The great Prussian Emperor Frederick once asked his chaplain to provide for him one commanding evidence that God truly existed and that the Bible was true.

The chaplain replied, "The amazing Jew, your majesty, the amazing Jew."

The mystery of Israel's survival is baffling to historians and to philosophers.

In his classic 10 volume work *A Study of History*, Arnold Toynbee, considered to be one of the greatest historians of all time, traces the rise and the inevitable fall of 26 civilizations. And what is fascinating is that he proved in every case that civilizations will rise, but they will inevitably fall never to rise again. In every case except one, the Jewish civilization.

For the Jew there is no explanation to the world. The history of Israel has defied the most brilliant analysts in that it has survived its fall even to the point of reconstituting itself in its national existence. Not only that, in revivifying its ancient language, it is amazing.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 3:1-8.

<sup>2</sup> Romans 3:1.

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In fact, Toynbee referred to the Jews as, quote, “The fossils of history, ancient objects that really shouldn’t be here, but somehow they are, quote, frozen in time.”

And sadly, like the vast majority of the world, Toynbee knew nothing of Scripture, nor the God who wrote it.

Let me give you the big picture to give you an understanding of what God is up to with the Jew and how they could come to a place of erroneous understanding even of themselves and certainly the gospel that Paul addresses here in Romans chapter three.

If we look at the Jews 4000 year history we would have to begin with the genealogical record all the way back in Genesis. And there we learn that 1656 years after God created Adam, because of unimaginable human wickedness, God destroyed the entire world in a flood, all except eight people who, according to the record says found favor in the eyes of the Lord. And, of course, that refers to Noah and his wife and three sons and their wives.

Five hundred years after the flood God set his uninfluenced elective love on a particular ethnic group of people, the Jews, later called Israel. And with them he made a unilateral, unconditional, irreversible covenant with Abraham, a covenant that would guide his providence, his sovereign plan to not only redeem a people unto himself, but also restore a kingdom that God has deliberately allowed Satan to temporarily claim for himself.

That covenant with Abraham is found in Genesis 12 and it really contains four elements. Out of Abraham would come, first of all, a seed, referring to Christ who would be both the Redeemer and a King. And we see these motifs of him redeeming the people for himself and restoring the kingdom all though Scripture. We see him not only as a Lamb—that would be the Redeemer—but a Lion that would be the King.

But secondly in that covenant God promised that through Abraham he would give a land, a specific territory that would be set apart for his people, a place where he, God himself, would eventually dwell in holy and intimate union with his people.

And, thirdly, he promised Abraham a nation, one that would allow Abraham’s godly reputation and legacy to be displayed both materially and spiritually. And the glory of God’s grace would in that nation eventually be put on display.

And fourthly, finally, he promised divine blessing as well as cursing, blessing upon those who bless Abraham’s descendants and a curse upon those who curse them. And these great promises are reiterated over and over and over again in both the Old Testament as well as in the New.

Now 600 years late God made another covenant with the sons of Abraham, only this one was given to another man, a man by the name of Moses. And this covenant was temporal in nature. It was one that was bilateral and conditional, called the mosaic covenant.

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You will recall that on Mount Sinai that God gave his law to his chosen people. He gave it to them to demonstrate their sinfulness, their inability to save themselves, their ultimate need for a Savior. And Moses became the first mediatorial ruler in the theocratic kingdom of history. In fact, according to Exodus 4:16 he was authorized to stand before Israel instead of God. In fact, Moses is presented in Scripture as a type of Christ who alone will eventually be the perfect embodiment of God, of God's mediatorial ruler in the messianic age.

But this historical kingdom was broadened at Mount Sinai to include the people of Israel. In Exodus 19 and verse six God said, "You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."<sup>3</sup>

And so at Sinai God commissioned Israel to be the ones to mediate this blessing to the whole world, a witness nation. They were to be the custodians of divine truth. And during that time God inspired Moses to frame a civil government that would exist upon the earth, one that would illustrate the kingdom of God and there the theocracy of Israel became the greatest model of government in the history of the world. And, frankly, it was a sample of the future kingdom promised to Abraham where God himself would reign as Messiah of Israel.

And over the course of history other mediatorial rulers were set in place. In the Old Testament we read about leader judges of Israel from Joshua to Samuel, men chosen directly by God. They were invested with regal functions. They were powered by the Holy Spirit.

And then God eventually established a monarchical form of government whereby he mediated his rule, the rule of his kingdom through various kings. And, unfortunately, they were all sinful which pointed to the need for a righteous king that would one day come and defeat sin, Satan and death. The only remedy to this problem, of course, would be the promised Messiah, the Savior King.

And it is for this reason about 1000 years after God made his covenant with Abraham and about 500 years after the giving of the law to Moses, God made another promise to one of his mediatorial rulers, a man named David, King David to be more precise.

And you can read about that covenant in 2 Samuel chapter seven which was really a reaffirmation of the regal terms of the original Abrahamic covenant, but also with the addition that the ultimate provision of those covenantal rights would be permanently attached to the historical dynasty of King David, that David's throne would ultimately belong to his descendant, the Son of David who is the Lord Jesus Christ.

And although its ultimate fulfillment would be interrupted for a season, it would ultimately be fulfilled in a future kingdom, in a restored Israel when finally the covenant nation would be all that it was intended to be.

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<sup>3</sup> Exodus 19:6.

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And, repeatedly, the Old Testament prophets speak about this future earthly kingdom and its Messiah King, that despite Israel's unfaithfulness to God, the Lord would remain faithful to his promises to the nation.

But eventually, according to biblical history, because of Israel's sin, we know that God transferred world power to the Gentiles as recorded in Daniel two. And ultimately the presence of God left Israel because of their ongoing apostasy and that is recorded in Ezekiel chapters 10 and 11. Because of their long trend toward apostasy, God pronounced a judgment upon them through the prophet Daniel, one of 70 weeks of years that you can read about in Daniel nine. We have studied this before at great length.

And this judgment will be completed in the final seven years of tribulation, sometimes known as Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, just before the Messiah King returns.

Of course, all of that is described in detail in the book of Revelation where Jesus reveals these truths as well as in the gospels. And then Jesus will return as King of kings, Lord of lords. He will establish his millennial kingdom which will be a bridge between human history and the eternal state.

Now also keep in mind that in God's grand scheme of redemption and restoration, he has used Satan to be his aid. He has used Satan to accomplish his purposes.

Since the very beginning when Satan was cast from God's presence, his all consuming passion has been to oppose God's plan of redemption, to somehow prevent him from redeeming a people unto himself and ever restoring a kingdom. We see this especially in the history of Israel, God's covenant people. Jesus said in John 4:22 that salvation is from the Jews. So, therefore, the Jews would be Satan's primary target. Satan tried to prevent God's plan of redemption by eliminating the very people from which the Savior would eventually arise. For 400 years they were oppressed in Egypt. They were constantly threatened in their history by overwhelming enemies even when they entered into their Promised Land. And, frankly, nothing has changed even to this day.

God warned his people of the consequences of their disobedience in Deuteronomy 28. In verse 63 he says, "And it shall come about that as the LORD delighted over you to prosper you, and multiply you, so the LORD will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you; and you shall be torn from the land where you are entering to possess it. "Moreover, the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other"<sup>4</sup>

Because of their idolatry, God used Satan, allowed him to unleash his fury upon the people. They were eventually, as you know, captured by the Assyrians, later by the Babylonians, disbursed among those regions.

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<sup>4</sup> Deuteronomy 28:63-64.

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In Zechariah three and verse one we read about how Satan, the malicious accuser stood in the presence of the Lord so that he could malign Israel and demand that God forsake them. And yet continued to be merciful. He continued to be faithful to his covenant.

We read in history how that they were enslaved and later slaughtered by the Romans in AD 70 when the Roman general Titus Vespasian leveled Jerusalem and the temple and massacred over one million Jews. And those who were left were taken into slavery and scattered all over the world.

To give you a sample of some of the things they have experienced, by AD 800 the persecution of Jewish immigrants by the medieval church in northern Europe was astonishing. By 1148 the Jews in Spain had to flee for their lives. They fled to Egypt, to Portugal, to Greece, to Turkey, to the Netherlands to avoid being burned.

By 1215 AD the Magna Charta in England literally legalized injustice against the Jews. The French hated them as well as did the Germans and the Poles. In the Polish regions that were seized by the Russians, the government would systematically seek to exterminate the Jews. And all through Europe they were forced to live in fear. They lived in squalor. They lived in the ghettos. The great massacres in Poland and Lithuania and in 1648 through 1656 killed untold thousands of Jews.

And historically they have lived under the sword of Gentile domination. They fled to Africa, to China, to Mexico, to South America, to India, all over the world.

So from their slavery in Egypt to the infamous pogroms of eastern Europe, even to the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust where six million Jews were exterminated, the Jewish people, dear friends, have endured more persecution than any people in the history of the world. In fact, some have argued that you could take the persecution of all other peoples and put them together and they would not equal the persecution of the Jews. They have been enslaved, tortured, butchered, gassed, ridiculed, dispersed like no other group. Unlike any other nationality, they were exiled from their very own land in AD 70. Their national identity and even their language was stripped from them. And wherever they have lived, they have been treated with contempt.

Yet isn't it amazing? Not only have they survived, but they have flourished. Out of the ash heap of the Holocaust they returned to their original land. The identical homeland from which they had been banished in AD 70 and in 1948 they established their own identity.

Dear friends, this is the miracle of the state of Israel today. Not only did they come back to the same land, they resurrected their ancient language. No other people group has even come close to sharing such a history of persecution and survival. Israel today is about the size of New Jersey. It has about four million Jews living in it and it is surrounded by 22 Arab countries with a population of 145 million combined and they are aligned with the whole Muslim world of about one billion and they all hate the Jews. They are all trying to destroy the Jews.

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What Arnold Toynbee and the rest of the world fails to grasp is that God selected the Jewish people, according to Deuteronomy seven verse six, for his own possession, above all the people that are on the face of the earth. They fail to grasp, according to Psalm 12:4, that he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

Well, obviously the apostle Paul understood all of this. In fact, later on in Romans nine he will speak about Israel's election. In Romans 10 he will speak about Israel's defection and in Romans 11 he will speak about Israel's salvation when their Messiah returns. He understood that in contrast to the mosaic covenant under which Israel failed, God promised a new covenant whereby he would perform a radical transformation in their heart, a work of redemption according to his gracious choice.

In Jeremiah 31 we read of this in verse 31.

"Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."<sup>5</sup>

It is fascinating that in that same passage God went on to link the perpetuity of his promise to the perpetuity of the physical existence of the sun and the moon and the stars and the earth.

He says, beginning at verse 35:

Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day, And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: "If this fixed order departs From before Me," declares the LORD, "Then the offspring of Israel also shall cease From being a nation before Me forever."<sup>6</sup>

So as long as the celestial bodies remain, so, too, Israel will remain.

Jesus announced that this new covenant would be ratified by his very blood, a promise that would bring saving grace to both the Jews and the Gentiles in the Church age in which we live now. This is the gospel of God that has ignited Paul's heart as he shares it here in Romans.

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<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah 31:31-33.

<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah 31:35-36.

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Now as we come to Romans chapter three Paul is going to deal with some of the Jewish objections to this gospel. See, now keep in mind. They understood that although they had been persecuted by the Gentiles for most of their existence, they knew that they were still a privileged people. But they were convinced that because of this, because they were a son of Abraham, because they possessed the law and because they were circumcised as we dealt with in Paul's words in chapter two verses 17 through 29, that because of all of that they were exempt from any condemnation, that they kind of had a free pass.

But what they didn't understand is that with privilege comes responsibility, not automatic salvation. And, in fact, it was their very privilege that actually brought further condemnation upon them.

So the apostle Paul, being a Pharisee of the Pharisees and understanding these things understanding how the Jewish mind would work, how they would vehemently object to the gospel. Understanding all of that, he comes up with the questions he knows they are going to ask which is basically, "Well, fine. Then what advantage is there in being a Jew if after all of this we are still under divine condemnation?"

So here in eight verses there are three objections and, I believe, three answers that he gives.

The first objection that he brings up, that he knows they are going to ask, has to do with his perceived attack upon God's calling of Israel, his perceived attack upon God's calling of Israel.

In verse one he says, "[Well,] then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?"<sup>7</sup>

The history of God's covenant promises to Israel that we have just reviewed give ample evidence to the privileges that they had. So this is a fair question. They are saying, "Basically, if being called by God as his chosen people, if knowing and preaching the law of Moses, if being obedient to the right of circumcision, as we have, if all of those things are unable to make us righteous before God, then what on earth is there to having any advantage whatsoever in being a Jew?"

Well, Paul answers the question that he has obviously heard from them before.

Verse two.

"Great in every respect."<sup>8</sup>

In other words, wonderful advantages.

He says, "First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Romans 3:1.

<sup>8</sup> Romans 3:2.

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The term “oracles” is *logion* (log’-ee-on). It refers to supernatural utterances of God. And in this context it would certainly include the Old Testament Scriptures that creator God had given to the Jews whereby he had revealed himself through the prophets who recorded it in his Word and then entrusted it to the Jews.

But also because the term *logion* (log’-ee-on) in the original language is a diminutive of *logos* (log’-os) which is typically translated “word,” I believe it is reasonable to assume that the Holy Spirit uses it here to point to a specific element of Scripture, an important message from God, one that could be singled out, namely the prophetic message concerning the promised Messiah.

Certainly this is where Paul is taking them in his argument. Later on in chapter three verse 21 we read, “But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe.”<sup>10</sup>

So he is saying, “You have had an enormous privilege here. Think about it. God has spoken directly to you. And herein is the advantage of being a Jew. You possess the oracles of God concerning the Messiah, by implication, the Messiah you crucified.”

You will recall in 2 Timothy chapter three verses 14 and 15 Paul would later encourage Timothy to, quote, “Continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of.”<sup>11</sup>

Well, what was he referring to? He goes on to say, “From childhood you have known the sacred writings,”<sup>12</sup> the writings of the Old Testament, “which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.”<sup>13</sup>

You see, dear friends, the Old Testament Scriptures contained all that a man would ever need to recognize the Messiah, to see clearly that Jesus was the Son of God. All of the sacrifices, all of the feasts and convocations, the symbols, the rituals, the rites including circumcision, all pointed to him.

Jesus made this so clear in his parable of the rich man and Lazarus you will recall in Luke 16. And there the rich man was enduring the torments of Hades and he sees Abraham and Lazarus there in his bosom and he cries out:

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<sup>9</sup> Romans 3:2.

<sup>10</sup> Romans 3:21-22.

<sup>11</sup> 2 Timothy 3:14.

<sup>12</sup> 2 Timothy 3:15.

<sup>13</sup> 2 Timothy 3:15-16.

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“I beg you, Father, that you send [Lazarus] to my father’s house—for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’

But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’

But he said, ‘No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’

But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.’<sup>14</sup>

So the Old Testament Scriptures contain the oracles of God pertaining to salvation through faith in the coming Christ.

But you see, dear friends, having information and heeding information are two very different things. That is something we should all take very seriously. For we, too, are an advantaged people that have the Word of God. It is one thing to know it. It is another thing to live consistently with it.

Well, Paul understood that the vast majority of the Jews knew the Old Testament as literature and as law, but not as transforming truth, not as truth that they would embrace in their hearts and humble themselves before it and believe in God’s gift of grace and respond in faith and obedience.

In fact, most of them prefer to follow the traditions of their favorite rabbis, their favorite political leaders so to speak and their respective parties.

I fear that the same charge could be leveled against most Christians today.

Think of how many Bibles we possess. Think of how many Bibles you probably have in your house, yet how little we study them. And yet, dear friends, God has spoken directly to you through his Word. He has entrusted his Word now to you. But think how little we value the revealed word of the one true God, how little it really impacts our lives.

Imagine what it would be like if suddenly on the news they show this spaceship that comes down and it drops off this book and it is glowing with all of this light and they hear this voice that says, “This is the word of the living God.”

Well, can you imagine everybody would want to have a part of it? Obviously that is not going to happen. It doesn't need to happen because God has already given it to us. But we ignore it, typically. And yet how often, like the ancient Jews we will hang on every word of our favorite politician or some human expert on the radio or the television,

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<sup>14</sup> Luke 15:27-31.

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especially some Christian version of Dr. Phil or whatever. We devour the words of men that rob life and yet we ignore the words of God that give life.

It is interesting even in Christian academia so-called scholars have the Word. Many of them study the Word. I had friends that were studying at Cambridge when I was studying at Oxford and I knew that some of them had studied the Word for seven years, devoted themselves to it. And it was obvious to me that they knew nothing of Christ. They knew nothing of Christ. In fact, they mocked the Word. And certainly that can be true in any school.

I was said to hear that in the Coalition of Christian Colleges today that represents 104 Christian colleges in the United States, only five believe in the creation account of Genesis, only five. I am thankful that one of those five colleges is the Masters College where I had the privilege of teaching.

So the point is the Jews had great advantage, advantage in every respect. They were entrusted with the oracles of the living God. But most of them neither believed it nor obeyed it.

What about you? The writer of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 10 verses 26, “For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment.”<sup>15</sup>

You see, dear friends, with privilege comes responsibility. And they did not see that. And if that responsibility to submit to the truth is ridiculed and mocked and ignored, then that very truth will stand in judgment against you.

How much more? Think about this. How much more will be the condemnation of those who knew the written revealed Word of God and yet rejected it, than those who rejected only the revelation of God through creation and conscience and knew nothing of the written gospel?

So Paul answers their first objection concerning his perceived attack on God’s calling of Israel.

But there was another one that he knew they commonly put forth and that is his perceived attack upon God’s promises to Israel.

Notice verse three.

“What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?”<sup>16</sup>

See, here is what they are thinking. Here is what Paul is saying.

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<sup>15</sup> Hebrews 10:26-27.

<sup>16</sup> Romans 3:3.

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“Just because not all of us believed the oracles of God pertaining to the Messiah Jesus, God has still got to fulfill his promises, doesn’t he?”

They no doubt remembered the words of the prophet Amos in chapter three verse two.

“You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth.”<sup>17</sup>

But they ignored the rest of the verse that said, “Therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities.”<sup>18</sup>

Jew Jews are so much like we all are. We hear what we want to hear, right? You see, what the Jew conveniently failed to understand—and I want to underscore the term “conveniently”—is that there were only a few unconditional promises that God made and all of them were made to national Israel, not to individual Jews. Moreover, nowhere in the Old Testament did God promise salvation to any individual Jew simply because of his physical heritage, simply because he was a son of Abraham.

God’s promise of salvation is always be grace through faith. They fail to remember the Lord’s individual invitation through Isaiah that we read in chapter 55 verse six where the Lord says:

Seek the LORD while He may be found;  
Call upon Him while He is near.  
Let the wicked forsake his way,  
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
And let him return to the LORD,  
And He will have compassion on him;  
And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.<sup>19</sup>

So Paul states their objection here in verse three.

“What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? May it never be!”<sup>20</sup> he says in verse four.

And Paul is going to later explain this much more fully in chapter nine verses six and seven. There he says, “But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; neither are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants.”<sup>21</sup>

What he is in essence going to teach and what we will learn is when we get there is that not all of Abraham’s descendants even belong to the physical people of God, that is, national Israel. Not all of those, therefore, likewise, are true children of Abraham through Isaac. And therefore they are not all the spiritual people of God.

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<sup>17</sup> Amos 3:2.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Isaiah 55:6-7.

<sup>20</sup> Romans 3:3-4.

<sup>21</sup> Romans 9:6-7.

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He is using that analogy there. They are not all under the promises that were given to Abraham to be somehow his spiritual children. Remember later on Paul is going to teach, “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”<sup>22</sup>

He will say, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”<sup>23</sup>

Said simply, dear friends, he is going to teach that salvation is a gift of sovereign grace, not of race. Yes, he will preserve the nation as a whole, but that doesn't guarantee salvation to every individual Jew.

A footnote regarding God's preservation of national Israel. As we read earlier in Jeremiah 31, unlike the conditional promises given to individuals that were based upon their faith and obedience, remember, again, their perpetuity of God's promises to national Israel was linked with the perpetuity of the physical certainties of the luminaries in the sky. And to those who would insist that somehow Israel has been permanently replaced and disenfranchised, that it has been permanently replaced by the Church, I would humbly submit to you that you have forgotten the one who originally elected them by his grace and you would do well to remember the words of the Lord in Isaiah 49 verse 14.

“But Zion said, ‘The LORD has forsaken me, And the Lord has forgotten me.’”<sup>24</sup>

And God answers this way.

Can a woman forget her nursing child,  
And have no compassion on the  
son of her womb? Even these may forget,  
but I will not forget you.  
Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands;  
Your walls are continually before Me.<sup>25</sup>

We know that during the messianic age when the Lord returns, anti-Semitism will cease and the curse of their unbelief, of Israel's unbelief will be lifted. Zechariah prophesies about this in chapter eight verse 13.

“And it will come about that just as you were a curse among the nations,  
O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you that you may become a blessing.”<sup>26</sup>

In fact, during the messianic age all nations will one day recognize that Israel has been raised to be the supreme nation over all nations.

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<sup>22</sup> Romans 9:13.

<sup>23</sup> Romans 9:15.

<sup>24</sup> Isaiah 49:14.

<sup>25</sup> Isaiah 49:15-16.

<sup>26</sup> Zechariah 8:13.

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Zechariah eight verse 23 says, “In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’”<sup>27</sup>

And late in Romans 11 Paul will go to great lengths to underscore the distinction between Israel and the Church and how God is not finished with Israel yet. He will say in verse 28, “From the standpoint of the gospel, they [referring to the Jews] are enemies for your [referring to Christians’] sake, for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice, they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”<sup>28</sup>

So indeed their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God with respect to his covenant promises.

Verse four.

“May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar.”<sup>29</sup>

Paul is saying, “Every... even if every man in the world becomes a liar, God will always remain true to his Word.”

And he goes on to quote Psalm 51 verse four.

“As it is written, ‘THAT THOU MIGHTEST BE JUSTIFIED IN THY WORDS, AND MIGHTEST PREVAIL WHEN THOU ART JUDGED.’”<sup>30</sup>

Obviously this is the perfect text. Even though God condemned David for his sin, David still praised God for his righteous judgment, even upon him.

So Paul is ultimately saying, “Yes, Jewish kinsmen, you have sinned and yes you are under divine condemnation, but you are correct. God will remain faithful to his unconditional promises to national Israel and he will also save those who repent.”

The prophet Zechariah made this clear in Zechariah 12 verse 10. The context here is when the Lord returns as the Messiah king. There we read, “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him.”<sup>31</sup>

Well, Paul moves, finally, to the third objection and that is his perceived attack upon God’s holiness. And here Paul describes yet another clever and yet fallacious line of thinking that he must have heard from his critics.

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<sup>27</sup> Zechariah 8:23.

<sup>28</sup> Romans 11:28-29.

<sup>29</sup> Romans 3:4.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Zechariah 12:10.

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Verse five.

“But if our unrighteousness demonstrates...”<sup>32</sup> which literally means, that term means to bring to light. If it “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.)”<sup>33</sup>

Now, what is he saying here? Well, he is speaking of these imaginary opponents that he has heard before and they are basically saying this.

“Paul, are you saying that our sin brings glory to God?”

And evidently that is what they wanted to hear. Our sin brings glory to God because it provides a dark contrast in order to better illuminate the light of God’s righteousness.

Now if this is true, if our sin, therefore, brings glory to God. Then how can God blame us for that which gives him glory?

Boy, that is a clever line of thinking, isn’t it? They are saying, you know, that would be blasphemy. If this were true, then God’s judgment upon sin would make no sense. In fact, God would even be unrighteousness in taking vengeance on our sin.

Now obviously this is ludicrous. But people will fabricate all manner of objections to reject the gospel because it is so expensive to our self righteous pride.

In fact, this argument is so tortured, it is so vile that Paul concludes his statement by adding, in parenthesis, “(I am speaking in human terms).”<sup>34</sup>

In other words, he wanted to clarify. He is saying that I am speaking according to the depraved logic of a fallen humanity. I don’t believe any of this.

So in response to their charge that somehow God condones sin, that that is what Paul is preaching, Paul responds in verse six:

“May it never be! For otherwise how will God judge the world?”<sup>35</sup>

In other words, if God used man’s sin to glorify himself he would have to abandon all judgment. So in essence he is saying, “Don’t try to twist the gospel so you can discredit it. Of course, God hates sin and he must judge it.”

You see, the scribes and the Pharisees despised the gospel of grace because it undermined their system of works righteousness. It exposed their hypocrisy. And so they are relentlessly hounding Paul, especially with this false charge of Antinomianism.

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<sup>32</sup> Romans 3:5

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Romans 3:6.

## Jewish Privilege That Condemns

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Antinomianism is a total disregard for God's law. That is what they were claiming that he was teaching, that somehow he is teaching that, you know, our sin glorifies God.

And then Paul reiterates the false charge in verse seven, "But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner?"<sup>36</sup>

In other words, your charge is false, because, I, too, am judged by God to be a sinner.

And in verse eight he says, "And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say), 'Let us do evil that good may come'?"<sup>37</sup>

And he concludes by saying, "Their condemnation is just."<sup>38</sup>

In other words, those that teach this garbage, this blasphemy, deserve the condemnation that God will bring upon them. And we will see that later Paul will address this again in chapters five and six. There he will say in chapter six verse one, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be."<sup>39</sup>

So Paul wages war with these Jewish haters of the gospel and exposes to them that their privilege is, in fact, that which condemns them unless they repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear friends, don't take refuge in your religious works. Don't hide behind some of your ridiculous, fallacious arguments. All men stand condemned before God. And unless we repent and embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, we will perish in our sins. And that is ultimately where the apostle Paul is taking all of his readers.

And so may, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we be taken there as well and rejoice in the grace that is ours because of Christ, not because we were born into a Christian home, not because we even have a Bible and we even have a church to go to. Those are great advantages, but they don't save us. Only Christ saves us by our faith and by his grace.

Let's pray.

*Father, thank you for these truths. Again, cause them to bear much fruit in our lives. Give us understanding. And we pray especially for our Jewish friends, Lord, that you would be pleased to soften their hearts to the truth of the gospel that they might be saved. For your glory we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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<sup>36</sup> Romans 3:7.

<sup>37</sup> Romans 3:8.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Romans 6:1-2.

## Jewish Privilege That Condemns

Romans 3:1-8

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