

Study in Romans

Doctrine > Bad News > God's Faithfulness to Judge

Romans 3:1-8

God's Faithfulness to Judge the World

In chapter one, Paul dealt with the bad news for the hedonist who begins suffering God's temporal wrath, the consequences suffered in this life on earth where God turns them over to the conflict of broken relationships with Himself, with other people, with creation, and with their own bodies and minds.

In chapter two, Paul has turned his attention to the moralist to point out how he/she is storing up for himself/herself the eternal wrath of God to be revealed on Judgement Day. Paul takes twice as many words to uncover the fact that the moralist, who trusts in his own good works, but fails to understand that God's focus is on the intension of the heart, not the outward appearance of the works, is in many ways worse off than those they teach because they are blind to their own wretched condition before God.

Before Paul delivers his closing statement on the bad news of man's condition under the judgement of God in 3:9-20, he takes a moment to answer a series of questions that might arise in the minds of his audience at this point as he deconstructs all that they have come to believe about being a worshiper of the True God: What advantage, if any, does the moralist have? Certainly his/her good works and knowledge of sacred Scripture counts for something, right? Why even be a follower of God's Word at all? Is God proving to be a condoner of sin?

1. Question #1 (v. 1): What value is there in being a Jew or in the sign of circumcision?
2. Answer #1 (v. 2): Paul anticipates his Jewish reader's thoughts that there's no use in being Jewish. This is not the case as they have not only all the revelation of God in creation and in the conscience as the Gentiles do, but also the OT Scriptures which supply specifics about God's will and way of salvation. (He is going to have a lot more say about this in chapter nine.)
3. Question #2 (v. 3): Does the Gospel nullify God's promises to Israel?
4. Answer #2 (v. 4): Just because some Jews are unfaithful does not mean God will bail on His promises. The OT quote is from Psalm 51:4, the great prayer of confession by David following his sin with Bathsheba.
5. Question #3 (v. 5): Does the Gospel nullify God's justice?
6. Answer #3 (v. 6): This is a self-refuting question borne more from the emotion of Paul's deconstruction of the Jewish/moralist view of himself than of logic. If God is unjust in bringing wrath, than He is unfit to judge the world because He Himself would then be exercising something other than justice. In other words, God's judgement of the world is, BY DEFINITION, justice.
7. Question #4 (v. 7): If God is glorified by my sin, shouldn't I bring Him glory by sinning more?
8. Answer #4 (v. 8): This last question is not a genuine question, but a bitter rebuke of Paul's Gospel message. Paul does not answer this directly because it is understood to be a sarcastic and false attack on him and his ministry. Instead he replies by referring to God's justice again in judging such people who blaspheme the Holy Spirit in this way.