

Romans 3:3-8 Can Unbelief Affect the Will of God?

Romans chapter 3 verses 1 through 8. Last week we spent time in verses 1 and 2. Reading again starting at verse 1, **What therefore is the advantage of the Jew? Or what is the profit or benefit of circumcision?** (verse 2) **Much according to every way. First, indeed, for that they were entrusted with the oracles or words of God.** (verse 3) **For what if some disbelieved?** That is how it is translated. **Does their unbelief make the faith of God of no effect?** Expecting the negative answer. No, it does not. Built right into the verse, you have your answer. (verse 4) **May it not happen! But let God become true, and every man a liar; according as it written, one of David's Psalms, "That You should be justified in Your words, and should overcome in Your judgement."** (verse 5) **And if our unrighteousness should commend the righteousness of God, what will we say? Is the God who is inflicting wrath unrighteous?** And expecting a negative answer. **I am speaking according to man.** So he is speaking foolishly, like a man would think. (verse 6) **May it not happen! Since how will God judge the world?** Verse 7, **For if the truth of God abounded in my lie for His glory, why yet am I also being judged as a sinner?** (verse 8) **And not according as we were slandered, or even according as some have affirmed us to say),** and he gives the quote, **that "We should do the evil things in order that the good things might come," of whom their judgment is just.**

As we begin Romans chapter 3. And, again, remember that Romans is The Constitution of the Christian Faith. Since chapter 1 at verse 18 all the way through now, up to the first part of chapter 3 we have been studying The Doctrine of Condemnation. The word *condemnation* is a judicial term that means *to have a sentence against you*. What Paul is proving is that every person right now stands with a sentence against them by God. The Gentiles stand guilty because God has witnessed through creation and has enlightened the spirit of the Gentile to know that there is a God if they choose to pursue it. If they choose not to pursue the enlightenment there is no excuse for them and God will deliver them over to corruption, even in this present life.

But starting with chapter 2 the Jewish person, the one who has been given and lives by the law, that Jewish person looks over at the corrupted Gentiles and they judge the Gentile as being a sinner. And as we have seen in all of our studies, we learned that to a Hebrew or Jewish person if you are not Jewish you are a sinner. Only a Hebrew or Jewish person is not considered to be a sinner in their eyes. They are God's chosen people. And if you are not Hebrew or Jewish you are called a sinner. So they are over on the other side judging the Gentiles because of their corrupt lifestyle and because the Gentiles are continuously in their lifestyle breaking the law of God.

But then starting with chapter 2 verse 2 Paul turns it on the Jewish or religious person as well, and says, "The same judgment that you are leveling against the Gentiles is the same judgment that is going to be leveled against you. Do you think you're going to escape? You are going to be judged according to the truth as well." That is why he said in chapter 2, he says, **You who teach the Law do you teach yourself?** The Jews said, "I do not need to live by it, I just need to proclaim it."

That is a deceptive religious part of sin nature, whether it is Jew or Gentile. Is that if you go by way of religion - automatically by holding a Bible, or reading a Bible, or proclaiming the Bible I am exempt. That is a false premise: I am exempt because I am telling you the salvation message. "It doesn't apply to me, I am already saved. I do not need to live by it. I am already saved. I live by grace not by law." So we have a way bewitching ourselves, taking the word from the first hour, that we are exempt.

So all through chapter 2 Paul is telling the Hebrew or Jewish person that both Jew and Gentile will be judged the same. No exemption for the Hebrew or Jewish person. As you study the Old Testament and the old covenant we learn that God did give the gospel to the Jews but He gave it to them to do two things. Number one, for their own realization of their need to receive Messiah and what He does for them on the cross. And secondly, that they would take that message to the world. Does it sound familiar? Because that is what we are doing.

Romans chapter 11 says because the Jewish people rejected their Messiah they cannot proclaim the gospel to the world. They have rejected the gospel. So God has taken the Gentiles and grafted us into the vine and we are now proclaiming the message that the Hebrew or Jewish person was supposed to do. And that does not make us anything special, we were grafted in. To serve the Lord is a privilege, an opportunity. Something that we were not originally called to do. We were called to hear the message and repent and receive Christ the Messiah and be saved. It is the Hebrew or Jewish people that been chosen to serve Him but they rejected Him so we are grafted in.

So at the last half of chapter 2 then the Jewish or Hebrew person would say, "Well we have participated in the sign of circumcision, it makes us children of the covenant." And the last two verses of chapter 2 Paul says, "Your circumcision means nothing unless you are circumcised of heart." Boy the ire of the Jew is not been raised to the highest levels. That is enough to make a Hebrew or Jewish person raging mad. To say that they are going to be judged the same way as a Gentile and that just possessing the law and studying the law does not give you any type of privilege at all. As a matter fact it makes you more responsible.

So the Hebrew and Jewish person is now, in their mind, they are responding to everything that he has said in chapter 2 in their mind. So Paul is imagining what the Hebrew person would say in response and he is answering those questions and those responses here in the first eight verses.

Verse 1, **What therefore is the advantage of the Jew? Or what is the profit or benefit of circumcision?** If being born Jewish and participating in the covenant sign of circumcision does not bring you salvation then what is the use, you know? What advantage is there? He says in verse 2, **Much in every way. First**, and foremost if not anything else, **they were entrusted with the oracles of God.** *Oracles*, **λόγια** (logia) is the diminutive form of **λόγος** (logos) for *word*. These are the individual statements and laws by God that have been given specifically to the Hebrew people. They were entrusted with the words of God. Now that is a great privilege. It does not guarantee them salvation, but they thought it did.

Remember last week in John chapter 5 verse 39 Jesus said, **You are searching the Scriptures and in them you think you have eternal life: but they are they which are testifying of Me.** I mean literally they presumed that by being in the Scriptures that they would have eternal life. There are accounts even in down through their history of Hebrew or Jewish people that believed that just by having the Tanak, which is the whole Old Testament or even the Torah, just the law portion of the Old Testament that just by having it in their house guaranteed them eternal life. Just by possessing it. And then others went as far as to study it and the more hours they put in for study, they thought the more they were eligible for eternal life.

And what Paul is saying is, "No, there is a great advantage to being Jewish, to being born a Jew." Your birth does not guarantee you eternal life. Your religious practice does not guarantee you eternal life. It is the response of your heart to the gospel. It is the response of your heart to the law. Because as you are going out and telling the Gentile he is guilty because he violates the law, he says, you as a Hebrew or Jewish person you are also violating the law. But they said, "That is fine but I am exempt." We will see at the end of this chapter, chapter 3 verse 20 that Paul says, **Through the law is the knowledge of sin.** That is what it was given for. It was never meant by God to keep the law so that you could get saved by keeping the law, because you cannot keep it.

In fact, when Jesus came - The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5, He presented a more complete interpretation of what the law was for. He says, **You have heard that it has been said by them of old time, "Thou shall not kill." But I say unto you if you have murder in your heart, anger in your heart towards your brother, you have killed him already.** So what He is saying is the Hebrew people only applied it socially to the outward religious man. But see, inside they were angry and hateful. That is why when Jesus came He says, "All the evil that we commit comes out of our heart, our spirit." That is where the human being needs the change. We need a new heart, a new change in spirit, because we are evil.

But the Jewish person says, "As long as I keep it outwardly, religiously, what I think in my mind and in my heart does not mean anything." Jesus said, "Oh yeah, because the Law was meant to convict you that you are a sinner." And the Jew said, "You are right. So we are going to go out and convict all those heathen sinners that they are sinner." But Paul says, "No, you too." It applies to everybody but the Hebrew person did not believe that.

To them were given the oracles of God. But then again as we said last week privilege, great privilege brings great responsibility. I hope you can see that we as non-Jewish people, we have the same sin nature as other human beings, Jewish or Gentile. We are all the same as far as our sin nature is concerned. Therefore we too can slip into that little religious rut, that mind frame, or frame of mind that says, "I am going to tell everybody else and I do not have to apply it to myself. All I have to do is proclaim it." That is just the opposite of what God's word says. **You who are teaching, do you teach yourself? You who are proclaiming the gospel to others, are you proclaiming it to yourself?** So basically, it was meant to be applied to them first and then to everybody else.

In verse 3 he discusses position. This is very interesting. Through these questions we get to understand the religious mind and specifically the mind of the Jewish person. The Jewish

person says, **For what if some disbelieved? Does their unbelief make the faith of God of no effect?** The attitude, interesting, the religious attitude amongst Jewish people is this: God would never give them a gospel that they would disbelieve. In other words, "We are God's chosen people if we do not agree with it, if we do not accept it, it probably is not from God." You see how they are centered around themselves. So they asked the question. First we had the privilege: "We have the privilege of having God's word, that makes us special." Paul says, "Only in responsibility."

What about positionally? "We are God's chosen people, so God would never give us a gospel that we would disbelieve." **Because if some disbelieved would it not make His faith and faithfulness of no effect?** And the answer is already found in the question. No, your disbelief would not make the faith of God of no effect.

Again, we have that same religious attitude that has been going on throughout the body of Christ, is that you as a human being control your own destiny. That you can tap into God's Spirit. You can make His Spirit do certain things. If life is not going for you in certain ways it is because you are not directing the Spirit and pushing the right buttons.

We know from Luke chapter 1, remember when the angel came to Zacharias and said, "Your wife Elizabeth is going to bear a son." And he says, "Well, you are going to have to show me a sign that tells me that what you are telling me is God's word, because we are both advanced in our ages and we cannot bear children." So the angel Gabriel says, "Because you have not believed my word, which will happen, you want a sign, you will be made silent and unable to speak until everything takes place." You see, his unbelief did not stop God's will. His unbelief did not stop God's work. None of us can. None of us can stop what God's Spirit does.

What the Bible does teach, though, is that we dictate to Him how He is going to get us there. We can submit and obey and go through the minimum struggle; or we can disobey like Zacharias and said, "Well, I am just not going to believe it is the word of God until He proves it." So the angel just says, "Okay, out of the way, bud." From the Greek word bud-eo. "Out of the way, bud, because God's Spirit wanted use you but because of your unbelief you can just sit there and watch. And watch God work and then when God is through working it will make you believe. But for right now you are silent and unable to speak." You see, his unbelief could not stop what God's will was, but he dictated to God what God had to do to him to get him to line up with His will.

It has never been taught in the Scriptures that unbelief is going to stop the work of God. That God cannot bless, or move in your life, or in your church until every single person in the church is on the same frequency, and everybody believes the same thing, and everybody is thinking positive. No.

Another classic example is Jonah in the Old Testament. One of my favorite stories. God says to Jonah, "You are going to Nineveh." Now, the Ninevites were enemies to Israel. "You go to Nineveh and you proclaim the gospel."

"Okay, which way is Nineveh?"

"Right out here. Just go up here and turn right."

"That's fine."

So he goes up and he turns left. He wants to go as far away as he can from the calling of God. Right? And I am sure God is just sitting there going [demonstrates shaking his head]. You are going to go, you know? You can rebel. You can run away from Me. And then God had circumstances set up so that what happens at the end of all of the things that he had to go through in running away from God's calling is that he was eventually spit up on the shore where he was supposed to go.

And even his attitude. Oh, I love his attitude. Because having the seaweed wrapped around his neck, and his skin is all white and scrunched up like a prune, and he is walking through the streets saying, "Repent." And everybody is going, "Oh, yeah! Sure! We will repent, no problem!" And then by time the whole city repents, then he gets mad at God, "I knew You were going to do that. I knew You were going to save them. What a bummer."

Great story to read if anybody tries to put the guilt trip on you and says, "Well, you know your negative attitude is really [bad], that is why God cannot do anything." God moved in spite of Jonah to show that God's faithfulness is greater than man's unbelief.

God can speak through a donkey if He wants to. I will not get into that. There is not anything that man can do or not do that would stop God. And yet there are teachings out there that make a human being the center such as the teaching, "If the human being does not believe, God cannot do anything." That does not stop God but it does not let us off the hook either. Like I say, we dictate to Him what He must do in our life to discipline us to get us to line up with His truth and His will, but it does not stop Him.

So he says, "No, disbelief" - in fact, verse 4 he says, **May it not happen!** The King James says, **God forbid.** Well, there is no word God in there, but in the Greek **μη γένοιτο** (*mē genoito*), *may it never* or *may it not happen* is the highest Greek expression of impossibility. It is impossible for man's unbelief to stop God's faithfulness.

But let God become true, and every man a liar. Now that I like. If people do not agree with the word of God, it is not God who is wrong. And until a believer comes to the point that they know that God's word is true word for word; and all other philosophies and all other opinions, they are lies. It is the only source of truth that we have in book form. If anything contradicts it, if anything opposes it, if anything challenges it, it is not the truth. **May God become true and every man a liar; according as it has been written.** He now quotes from Psalm 51:4. If Psalm 51 is not familiar to you, this is David's penitent Psalm as he repented before the Lord after committing adultery with Bathsheba. He says, **That You should be justified in Your words, and that You may overcome in Your judgement.** God is true, every man is a liar. God is the only one who is justified. God is the only one who is victorious in all of His judgments and in all of His words. And a person who is repenting that is exactly what they are going to acknowledge. God is justified in all that He does.

But then thirdly, in verse 5 the participation. Now the Jewish mind picks up from that question and says, "Okay, you blew up that philosophical approach, how about this one?" **And if our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God, what shall we say?** Paul is just kind of looking at this. **God who is inflicting wrath is not unrighteous, is He?** He says, **I am speaking according to man.** He is not unrighteous. **May it never happen! Since how will He judge the world?** If God is unrighteous He cannot judge anybody for being a sinner because His judgment is skewed.

So verse 7, the mind of the Jew says, **For if - catch this now, For if the truth of God abounded in my lie for His glory, why yet am I also being judged as a sinner?** What the Jewish person is saying then is, "Well, if we do have any effect on God and what God wants to do in His will; and if all we are, are sinners; and God's faithfulness is the only thing that makes the things of God happen and we are just like trash, then His righteousness is glorified in my sin. So that when I sin, I turn to Him and He is glorified through having mercy on me and righteousness. So the more I sin, the more He is glorified." How do you like that one? Just went from far left to far right. Why am I being judged a sinner if my sin gives Him the glory when He works? When God moves and fulfills His promises because He is faithful and I cannot cancel that out, and He is faithful to me as the sinner, why am I being judged for being wrong? I am making God look good. That is the religious mind, specifically, the Jewish mind.

He says, **And not according as we were slandered, and according as some say that we say.** Paul says, "There is a rumor going around." That some people say that if you want to glorify God and this is a quote at the end of verse 8, that **We should do the evil things in order that the good things should come.** The more evil you are, the more God's grace is upon you. The more miserable you are, the more God's Spirit is dominant in your life. So I guess Paul's gospel is that we should do evil things so that good things should come. The more evil I am, the more I experience the goodness of God and His mercy on me. Then he says, **Of whom the judgment is just.** The people who say such things - first of all, he says, we were blasphemed and some affirmed that we said that. We did not say it. Secondly, the people who go by that kind of approach and philosophy, the judgment for them is just. They get what they deserve. He did not feel like getting into it with them again anymore.

He is presenting how a Jewish mind would oppose the gospel of grace. And the fact that The Doctrine of Condemnation is for everyone. And as we get into the next section we start getting into the summary statements of this doctrine before we move into The Doctrine of Justification. But The Doctrine of Condemnation is that **All have sinned and come short of the glory of God;** Jew, Gentile, everybody. A person can be born into a Christian family, that does not make them saved. They too must repent and experience the spiritual birth in Jesus Christ.

Everybody has sinned, and that is The Doctrine of Condemnation. He has explained it both for the Gentile and for the Jew, that the Gentile is guilty because of their conscience and the Jew is guilty because of the law. Both stand without defense before the throne of God because all have sinned.

You can also probably see from this why a Hebrew or Jewish person does not want to receive Christ as the Messiah. Their privileged religious position in their own minds would be ruined. They would have to take the humble road and say, "You have no privileges other than responsibility because you were given the word of God, which makes you more responsible than anybody else on the face of the earth." But now we have been given the word of God. That makes us more responsible than any people on the face of the earth. Not only to represent the truth but to obey the truth. The same message is for us as it was for the Jews who rejected Christ. We have been given the oracles of God. It applies to us first and applies to others second. That is always the ways of God.

Let's close in prayer.