

The Advantage of Being Jewish, Part 2

Scripture: Romans 3:5-8

Code: 45-25

Romans chapter 3 is our passage for tonight. And we really got a good running start on this first eight verses last time, and we just want to kind of finish it up in our study tonight. And then we'll move on to the final section in the first part of Romans, which runs from verse 9 through verse 18, well down to verse 20, really. But just before Paul comes to his final summation, he is in chapter 3 presenting the objections that a Jew would raise to the indictment of the Jew that has been given in chapter 2 verse 17 to 29. Paul has just let the Jew know that neither his heritage from Abraham, nor his possession of the law and his law keeping, nor his circumcision and sign of the covenant will redeem him because he is a Jew who is one inwardly, it is a matter of the heart. And that's how chapter 2 ends.

Now the Jew immediately, and Paul knows this, would argue with him. And he would raise some objections so Paul acts out the dialogue in the first eight verses of chapter 3 with an imaginary Jewish antagonist. And he's used to this because the Jewish antagonist for Paul is not usually imaginary. He faces this kind of interaction repeatedly in his ministry. It is very common for him to have to respond to the Jew who hears his message and reacts rather violently. And so he puts arguments in this text that are very familiar to him.

Now Paul was very commonly accused of perverting the Scripture, twisting and perverting the Old Testament and Jewish law, doctrine and tradition. His message was Jesus Christ. His message was the new covenant. His message was grace. His message was the end of the ceremonial law. His message was the heart not the flesh. His message was freedom, not bondage. And he consistently attacked the traditions of the Jews. Their traditional self-righteousness, their traditional legalism was the object of much of what Paul said.

So, repeatedly they accused him of being a heretic, of speaking lies, of perverting the Word of God, of twisting the Scripture. In Matthew (note: this should be Acts, but John said Matthew) 21:28 when they found him in the temple in Jerusalem on one occasion, they said, "This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people and the law and this place." And it says, "He hath polluted this holy place."

Now in that passage they accused him of three things, speaking against the people, against the law and against this holy place. Now in one sense he did do that for he said, it is not enough to just be a Jew physically, he said it is not enough to try to keep the law and this place is not in fact any longer the holy place. And so he really did speak as they had accused him of speaking, but they pushed it

beyond.

In chapter 24 of Acts, let me take you to two verses, verses 5 and 6, and here is another occasion of accusation against Paul. "For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, or an irritant, a mover of sedition, a rabble rouser, among all the Jews throughout the world, a ring leader of the sect of the Nazarenes who hath gone about to profane the temple whom we took and would have judged according to our law." So they say that Paul is pestilent, seditious, a ring leader of an unacceptable and heretical sect and has gone about to profane or desecrate the holy place.

In the twentysixth chapter of Acts we find a couple of other verses that help us. It tells us here in Paul's rendering of his testimony to Agrippa that Paul himself admits to some of this conflict. He says, "I was not disobedient," in verse 19 of Acts 26, "to the heavenly vision," that is when he saw the Lord on the Damascus road, "but showed first unto them of Damascus and at Jerusalem and throughout all the borders of Judea and then to the Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God and do works fit for repentance. For these causes, the Jews caught me in the temple and went about to kill me." It was because he told them they were sinners, it was because he confronted them with a need to repent which in effect was saying your heritage and your tradition and your worship does not save you. You are lost and you must repent and you must turn to God and you must do works that manifest repentance and for this cause they caught me in the temple and set about to kill me.

So, this was a very common element in Paul's life. He created antagonism instantaneously among the Jews and you know if you've read the book of Acts at all that from place to place he went, he stirred up an uproar among the Jews. He would go, first of all, to their synagogue when he went into a new city and he would preach and there some would believe and some would become infuriated with him.

Now let me just show you another illustration of this same kind of reaction in the sixth chapter of Acts. And this in the case of a man named Stephen. But again it gives us a good insight into the kind of response that the preachers of the gospel received in these early years. In Acts chapter 6 verse 9, "There arose certain of the synagogue which is called the Synagogue of the Libertines and Cyrenians and Alexandrians and of them of Cilicia and Asia arguing with Stephen." Now Stephen was going again and preaching the same message Paul was preaching, he was preaching the gospel of grace, of liberty, freedom, and so forth. And the Jews in the synagogues of all of these different places began to argue with Stephen. They couldn't accept the fact that their heritage and their law and their circumcision did not save them. They could not accept the fact that their sacrificial observances could not redeem them, did not obligate God to bring them salvation. And so they argued. "And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke." They could not argue successfully, they couldn't win the debate with Stephen. "Then they suborned men who said, We've heard him speak blasphemous word against Moses and God." Now here is the epitome of their accusation, he is speaking against Moses and, of course, since God is behind the Mosaic Law and the temple and the

ceremonies and the sacrifices and circumcision and the Abrahamic promise, they are speaking against God. And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes and came upon him and caught him and brought him to the council. They set up false witnesses, they rigged his trial. It was strictly a rigged situation, just like the trial of our Lord. And they said, "This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words...here it comes again...against this holy place and the law for we have heard him say this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us." And I love that last verse, "And all that sat in the council looked steadfastly on him...that is Stephen...they saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."

Before it wall over, they murdered him. They stoned him to death. And one of the people who was there watching the stoning and perhaps involved was one named Saul who later became Paul and who would have suffered the very same fate that Stephen did.

Now this is not to be surprising to us because our Lord endured the very same thing as well. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself spoke against the Jews. He said, in effect, you're not even children of Abraham, you're children of your father the devil. He told them, "You search the Scriptures but the Scriptures are they which speak of Me," so you aren't even discovering their reality. Whether Jesus or Stephen or Paul, it was the very nature of the gospel that it went against the grain of traditional Judaism. And the Jews could not stand any attack on their Abrahamic security. They couldn't stand any attack on their perverted legalism because in their own minds they had affirmed their salvation on the basis of their heritage and their legalism and their circumcision. And Jesus and Stephen and Paul and the rest of the apostolic messengers were blowing that security to bits. And so they were very irate. And they murdered Jesus and they murdered Stephen and eventually even the Apostle Paul lost his life and many many others of the Apostles just as prior to our Lord they had murdered the prophets who came before Him. They never wanted to hear the truth. And when they were confronted about the inadequacies of these things, they were infuriated.

Now then, this is the common Jewish response to the preaching of the gospel in biblical times. It has mellowed somewhat today because Jews today don't adhere strictly to religion but if you were to bring these things before an orthodox or even a conservative Jew of some dedication and commitment, he would probably be just as irate. I shall never forget the occasion when Marty Wolfe came to me and we were just students in those days and he said, "John, I want you to come with me I'm going to go down and meet the rabbi of the largest temple in Hollywood area and I want to go because I want to see if we can talk to him about Christ." And he said, "He'll accept me because I'm Jewish and he knows my family and whatever." And I said, "Why do you want me?" He said, "I just think it will be interesting."

So, we went. And I'll never forget standing on the doorstep and looking at the little mezuzah that was stuck at the door, you know, binding the law on the doorpost. And we were greeted by his wife who took us through this house in Hollywood and way back to a study. We walked into the study and we

started with all of the little amenities of trying to be nice to each other and make some kind of a foundation on which to have a discussion. And, of course, after a few minutes, I said to him, "Ah, sir, what do you think of Jesus Christ?" I just figured it was the direct approach, might as well get on with it. And I'll never forget his reaction. His fist went up in the air and came down on the desk with full force so that everything on the desk just went up in the air and came down again. And his eyes became fiery and his lips curled up and he looked me in the eye and he said, "Young man, do not ever mention that name in my presence. What do you know about religion?"

Well, it was as straight an answer as was my question. But that mirrored something of the attitude that the Apostle Paul faced. So, go back to Romans 3. Paul's message to the Jew in Romans chapter 2 verses 17 to 29 would obviously infuriate him because he's just been told neither his Jewishness nor his tradition and law keeping nor his circumcision will save him from hell. And naturally he's going to react. So Paul acknowledges the typical objections, the typical reactions.

Now you say, "Well what in the world does this have to do with us?" Well, I grant you, that it's a very historic text and it deals very specifically with the Jew but I think for us it can be illustrated by the parallel today of religious people who think their religion is going to save them, even though they may not be Jewish. There are many people today who believe their religion is going to save them. They believe because they attend church or because they've been baptized or because they've done good deeds, or they've come from a religious heritage that that's going to save them. But it won't...it won't.

Now do you remember the objections? First of all, they basically overall say you can't teach that way, Paul, or you're attacking God. That's really what they accuse him of doing. You're attacking God three ways. One, you're attacking God's people, two, you're attacking God's promise and three, you're attacking God's purity. And they're right back to the same three things. He speaks against the people, he speaks against the law and he speaks against the holy place. Same basic three arguments as in Acts 21:28.

Now remember last time we said, first of all, they accuse him of attacking God's people. In verse 1 they say, "What advantage then hath a Jew?" Or what profit is there of circumcision? In other words, if heritage and law and the sign and all that is Jewishness if all that Jewishness doesn't save you, then what is the use of it? What is the advantage of it? And he answers them, "It has much advantage because unto the Jew is committed the Scriptures of God." The advantage in being a Jew is not that you're instantaneously saved by being Jewish but that because you're Jewish you have received the Scriptures which can lead you to salvation. God's care and protection and promises and covenants and adoption and land and Messiah and chiefly the Scriptures have been given to the Jews.

So, when they say "You're speaking against the people of God. I mean, if we're going to believe you then there's no advantage in being a Jew and God's calling out of the Jew was pointless, meaningless vanity...senseless. You're speaking against God's chosen people."

"No I'm not," he says. There's great advantage to being a Jew. And the advantage is to have the words of God, not that you're instantly saved just because of that but because you have what leads you to salvation.

Now, we could talk a lot about the authority of the Scripture, the marvelous meaningfulness of the Scripture that would be for another series. But just to point out to you that the statement in verse 2 "Unto them were committed the words of God," logia of God is a very important statement, people. It is one of the key verses in all discussion of biblical inerrancy and inspiration and authority because it says, in effect, that the Scriptures given to Israel were the very words of God. And don't let anyone deny that to you. The Old Testament includes and excludes anything but the words of God. In fact, 3,808 times Old Testament writers refer to their words as the very words of God. The Psalmist put it, "For ever, O Jehovah, Thy word is settled in heaven." And God said, "I have exalted My Word above My name." Jesus said of the Old Testament, John 10:35, "Scripture cannot be broken." And in Matthew chapter 5 He said, "Not one jot or tittle shall in any wise pass from this law till all be fulfilled."

So, they received the Word of God and it was to lead them to salvation. That was a great benefit. And they really never followed it to salvation. They never listened to what it said. As I quoted earlier, when the Lord says, "You search the Scripture but they are they which speak of Me." Here you are reading the Scripture and not discovering its main message. In Mark 12 a couple of verses come to mind. Verse 24, "Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God?" You err because you don't know the Scriptures. And He says, "Have you not read in the book of Moses..." don't you know even the basis of the Pentateuch? You see, their great advantage in being a Jew was having the law of God which they never bothered to really understand, or in many cases to even read.

There's another verse in Luke 16 where our Lord comments on this same thing. Do you remember when the rich man Lazarus died and the rich man said, "Let me go back and tell my brothers not to come to this place," because he was in torment? And he calls to Abraham and Abraham responds and says, he says I want to go tell my brothers, and Abraham says, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." In other words, they don't need to come to this place of burning, they don't need to come to this place of torment if they will but hear Moses and the prophets. And that is simply a statement comprehensively meant to refer to the Old Testament. If they would just listen to the Scripture they would know.

In 2 Timothy, perhaps the most comprehensive statement is made where Paul says this to Timothy. "From a child, thou hast known...listen to this phrase...the holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto...what?...salvation." The Scripture was given to make men wise unto salvation. In Psalm 19:7 it says, "The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul." So the advantage to having the law was that the law of God would lead them to salvation. And then from salvation to all of the

fullness of blessing within salvation. Jeremiah said, "Thy words were found and I did eat them and their word was in me, the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Psalm 19 verse 8 says that the Word creates rejoicing in the heart. Psalm 19 verse 7 says it makes wise the simple. The same Psalm, verse 8 says it enlightens the eye. Verse 10 says, "Therefore the law of God is more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb and in keeping of them there is great reward."

So, the law of God was given them to lead them to salvation and all its attendant blessings. That's a great advantage. That is an inestimable advantage. So, you see, Paul is not attacking God's people, he is not denigrating the quality of being Jewish, he is not saying there's something less, he is saying there's something more, something marvelous, the special place of God's people is not that they are exempt from God's judgment but rather that they have the Word to lead them to salvation. That's their advantage. And if a Jew in any age, that age or this age, rejects the Scripture that God has given him, then he loses his advantage and in fact he is at greater disadvantage for having ignored that which God provided.

And I would parallel it by saying this is the only advantage to the church today. The advantage to being in the church is not that if you're in the church you're saved, not at all. The Roman Catholic Church has tried to teach that through the centuries that you're saved by the church, but that is not the case. Faith comes by hearing, it says in Romans 10, a speech about Jesus Christ. Faith comes by believing in Christ, by receiving Christ. Faith comes by the Word of God. It does not come through the church as such and the only advantage to being in the church is to be where the Word of God is being taught. And if there is one place that calls itself a church and doesn't do that, it is forfeited its only purpose for existence.

Now let's look at the second objection. The second thing they're going to say in verses 3 and 4 is that you're attacking the promises of God. You're not only attacking the people of God by saying being Jewish doesn't save us, but you're attacking the promise of God because God promised to redeem His people, He promised His people a Kingdom, He promised a nation and so forth. And so they say in verse 3, "What if some did not believe..." so what if you have some rebels, some unbelieving Jews, "Shall their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?" In other words, if God is not going to grant salvation to His people based on their heritage, their law and circumcision, then He's unfaithful to His covenant as they perceive it. Therefore because a few Jews were unfaithful, God is unfaithful. So they're saying, "Paul, if you say what you say, then you're saying God breaks God's promises." So they accuse Paul not only of attacking God's people but God's promises.

Now Paul has just said you have a great advantage in having the Word of God but it's no advantage at all if you don't obey it. And so they simply would respond by saying, "Well okay, if we don't obey the law does that mean God forfeits all of His promises? Then God doesn't keep His Word? You've just attacked His faithfulness."

No, no, no, verse 4 Paul says, "No, no, no, no, me genoito, God forbid, let it never be, can't happen, it's impossible." Even if every man in the world spoke against God, God would still be true and every man a liar. And then he quotes from Psalm 51 where David said that God is justified in His sayings and when someone tries to judge God, He will always overcome their judgment. In other words, God is always to be vindicated. God is always to be exalted. God is always to be justified, always to be honored, always to be vindicated. God has integrity. We must never impugn God, He will always and ultimately keep His Word in spite of their unfaithfulness.

You say, "Well wait a minute. If the Messiah turned His back on Israel, if the Messiah said no to them because they rejected Him and if He turned to the Gentiles and turned to the church, then aren't they right, isn't this argument valid, did not God break His covenant with Israel? No. He just postponed it. And that is going to be made clear to us in Romans chapters 9, 10 and 11. There is a day coming, beloved, when God will bring back the nation Israel to redemption. He has to do that or this criticism would be valid of Him that because a few of them didn't believe, He became faithless and untrustworthy. That is, I think, the great error of covenant theology that it ultimately makes the Jews argument correct. If God did permanently set aside Israel and there's no future for Israel, then this argument is right. He did break His promise. But believe me, Paul says, "No, no, no, no, no, no...no God is true if every man in the world is a liar and God will be justified and God will be vindicated." And he doesn't go into when or how but he will in chapters 9, 10 and 11. And we're still looking for that day in the future. And in case you're worried about whether it will happen or not, just keep in mind that the Jewish nation still exists in tact and they're gathered in their land right on prophetic schedule...awaiting this ultimate fulfillment of God's covenant. And it will happen, says Zechariah, when they look on Him whom they have pierced and they mourn for Him as an only son. And then will God open a fountain of salvation to the nation of Israel. And Romans 11 says at that time all Israel will be...what?...saved. But God is not unfaithful.

So, the Jew will argue then that there's no advantage to God's people. You're speaking against God's people. He says, "No, no, they have a great advantage, they have the Word of God to lead them to salvation." But God doesn't keep His Word. Oh yes He does keep His Word and you know He does because your own greatest Jew who ever lived, David, said God will always be justified and vindicated no matter who speaks against Him.

Now that leads him to the third objection. And watch this, I've got to set it up for you a little bit as we hit verse 5. God is glorified in spite of the sins of Israel. Their unfaithfulness does not make God unfaithful. In fact, by contrast it will reveal His great faithfulness. God will be glorified even in the midst of their unbelief and in the midst of their sin. God, it says at the end of verse 4, will overcome, even when He is condemned...or when He is impugned. God will be justified. And the idea here is that in the midst of the sinfulness of men and the unbelief of Israel, God will still be glorified. In the midst of men's unfaithfulness, His faithfulness will stand out by contrast. Men are unfaithful but God is not.

Now...well, follow this reasoning, and this is really the reasoning in Paul's mind between verses 4 and 5.

This is the thinking then of the antagonist. And Paul knows it. Okay, if Israel's sin does not void God's promise but only makes God's faithfulness more glorious by contrast...you contrast unfaithfulness with faithfulness and faithfulness looks real good. I mean, when you go into a jewelry store to buy a ring or a necklace and they take it out of the cabinet and they bring it up to place it so that you can see it on top of that glass counter, have you ever noticed what they put the gold upon? What is it they put it on? Velvet...what color? Black. Why? Because it makes the gold look so much more beautiful. If they put it on a white background, or a beige background or a gold background, it wouldn't make the point. But always on a black one. And in a very real sense, you see, that's exactly what's going on here. The argument is going to be, "All right, if our black velvet unfaithfulness gives greater glory to God's faithfulness, then our sin gives God glory. And if that's true, then Paul, you've just spoken against the purity of God."

You see, this was the heart and soul of the message of grace that in our sin God forgives us and gains glory because of His forgiveness. And so they would accuse Paul of saying, "Well sin, then, gives God glory. And if you're teaching that, they're violating God's pure nature." So that's objection number three, you're attacking God's purity. If our sin makes His holiness stand out by contrast, makes His righteousness stand out by contrast, then you're saying sin glorifies God and you have attacked the holy nature of God.

Now I want to kind of help through verses 5 to 8 because it's the difficult part of the passage, so stay with me and I think you'll see it clearly. Verse 5, the end of the verse, and we'll jump around and just pick up the pieces and put it together. Sometimes Hebrew reasoning is not quite like ours so we'll see if we can get the message. The end of verse 5 is a little parenthesis and I just give that to you so you'll set it in your mind to begin with, "I speak as a man." Now what Paul is doing here is saying I'm giving a typical human logic, I'm reasoning as men might reason. And he puts that in just so nobody will think this is good reasoning. This is typically depraved human thinking. A man would argue like this, but it is such a blasphemous argument that Paul wants no one to think in anyway it reflects righteous reasoning. So this is just basic human reason, the empty reasoning of an evil man.

If God triumphs in the midst of my sin, if His faithfulness shines against my unfaithfulness...in other words, if the unfaithfulness of Israel only by contrast shows the faithfulness of God, then how can God ever punish me for giving Him such a wonderful opportunity to show His glory? Look at verse 5, "If our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?" In other words, would it be fair for God to take vengeance on people who give Him an opportunity to display His glory?

I can understand why a man would reason like that because typically men want to justify their sin anyway, don't they? And what a marvelous justification this would be. O my, you see, I sin because when I sin God forgives and when God forgives He gets glory because forgiveness manifests His glory. Or when I sin it gives God a marvelous opportunity to demonstrate His grace. When I sin it gives God a marvelous opportunity to show His love and His mercy, therefore I sin so God can put Himself on display. How could God take vengeance on someone who had such a good purpose?

Now do you know why he said I speak as a man? Typical human rationalization. So they're really saying, "Paul, this is what you're doing. You're taking a direct attack at the holiness of God by making sin a way to glorify God and thus creating antinomianism which means an antilaw view." See, they were legalists. They were hardlined legal...you never met a legalist like a Pharisee, never. I mean, even a right wing fundamentalist of the cultic order doesn't come close to a Pharisee. And for someone to come along and talk about grace and forgiveness and mercy and freedom, naturally they're going to say, "Boy, that is antinomianism, that is lawlessness. And where you're saying that no, your unfaithfulness just gives God's faithfulness that much more grandeur, they're going to accuse you of attacking the purity of God."

Now go down to verse 7 and you'll see the very same idea just in different terms. "For if the truth of God," or you could say the truth about God, "hath more abounded through my lie unto His glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner?" Now think about that. In other words, if I lie...as an illustration...but by contrast to my lie the truthfulness of God stands out, haven't I done a good thing? Haven't I done a wonderful thing? What are you going to judge me as a sinner for?

In other words, Paul, you're saying they're no sinners because the worse you are the better the contrast. Did you ever think these thoughts through? Well this is their reasoning. How can I be seen as a sinner when I'm just doing such a good thing for God?

What's Paul's response? Well back up to verse 6, here we go again, "No, no, no, no, no, me genoito, no way, can't be, impossible, you can't have that kind of thinking, it just can't be." Now drop down to verse 8, and they would continue their little argument here kind of, "Why am I judged a sinner," verse 7 says, "and not...and we'll skip the little parenthesis...rather let us do evil that good may come." In other words, they're saying, "Look, Paul, if I follow your theology then all my sin just gives glory to God and so my model for life is going to be, let us do evil that good may come." I mean, let's really put God on display. The more wretched we are, the more lovely He looks. The more sinful we are, the more gracious He appears. The more faithless we are, the more faithful He will be. The more we lie, the more His truthfulness will be made clear. So, our motto for life is let us do evil that good may come.

And you want to know something? This is not a hypothetical accusation, it's a real one. Look at the parenthesis in verse 8. And by the way, in the Greek rendering, I think that parenthesis is correct. He says this is not hypothetical, "For we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say, let us do evil that good may come." In other words, they had actually accused him of this. They have said your gospel of grace and your gospel of mercy and your gospel of forgiveness and of freedom, is license, it is license to sin. It speaks against the holiness of God.

Now, of course, we would expect legalists to attack the gospel of grace, the gospel of freedom. So Paul's imaginary Jewish accuser says he is attacking the purity and the holiness of God by saying sin only manifests God's holiness by contrast, this teaches then that sin is a way to bring God glory. And listen carefully now, if sin is another way to bring God glory then there's no such thing as sin. You got it? And if there's no such thing as sin, then how can I be judged a sinner?

Now let me show you a comparison in the sixth chapter of Romans. Chapter 6, now I want to take you back from chapter 6 to the twentieth and twentyfirst verses of chapter 5. And here Paul says the law entered that the offense might abound. In other words, when the law came in we knew we were breaking the rules. The law made it abundantly clear that we were sinful. But where sin abounded grace...what?...did much more abound. Now in order to have grace you have to have...what?...sin. You don't need grace if there's no sin, right? So wherever sin abounded, grace abounded. Isn't that a wonderful thing? But that would just literally infuriate a Jew. The more sin, the more grace. So immediately Paul picks out that response in verse 1 of chapter 6. What should be our response then? If the more sin, the more grace, what do we say? "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" What's the answer? Here we are again, "No, no, no, no, no, God forbid, it can't happen, never will be, no, no, because we are dead to sin," or better, we have died to sin. "How shall we live any longer in it?"

Now we'll get into the argument in its detail when we get to chapter 6, go back to chapter 3, I just wanted you to see the parallel. In Romans 4:5 Paul says that God justifies the ungodly. And He does it with delight. If that is true, if my sin manifests God's glory, if God delights in justifying the ungodly, if the more sin, the more grace, then let us do evil that good may come, ungodliness then becomes a virtue. Now this kind of thinking would put a high premium on sin and that's exactly what they accuse Paul of doing.

Now may I add that I think they probably had some reason to accuse Paul because there may have been some people under the name of Christianity who were doing this. That's right, who were teaching a libertine position. It's not uncommon in our own day. Did you know that? There's one current Christian author that I read who said this, "God is happy when you sin because it gives Him an opportunity to exercise His forgiveness." That's contemporary. And there were some contemporaries of Paul who had taken this teaching of grace and pushed it to license. Illustration, Jude verse 4, next to the last book in the New Testament, right before Revelation and look at it there.

Jude is all about false prophets and false teachers and apostates. But there's one interesting note in verse 4 there, these are the apostates, the false teachers who have infiltrated the church. And their doom has been predicted, it says in verse 4, "Certain men crept in unawares who were before of old prewritten...the word ordained means prewritten...to condemnation." In other words, they're already doomed. Their doom has been predicted. And here is their character. They are ungodly men. That is they lack holiness, that's their character, they lack holiness, they lack reference for God, they lack purity even though they may appear in a preacher's robe and use Scripture. They are ungodly men. And here's what they do, here's their conduct. "They turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness," that means gross immorality. They turn grace into license, do you see it?

So I think that the reason they accuse Paul of this may have been even intensified by the fact that there were some who abused this reality. There were those who turned grace into immorality in the name of Christianity. And what they were really doing, if you look at the end of verse 4, is they were denying the lordship of Christ. Now there's the key, beloved, listen. When you become a Christian, that isn't license to sin and be forgiven. When you become a Christian you come under the lordship of Christ and you become desirous above all things of obeying His lordship. And so these were guilty of twisting, turning grace into gross immorality. There were antinomians, there were libertines, they may be in 1 Corinthians 5 where you have the people in the church there. In one case a man having sexual relationship with his father's wife and you have all the rotten filth of the Corinthian assembly. They may have been infiltrated by these who turned grace into lasciviousness. Some Gnostics who held a dualistic view did that.

And by the way, there are some people today in our contemporary society who teach what's called the two natures of you, that you as a Christian have an old nature and a new nature. You heard that view? And your old nature fights against your new nature. That's not a New Testament view, as we shall see when we get later into Romans. You're really one new person, but some teach you're two people. This is common. And these two natures fight against each other and that when you do right it's your new nature, and when you do wrong it's your old nature. Now watch this, here's the ultimate reasoning. When you do wrong it is your old nature. So you're not responsible for that, it's your old nature. What else would you expect it to do? So there should be no discipline, no chastisement because it's only your old nature not really your new one. And after all, you can't change your old nature, that has to happen when you die. You see, that kind of dualism is a convenient place to put your sin and tolerate it.

And so, there were these people who denied the lordship. And by the way, the word "Lord" as it first appears in Jude 4 is despotes, it's the word that means an absolute sovereign. They were denying the absolute sovereignty of Christ in their life, calling them to holiness and they turned grace into lasciviousness. Now go back to Romans 3 again and we'll wrap it up.

So, Paul, if you teach this kind of thing that when we don't believe and when we're unfaithful, God remains faithful and God is even seen as more faithful by contrast than you're making our sin glorify God and you're striking a blow at His holiness by saying sin glorifies God. And Paul's answer now, back again to verse 6, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no." Why? "For then how shall God judge the world?" Now there's one thing a Jew knew. If he didn't know anything else he knew this. God would judge the world. Genesis 18:25, "God is the judge of all the earth." Psalm 94:2, "God is the judge of all the earth." Psalm 50 verse 6, "God is judge Himself." Psalm 58 verse 11, "He is judge that judgeth in the earth," and on and on and on, all over the place in the Old Testament. They knew one thing, God would be the judge.

But, if all sin glorified God then there would be nothing for God to judge. Right? So he is saying it can't be that that can't be, it can't be because that would make God not God for God is the judge. And if there's nothing to judge, then God has nothing to do. All morality and all order and all justice and all right and all wrong and all religion would be annihilated, there would be no right and no wrong, no values, no nothing. Nothing for God to judge but God said He'd be the judge so there is sin and there is righteousness. So Paul says I am not advocating an obliteration of all sin which would strike a blow at the holiness of God.

And then he gives a second reason, I think, at the end of verse 8 in this little phrase, "Whose condemnation is just." There are some people who deserve to get judged. Who are they? They're the people who say, "Let us do evil that good may come." Quite the contrary, he says. Not only do I believe that there is sin which God will judge because He is the judge, and if He's the judge He has to have something to judge, but I believe one of the very sins He'll judge is the sin of lawlessness. So not only do I not teach it, but I think that's one that God Himself will judge. So the beloved Apostle Paul has taken care of their arguments. He does not speak against the people. They have a great advantage in the law of God. He does not speak against the promises, God will be faithful if all the world is unfaithful. And He is not speaking against the holiness of God, the purity of God when he speaks of grace and forgiveness and mercy and freedom because God must judge because He is the judge. And one of the things He will judge is that attitude that says I will sin because it glorifies God.

And so, all men are rendered guilty. All arguments are silenced. The pagan man, Paul finished him off in chapter 1. The moral man, in the first part of chapter 2. And the Jew in the last of chapter 2. And now he answers all his arguments. God's people have a great advantage, they have the Scriptures. God's promises are valid, the character of God demands it. God's purity is in tack, the function of God's judgment and the evil sin of man reveals it. So he's not speaking against God.

Now, let me just close, if I can, by making an application. God sets a whole nation of people before the tribunal, as it were, in Romans 2 and 3, the Jews. And he says all of your religious accretments(?), all of your religious activities, all of your religious artifacts, all of your religious ceremonies and customs and traditions add up to nothing if it isn't in your heart. Verse 29 of chapter

2, it's got to be in your heart. And I believe that is the single most important issue facing the church in the world today. Our message to people is simply this, you must know God intimately, personally through Christ in your own heart and, believe me, the churches of America and the religions of the world are jammed full of people who are counting on the system to be their salvation. And it is not...it is not. In fact, it will damn them to a deeper damnation because many of them sit in the place where they have the advantage of the Scripture and they reject it. If you are depending on anything, anything other than a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, you're lost...you're lost. The only advantage you have in being in the church is the Scripture.

And that's why I tell people so often, if you're sitting some place in a church where they do not teach the Scripture, you've got no advantage at all. You might as well get out of there because that's all the church can offer you. It cannot redeem you by its organization or its ceremony. And the saddest example of wasted privilege was Israel. And the parallel is today, the people who sit in the church lost...lost. It's a crime against privilege and against opportunity.

Listen to this written years ago by J.A. Alexander and I'll close.

"There is a time, we know not when, a point we know not where marks the destiny of men to glory or despair.

There is a line by us unseen that crosses every path, the hidden boundary between God's patience and His wrath.

To pass that limit is to die, to die is if by stealth, it does not quench the beaming eye nor pale the glow of health.

The conscience may be still at ease, the spirit light and gay, that which is pleasing still may please and care be thrust away.

O where is this mysterious born by which our path is crossed, beyond which God Himself hath sworn that he who goes is lost?

How far may we go on in sin, how long will God forbear, where does hope end and where begin the confines of despair?

An answer from the skies is sent, ye that from God depart, while it is called today repent, and harden not your heart."

He was calling us to an awareness that there's a line out there somewhere and you may cross it and not even know it, and it's the line between God's patience and His wrath and you've stepped over and you're lost. You can cross that so easily sitting in the church and rejecting the Christ the Scriptures

teach. That was the folly of Israel and many fools have followed in their trade. Let's bow in prayer.

Just for a moment as you quiet your heart before God in the closing few seconds of our time tonight, look into your own heart. Ask yourself a very simple question...do I know Jesus Christ personally? Am I depending on religious formalities or ceremonies or activities being in the church to save me? In some cases am I depending on my Jewishness to exempt me from God's judgment? If you are, you're deceived. These things cannot save you, only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can you be redeemed. And that does not attack God's nature in any way. There is still advantage to being a Jew and being in the church, the Word of God. And God is still faithful to all of His covenants and promises and will fulfill them some day when hearts turn to Him. And because God triumphs over and receives glory in spite of your sin is no excuse for your sin. What you must do is follow the path of the Scripture to Christ, give Him your life. If you have any question, do it right now in your heart, just pray and invite Jesus Christ to be the Lord of your life.

Father, we pray tonight that no one would leave this place who has not confessed Jesus as Lord, believed in their heart that You have raised Him from the dead and thus been saved. That no one would leave and step across that line between Your patience and Your wrath but that today while it is day they would repent. Do Your work in every heart, dear Father. Amen.

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