

# WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO CONVINCE YOU?

Romans 3:1-8

I liked my step-grandfather Curley. He was a genuine cowboy, butcher and incredible cook. Curley liked us grandkids. He enjoyed coming to our choir concerts at church. After one such concert through which the Gospel was clearly declared, I asked Curley if he was ready to trust in Jesus as his savior. I'll never forget his answer. "All my friends are in hell so that's where I want to go." I didn't know how to respond in the moment. After thinking about it I realized the fallacy of his thinking. If he could speak to his friends then in hell, what would they tell him to do? TRUST CHRIST!! DON'T COME HERE!! WE'RE NOT ENJOYING FRIENDSHIPS IN THIS TERRIBLE PLACE.

Curley thought he had a valid reason for rejecting the Gospel but his reasoning was faulty because it does not line up with reality. Our passage today takes us deeper into the Jewish mind and its reasons for rejecting the Gospel.

Unbelieving Jews have already been condemned by Paul in chapters 1 and 2. Paul taught that all humanity is under God's wrath because of our refusal to acknowledge the evidence of God's "eternal power and divine nature," that is clearly seen through His creation. God's present wrath is expressed in that God gave humanity over to various forms of sin (1:18-32). The Jews were even more guilty than the Gentiles, because they had been given the Law, the revelation of God's character and of His standards for man's conduct. They professed to adhere to this Law, teaching and judging others by it, but they did not practice it themselves (2:1-24). Paul's ultimate point is that both unbelieving Jews and unbelieving Gentiles need the Gospel because they are under God's wrath.

Having preached the Gospel in numerous Jewish synagogues, Paul was well acquainted with Jewish counter arguments. Romans 3:1-8 is cast as an exchange between Paul and a Jewish antagonist whom I've named "Judah". Judah begins by suggesting that if Jews are sinners just like the Gentiles, then there is no value in being Jewish.

JUDAH: "Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?"

"What good does it do me to be a Jew? If circumcision is of no value and a Gentile can be looked upon by God as a 'Jew in heart,' why should a Jew feel blessed to be a Jew?"

PAUL: "Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God."

The Old Testament Scriptures were God's very words. They reveal the perfections of God's character. They reveal God's unique relationship to the Jews. They contain God's purposes and promises of His blessing for His people. They define sin and its consequences, as well as righteousness and its rewards.

PAUL: "What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?"

If the Jews are "sinners" like the Gentiles, will God's purposes and promises to the Jews be nullified by the sins of some?

PAUL: "By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, '*That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.*'"

The fulfillment of God's unconditional promises to the Jews does not depend upon the faithfulness/obedience of the Jews, but the integrity of God. God keeps His promises. God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promises includes not only His promised blessings but also His promised judgment. Paul demonstrates this by quoting Psalm 51:4 from King David's confession of his sins against Uriah and Bathsheba. Unlike the Jews whom Paul is confronting, David acknowledged that God was right and just in His judgment of his sins.

Paul affirms the value of being a Jew in two ways. First, the Jews were entrusted with God's Word. Second, the Jews will receive the blessings promised them by God despite their unfaithfulness because it

depends upon God's faithfulness alone. In other words, they are going to receive both the promises and judgments of God because God always does what He says He is going to do whether we believe Him or not.

### **I. GOD ALWAYS DOES WHAT HE SAYS HE IS GOING TO DO WHETHER WE BELIEVE HIM OR NOT (3:1-4).**

The promises of God's Word are not dependent upon our obedience but upon His faithfulness. God can be trusted to be true to His Word, even though every man is a liar. God is not done with the Jews, with the nation of Israel. The promises of the Abrahamic Covenant, the Land, the Seed and the Blessing, are unconditional promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants. As this passage declares, the unbelief of the Jews will not nullify God's faithfulness to fulfill His covenant promises to the nation of Israel. We reject Replacement Theology which teaches that the Church has replaced Israel in God's program. Consider Paul's clear statement in Romans 11:1-2:

Romans 11:1-2 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. <sup>2</sup> God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.

Later, in the same chapter Paul declares:

Romans 11:25-29 (ESV)

<sup>25</sup> Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. <sup>26</sup> And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written,

“The Deliverer will come from Zion,  
he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”;  
<sup>27</sup> “and this will be my covenant with them  
when I take away their sins.”

<sup>28</sup> As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. <sup>29</sup> For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

This is not an unimportant truth as many churches teach; this has to do with God's character, His integrity. God does not lie. God does not break His promises. Even when His people are faithless He is faithful.

Just as God will be faithful in fulfilling His promises of restoration and blessing to the Jews, so also He will be faithful to fulfill His promises to us in Christ. What are some of those promises?

Romans 8:1 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:23 (ESV)

<sup>23</sup> And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Romans 8:28-29 (ESV)

<sup>28</sup> And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Romans 8:35, 38-39 (ESV)

<sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

<sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We should rejoice in God's faithfulness. God's faithfulness should not lead to complacency in our relationship with Him, but inspire us to greater faith, obedience and service. As we observed in 3:4, Paul quotes Psalm 51:4, David's confession of his sins in committing adultery with Bathsheba and murdering Uriah her husband. Paul did so to make the point that God's faithfulness includes His faithfulness to judge

the sins of His people. David accepted God's judgment as just and repented. In the same way, the unbelieving Jews should accept the fact that they are rightly under God's wrath and they should the Gospel message that Jesus is the Messiah and Savior.

Unfortunately verses 5-8 reveal the depth of Jewish opposition to Paul's message. Verses 5-8 likely reflect Jewish counter arguments Paul had encountered over the course of his three missionary journeys.

JUDAH: "But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.)

"How can a righteous God punish men for their sin if He benefits from their unrighteousness?" The "badness" of man's sin makes God's righteousness look better by contrast.

PAUL: "By no means! For then how could God judge the world?"

If God could not righteously judge men for their sin because He benefited from it, then He could not judge anyone. This goes much further than the self-righteous Jew intended. These Jews delighted in judging and condemning the Gentiles as sinners. They would also delight in seeing God execute His divine wrath upon them. They wanted God to judge the Gentile world and to overlook their own sins. By pointing out that the premise of his questioners would eliminate all judgment, Paul took the wind out of their sails.

JUDAH: "But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner?"

"If my lie does demonstrate the truthfulness of God, then God has gained and (it would seem) my sin has been beneficial to Him." The questioner seems to be saying, "Why does God (as you represent Him, Paul) have the nerve to judge me, after all the good I have done Him?" Imagine it, the sinner seems to be expecting a pat on the back and a word of thanks, rather than the death penalty!

PAUL: "And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

The error of his Jewish opponents would lead them to ask this question, "If a little sin benefits God, why not benefit Him even more with an abundance of sin?" Why not make sin a lifestyle, and why not encourage others to join in? This was precisely where the thinking of Paul's opponents led. Paul has but one answer. It was an answer with which his opponent should agree: "The condemnation of those who would advocate this is just indeed."

In rebutting their arguments, Paul demonstrates there is no way out; Jews and Gentiles alike are under God's wrath and in need of the Gospel.

## **II. THERE IS NO WAY OUT, WE ARE ALL UNDER GOD'S WRATH AND NEED THE GOSPEL (3:5-8).**

The unbelieving Jews were eager to judge the Gentiles and to condemn them as sinners (2:1). In so doing, they condemned themselves, because they failed to live according to the standard by which they had judged others (2:1-29). When it became evident that they too were condemned as sinners, the unbelieving Jews (unlike David) refused to repent. Here in Romans 3:1-8 they did not attempt to deny their sin, but defend it. Rather than submitting themselves to God's judgment they put God on trial for judging them! Is there any doubt that the Jews, like the Gentiles, are sinners under God's wrath and desperately in need of the Gospel?

How much better it would be for the unbelieving Jews to follow the example of their beloved King David and accept God's judgment as true and right and in humility seek His forgiveness. They would discover His grace and forgiveness in Jesus.

How about you?

Have you accepted the fact that you are under God's wrath and trusted in Jesus for salvation?

If not, why not? Are you believing that somehow you are exempt from God's judgment? Stop fighting God. Give up such notions. Accept His judgment as right and true and in humility seek His forgiveness. Trust the fact that Jesus suffered God's wrath on the cross for you; to pay the penalty for all your sin. This is how much God loves you. Stop fighting Him. Receive His love today!

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**QUESTION:**

Are there historical and contemporary events that would seem to reinforce the biblical truth that God will fulfill His promises to the nation of Israel?

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**NEXT WEEK:** Bruce Malone – author, *Have You Considered*.