



The Epistle to the Romans

Lesson Number 8



GOD'S JUDGMENT IS JUST

^{3:1} What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? ² Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God. ³ For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? ⁴ Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged." ⁵ But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.) ⁶ Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world? ⁷ For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner? ⁸ And why not say, "Let us do evil that good may come"?; as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.

(Romans 3:1-8^{NKJV})

INTRODUCTION

LESSON OUTLINE

- I. IS THEIR JEWISH ADVANTAGE? (3:1-2)
- II. SOME DID NOT BELIEVE (3:3)
- III. LET GOD BE TRUE (3:4)
- IV. OUR UNRIGHTEOUSNESS DEMONSTRATES GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS (3:5-6)
- V. TRUTH INCREASED THROUGH A LIE (3:7)
- VI. A FALSE CHARGE (3:8)

The Kingdom of God is characterized by unique thought patterns. They are not after the manner of this world, and even appear foolish in the eyes of men. God has made a comparison between His thoughts and ways and those of men—men in their best fleshly state. "Let the wicked forsake

his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:7-9). This is a universal indictment.

The "unrighteous man" is anyone without the righteousness of God. With great power, the Spirit is convincing us that no offspring of Adam possesses that righteousness by nature. Nor, indeed, have any of them achieved that righteousness through their own efforts. There are no exceptions to this. The ONLY Man who has ever lived to whom, righteousness was NOT imputed, was the Lord Jesus Christ – and He was NOT a

son of Adam, but the "Seed" of the woman (Gen 3:15; Gal 4:4). To every other person judged to be righteous, that righteousness was a "gift," not an achievement. It came from God, not from human effort.

In order to comprehend the things of God, there must be an abandonment of the "natural" way of thinking. The things of God simply cannot be comprehended on that level. As it is written, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14). That is why the apostles spoke in spiritual words, expressing spiritual thoughts in words employed by the Holy Spirit. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"^{NASB} (1 Cor 2:13).

The passage before us employs this Kingdom method in an obvious way. The passage makes no sense whatsoever to the natural mind, and thus is corrupted by many. It is too high for any one who is not in Christ Jesus.

Here we find a form of spiritual reasoning that is most powerful. He is going to show us that no human conduct can alter the Person of God. God will not become unrighteous because man is unrighteous. Nor, indeed, is He righteous because of man's response to Him. He is always just and righteous in His judgments. Man, regardless of his activity, only accentuates God's righteousness.

Ponder the questions that will be addressed in this passage. They will be answered in the wisdom of God.

- ▶ What advantage has the Jew?
- ▶ What is the profit of circumcision?

- ▶ What if some did not believe?
- ▶ Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?
- ▶ If our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say?
- ▶ Is God unjust, who inflicts wrath?
- ▶ If the truth of God has increased through my lie to his glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner?
- ▶ Why not say, "Let us do evil, that good may come?"

To actually deal with these interrogations is strange to the flesh, or "the natural man." However, they introduce a form of spiritual reasoning that is essential to a valid understanding. These questions are all provoked what the Lord affirms, and are answered upon that basis of that affirmation.

Circumstance is not the proper environment for godly deliberation. We

must guard against such imaginations.

These questions are based upon certain realities: (1) The Jew, (2) circumcision, (3) some did not believe, (4) the faithfulness of God, (5) our unrighteousness, (6) the righteousness of God, (7) God inflicts wrath, (8) the truth of God increases. None of these can be changed by mere human activity. They are all conditions we must confront. All of them are very real, and are not mere hypotheses, or human suppositions.

In this section the Spirit answers the objections that will be raised to what has been said to this point. These are objections presented from a Jewish point of view. In answering them, however, the Spirit not only speaks to Jews, but to all. He will confirm that God is absolutely righteous in all of His judgments. All who disagree with Him are, by virtue of their disagreement, unrighteous.

IS THERE A JEWISH ADVANTAGE?

3:1 What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? 2 Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God. The NIV reads, "What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision?"

Here we come into sharp conflict with

circumcision both came from the Lord. They were Divine distinctions among men, originated by the Lord of glory. What thoughtful person is willing to affirm there is no advantage to being chosen by God and granted a sign of His covenant in their flesh?

Our thinking must be brought into accord with the Lord, else the Scripture will yield no benefit to us. **When man's**

He does not ask what advantage the rich man has, for riches give man no advantage. Neither is the wisdom of men the point from which godly reasoning proceeds. Do not miss the power of this reasoning! The Spirit does not ask us if kings of the earth have an advantage, or those who are expert in some field of earthly endeavor. He asks what advantage the Jew has, for Jews alone can trace their national origin to the Living God.

With great care, the Spirit approaches this subject. He does not ask what advantage the philosopher has, for God has repudiated the philosophies of men. He does not ask what advantage the rich man has, for riches give man no advantage. Neither is the wisdom of men the point from which godly reasoning proceeds.

And when it comes to something men have done, the question is "What is the profit of circumcision?" He does not ask about the profit of earthly organizations, expert business acumen, or other areas of human accomplishment. All of man's righteousness, or very best achievements, are as filthy rags before God (Isa 64:6). The question is "What is the profit of circumcision?"—an ordinance of God.

much of the theology of our time. Many with whom I have had contact would not answer this interrogation as the Spirit does. They would emphatically declare that there was no advantage to being a Jew, or having the seal of circumcision. But they are wrong—seriously wrong. In their position they have maligned God, who chose and led the Jews, giving them the Law and the prophets as well. The distinction of being a Jew, and the uniqueness of the sign and seal of

theology does not allow the hearty embrace of the expressions of Scripture, it is to be discarded as chaff. It is not true, and hence is not profitable, but detrimental to our faith.

THE HIGHEST FLESHLY ADVANTAGE

With great care, the Spirit approaches this subject. He does not ask what advantage the philosopher has, for God has repudiated the philosophies of men.

Particularly for the Jew, the Lord is now going to confirm they are inexcusable before God. They had no righteousness of their own—even when given remarkable advantages. If there is any question about the impotence of the "natural man," the Spirit will now lay the axe to the tree of human reasoning. He is going to prove

flesh did not improve itself, even when given advantages from God. Men may argue about whether it was possible for them to become righteous or not, but the fact is no one did.

“MUCH EVERY WAY”

Nearly every major translation reads the same way (a rare phenomenon of itself): “*Much every way*,” or “*Much in every way*” (KJV, NKJV, RSV, NRSV, NIV). The NASB reads, “*Great in every respect*.” “*Much every way*” means, however you look at it, there **ARE** advantages to being a Jew and being circumcised. Robertson says of this verse, “So it means the overplus of the Jew is much from every angle.” Word Studies

The facts that “*all have sinned*,” and that “*there is none righteous*” do not mean no one has had an advantage, or received special favors. Rather, sin had taken such a toll upon the human spirit, that no amount of fleshly benefit could correct the situation. It is essential that this is perceived to some degree, else the necessity of sending Christ into the world will not be perceived or appreciated.

This is precisely why Jesus is NOT preached in much contemporary religion. It is because the need for Him is not perceived. Men continue to cling to the notion that some goodness remains in fallen man. They overestimate the strength and freedom of the human will, and thus relegate Christ into the background. This is a sin of the greatest magnitude.

THE JEW’S CHIEF ADVANTAGE

No matter how you look at the subject, the Jew’s had the advantage over all others. However, there was a “*chief*” advantage that towered over all of the others. “*Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God*.”

The Oracles

The word “*oracles*” means the sayings, message, or utterances of God. The word also carries the connotation of brevity, in the sense of being introductory. These beginning communications from God included everything from the words uttered at Mount Sinai to the promises of

a coming Savior. The literal meaning of the word is “Divine communications.” A paraphrase of this verse could read, “Chiefly because to them were committed the very words of God.” That is the idea being communicated.

Notice, the Spirit does not say “*Scriptures*,” although that is, in fact, how the Word of God was given to them. He does not view the Word from an academic viewpoint, i.e., writing, but from the standpoint of its origin. Keep in mind that the Jews had been in possession of God’s Word for over 1,500 years. It had been copied hundreds, perhaps thousands, of times, and translated into other languages. Yet, the Spirit refers to “*the oracles of God*,” just as though that Word had been freshly spoken.

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This is precisely how the Scriptures are to be viewed. They are not to be regarded as the writings of mere men, or copies of the original, or a book that has been handed down through the generations. When we limit our view of Scripture to being the writings of men, we dull the edge of the Spirit’s sword.

are to be viewed. They are not to be regarded as the writings of mere men, or copies of the original, or a book that has been handed down through the generations. **When we limit our view of Scripture to being the writings of men, we dull the edge of the Spirit’s sword.** While there is nothing particularly wrong about referring to what Moses said, Isaiah said, Paul said, etc., that is not the most noble view of God’s word. These are all men God used, and their words are to be viewed as God’s word to men – “*the oracles of God*.”

At the time of this writing, the Jews

had only scrolls and books, and none of them were original. Yet, the advantage of the Jew (current advantage) consisted in possessing the very communications of God. I do not wish to labor this point, but draw attention to it because of the approach made to the Scriptures by much modern theology. They are approached with a degree of criticism and skepticism that is related to unbelief.

The Spirit never provides men with the option of determining which portion of Scripture is valid and which is not. With a consistency that never varies, the Scriptures are treated just as though in them we were hearing God speak out of heaven. They are “*the oracles of God*.”

The Advantage

The thought that God confined His communications to the Jews is a staggering consideration. He entrusted His Word with the people He had called and cultured. It was to their advantage to know what the Lord had said. Here, in the Word of God, the mind and will of God are contained. Through it, men come into some acquaintance with God, how He thinks, and what He is doing. That is an advantage! The Jews were the keepers of the only sacred books the world had seen. No other writing was given “*by inspiration of God*” (2 Tim 3:16).

This means it is a disadvantage to be ignorant of what God has said. That is particularly true when it is willing ignorance—i.e., having the Word, but not being acquainted with it. In our time, there is an unprecedented ignorance of the Word of God within the professed church. As a rule, its leaders are abysmally uninformed concerning the Scriptures. They choose to be specialists in other things. Such men, however notable they may appear, bring only disadvantage to the saints of God.

The Point

Lest we miss the point of our text, even the undeniable advantage of having the oracles of God yields no satisfactory results unless hearing is mingled with faith. This is the point being made, that in spite of every advantage, the Jew still stood in need of a righteousness from God.

As a people, they did not rise above others in this respect. As it is written, *“For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it”* (Heb 4:2).

While the possession of *“the oracles of*

God” are a distinct advantage, and is not to be despised or questioned, **it is not the ultimate advantage.** That is why Jesus said to the Scripture experts of His day, *“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life”* (John 5:39-40). The chief

advantage of the Law and the Prophets is found in persuading men they have no righteousness of our own, and desperately need a Savior. Those brought to such a conclusion have profited from the Scriptures. They have, by those Scriptures, been made *“wise unto salvation”* (2 Tim 3:15). That is the ultimate of advantage.

SOME DID NOT BELIEVE

“ For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?”

We now come to a section of unusually strong spiritual reasoning. It will become apparent to you that this is not an example of human philosophy. Nor does it conform to the rules of human logic. This very passage has been used to promote some *“damnable heresies”* (2 Pet 2:1) that lead men to believe God will take them to heaven even though they choose to live in sin. It is to our advantage to know the truth that is being expounded in this remarkable text.

“SOME OF THEM”

The manner in which this statement is made takes hold of our minds. *“What if **SOME** did not believe?”* This same form of reasoning is found in the eleventh chapter, and in First Corinthians. *“And if **SOME** of the branches be broken off. . .”* (Rom 11:17). *“Neither be ye idolaters, as were **SOME** of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as **SOME** of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as **SOME** of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as **SOME** of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer”* (1 Cor 10:7-10). Hebrews 3:16 says, *“For **SOME**, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by*

Moses.”

In all of these references, those who believed were in the minority, and those who fell were the vast majority. From the standpoint of numbers, those who did **not** believe were **“many.”** Thus, in First Corinthians 7:5, the Spirit refers to the

of the spies (Num 14:1-6). But this was not the end of the matter. When a report was made to *“all the children of Israel,”* the people chose to believe the faithless spies, rejecting the testimony of Joshua and Caleb. As a result, the unbelievers were all excluded from the promised land. God only allowed Joshua and Caleb to enter, and the *“little ones”* who had not yet come of age (Num 14:30-33).

The *“footmen,”* or fighting men, of Israel numbered 600,000 (Ex 12:37; Num 11:21). If we just considered that number, excluding the women, the percentage of unbelievers was 99.9999666%. The percentage of those believing was .000033%. A statistician would consider *“some”* believed, but the Lord of glory says

*“some did **NOT** believe.”* The heavenly equation, therefore, might be stated in this manner. 600,000 less 2 equals *“some.”*

I once explained this to one of my daughters this way. Those who do not believe are counted as nothing. They are *“not a people”* (Deut 32:21; 1 Pet 2:10). Those who do believe counted for one. Therefore we read, *“There was A MAN in the land of Uz, whose name was Job”* (Job 1:1). Thus, in the case of Israel in the wilderness, 599,998 times zero equals zero, while two times one equals two. Joshua and Caleb were fully recognized by the Lord, while the rest are described as

THE REASONING OF THE FLESH

For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?

But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath?

FLESH

For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner?

And why not say, "Let us do evil that good may come"?

SEEKING TO JUSTIFY SIN

very same group of people as *“many.”* *“But with **MANY** of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.”* Other versions accent the proportionate aspect of the numbers: *“**MOST** of them”* (NKJV, NASB, NIV).

In this text *“some”* reflects a Divine perspective. While those who did not believe were actually the majority, they were outweighed by those who DID believe. Take, for example, Joshua and Caleb. When Israel spied out the promised land as a prelude to entering it, these men were two of the twelve spies sent out. They were the only two who believed the land was given to them by God—one sixth

“some” who “did not believe.”

Those having a propensity to numbers should consider how God counts people. We do not have any idea of the number of people who perished in the flood, but we know exactly how many were saved—eight (1 Pet 3:20). We also have no idea how many people perished in Sodom and Gomorrah, but we do know how many escaped out of it—three (Gen 19:30).

SOME BELIEVED

The point of our text is that there were believers. Everyone did not reject God’s testimony. Among the chosen people great men stood out. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Caleb, David, the Prophets, etc. The presence of these believers, though the numeric minority, confirmed how wicked the unbelievers were. It also shows that God always receives those who believe His Word and trust in Him.

The failure of men to believe is NOT owing to any deficiency or lack of clarity in “the oracles of God.” That is why unbelief is consistently condemned in Scripture, regardless of where it is found. While I can only speak for myself, I am alarmed at the unbelief that is found in the professed church. It is in such staggering proportions that it is mind-boggling. The Word of God is questioned, and often challenged, by the very people who claim identity with Christ. It is a matter of deep concern.

UNBELIEF DOES NOT NULLIFY GOD’S FAITHFULNESS

“What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?”^{NASB} Here is a most powerful form of reasoning. Does the fact, for example, that the unbelieving Jews fell in the wilderness mean that God proved unfaithful to them? Was His promise to them voided by their unbelief? The Spirit will take up this identical argument in regards to the Jews’ rejection of Christ in the eleventh chapter. It is, therefore, a pivotal point of consideration, and to be given serious thought.

First, only those who disbelieved fell in the wilderness. God brought Israel into Canaan, just as He promised. He had never committed Himself to bring the unbelieving and faithless into the land of promise. Their unbelief did not void the promise of a coming Messiah, or invalidate one word of His “oracles.” In a blast of fury, God did not make an end of believers, nor did He call back His promises of a Savior and a New Covenant. He held to His revealed purpose, even though “some” were excluded because of

His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thess 1:7-9). Is there a soul so naive as to think such people never believed, or had never escaped the pollution of the world? Remember, these are words spoken to the church, and that for a reason.

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It is possible to come out of Egypt, yet never get into Canaan. It is also possible to get out of Sodom, yet be destroyed in route to safety, like Lot’s wife. Jesus admonished us to “remember” her (Lk 17:32). It is possible for God to make a man a king, then reject him for his disobedience (1 Sam 16:1).

In all of these cases, and more, God did not withdraw His promises. He did not adopt a new purpose, abandoning the one He had revealed. The unbelief of men did not cause Him to be unfaithful. The “eternal purpose” (Eph 3:11) moved along, and those who believed continued to be blessed.

God Is Faithful to His Character

God not only is faithful to His Word, He is also faithful to His character. He “cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim 2:13), or act in contradiction of His Person. He cannot overlook a believer, and He cannot countenance an unbeliever. He cannot promise something He will not do.

Again, a strong argument will be made of this in the eleventh chapter. There the Spirit will confirm that Israel has not been abandoned. There present state is only “until the fulness of the Gentiles” (Rom 11:25). That is the Word of the Lord, and it makes little difference what men may think of it. Those who affirm God has thoroughly cast away His people Israel, have not told the truth. What is even more, they have represented God as going back on His covenant with them, and being unfaithful to His Word. The teaching of such men must not be allowed among believers.

their unbelief.

There are those who hold that God will take professed believers to heaven, even though they stumble on in the darkness. These false prophets say that God made a commitment to such people, and will not withdraw from it, even though they prove faithless. However, their reasoning is flawed to the core. First, God has made no commitment for good to anyone who does not walk by faith. In fact, He affirms, “Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul”^{NKJV} (Heb 10:38-39).

God has made some commitments concerning those who do not believe, who are disobedient, and who do not know Him. “. . . he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mk 16:16). “. . . when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with

The ONLY Jews rejected by God are those who do not believe. The Gospel is still the power of God to them “*first*” (Rom 1:16). On Pentecost every single Jew who believed, receiving the Word gladly and being baptized, were added to the church (Acts 2:41). This acceptance prevails to this day, confirming that God is faithful. If God does not reject a person because they are a Jew, then he has not summarily rejected the nation. If “*glory, honor, and peace*” will be given “*to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first . . .*” (Rom 2:10), then God has not written off the Jews. They are still recognized and offered salvation.

Let none imagine, however, that this

makes the slightest provision for the acceptance of those who refuse to believe. Their unbelief will not make the faithfulness of God to His own word and character void. They WILL be rejected because of their unbelief. If this is not so, then the Lord has not spoken truth concerning the destiny of unbelievers.

Further, and for purposes of clarification, nothing in God’s word suggests that an unbeliever never was a believer, or that a believer can never become an unbeliever. Those are suppositions created by men. Jesus spoke of those “*who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away*” (Lk 8:13).

The Spirit also exhorts believers, “*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God*” (Heb 3:12). It is folly, therefore, to affirm such a condition cannot occur. In fact, such a thought quenches and grieves the Spirit of God

Our text reminds us that God has pledged certain reactions to both believing and not believing. Because there is no unfaithfulness with God, it is not possible for an unfaithful person to be blessed, or a faithful person to be cursed. Either of those would require God to deny Himself, and He is incapable of doing that. God is ever faithful!

LET GOD BE TRUE!

“*Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: ‘That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged.’*” The question has been posed, “*For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?*” The answer is emphatic. “**Certainly not!**” The KJV version reads, “*God forbid!*” Although not accurate etymologically, “*God forbid*” projects the spirit of the text—namely that such a statement will not be allowed by God, as the rest of the verse attests. Other versions read, “*By no means,*”^{RSV} emphasizing there is no provision for such a conclusion to be entertained. The NASB reads, “*May it never be,*” reflecting the response of faith which is repulsed by such a thought. The NIV reads, “*Not at all,*” which highlights the absurdity of the thought that God could be unfaithful.

This verse must not be viewed through an academic set of glasses, as though it were merely a rhetorical argument. The character of God and the salvation of men hang in the balance. If God is unfaithful, how can He be trusted? And, if men can be unbelieving and still be saved, precisely what is the point of salvation? If God can receive people fundamentally unlike Himself, why is there a need for a Savior at all? What, then, is the purpose of the

atonement? And what sense is there to reconciliation?

The whole point is that God “*cannot deny Himself.*” He cannot accept sinners into His fellowship and remain righteous. He would, in such a case, have to abandon His prerogatives of judgment. The very thought of such things is repugnant to the righteous.

LET GOD BE TRUE

This expression does not suggest that man has any role whatsoever in God being, or remaining, true. Rather, it poses a conflict between the perception of men and the declaration of God. The exhortation is to reject any suggestion

made ineffective by the lack of believing on the part of man. The person rejecting God’s Word will pay the penalty for doing so, but will not deprive the Word of its effectiveness, or God of His faithfulness. The blasphemy of men, and their rejection of the Word of God are like weightless notes on the balance of eternity. God remains faithful in all of His promises and affirmations.

The Example of Esther

We have an example of the faithfulness of God in the book of Esther. Although God Himself is not mentioned in this book, yet His providence and power are clearly seen in it. When the Jews were threatened by wicked Haman, Esther’s uncle, Mordecai, informed Esther of the plot. He charged Esther “*that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people.*” Although she was the Queen, she was fearful to go before the king. She thus informed Mordecai of her reasoning. “*All the king’s servants, and the people of the king’s provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these*

We are not to allow our minds to entertain the imagination that God’s Word is voided or made ineffective by the lack of believing on the part of man.

that the Word of God is not precisely the truth. To approach the Word of God with any element of doubt reproaches God.

Permit me to be more specific. We are not to allow our minds to entertain the imagination that God’s Word is voided or

thirty days.”

Being strong in faith, Mordecai refused to accept this answer. Knowing that God was faithful, he boldly sent word back to Queen Esther. *“Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king’s house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, THEN SHALL THERE ENLARGEMENT AND DELIVERANCE ARISE TO THE JEWS FROM ANOTHER PLACE; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”* (Esther 4:5-14). Mordecai knew God was faithful to His promises!

This type of faith let’s “*God be true,*” bringing benefit and protection to the believer. However, notice that if Esther refused to be the means through which God worked, she herself would pay the due penalty: *“but you and your father’s house will perish.”* Thus the Lord would react to unbelief precisely as He said He would, as well as He would to belief.

The Mind of the Flesh

It should not surprise you that the fleshly mind balks at letting “*God be true.*” If some word of God is not preferred, or jars against preconceived notions, the carnal mind is quick to find a way that justifies rejecting the word. Perhaps it is an historical position, a distorted view of Scripture itself, or some contextual consideration. Some imagine they can get rid of the Word by an appeal to etymological considerations, or some position that sees a particular word as no longer relevant. Indeed, unbelief is creative in its attempts to avoid letting “*God be true.*”

It is for our good that we are admonished to confront such tendencies militantly, throwing them down with our strong weaponry (2 Cor 10:4-5). Any view that neutralizes Divine commitments, or presents God as retracting His promises, is from the devil. Unless cast down in faith, embracing it will prove to be the undoing of the soul.

As we will see, every person will eventually confront God, and every syllable uttered by God will be found true. Wherever men have contradicted God, or refused to let Him be true, a strict accounting will be given. Men must be quick to come away from false views, and embrace the Word of God as it stands.

GETTING TO THE POINT

With God-glorifying precision, the Holy Spirit is showing that the judgment rendered upon the Jews did not negate God’s pledge to them. The promise made to Abraham would be carried out, even though “*some*” of them would fall through unbelief. The Spirit will provide an extensive exposition of this in chapters nine through eleven.

I am fully aware that I am in a geographical area where this is emphatically denied. But those who contend the Jews have been totally abandoned are wrong—seriously wrong. Our text is reasoning against such vanity

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of thought, showing that God has not recalled His promises to the ancient people, even though a considerable number of them have been cut off.

AND EVERY MAN A LIAR

See the strength with which the Spirit speaks. He makes no allowance whatsoever for a conflict between the words of men and the words of God. He does not appeal to interpretations, laws of hermeneutics, and contextual considerations. He takes us back to the thus saith the Lord, and soundly condemns all who are at variance with it.

Not only are we to let “*God be true,*” but we are also obliged to let all who contradict Him be liars. Their supposed credentials are not honored in heaven.

The NASB reads, *“Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar.”* If believing God means I must discount everything every man has said, then let it be so! If believing God means I must relinquish the doctrines of men, then let it be so! If it means I must no longer listen to certain teachings, then I will listen to them no more! If it involves withdrawing from some people, then do it.

This is not a call to be factious, for that is a work of the flesh. However, there are teachings and religious bodies who make it exceedingly difficult to believe God. Some views of God make it nearly impossible to let “*God be true.*” They cast a mantle of doubt upon the Word of God, and cause people to trust in men rather than in the living God. It should not surprise you that some people actually give very little of their own persons to God. They are depending on their church, or their position, to carry them safely through the judgment. But it will not happen!

It is true, our text is a hypothetical presentation. He is not suggesting that every man is a liar, for there are those who “*speak the truth in love*” (Eph 4:15). There are faithful ministers “*as the Lord gave to every man*” (1 Cor 3:5). There are those who “*speak the truth in Christ*” (1 Tim 2:7). The point of this text, however, is that every believer be resolute in his determination to believe God. Whatever the repercussions of letting God be true, even if it is accepting every contradicting person to be a liar, let it be so! Since we will face Gof, let Him be true!

GOD WILL OVERCOME

“. . . as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.” This statement is taken from Psalm 51:4. *“Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.”*

Here is an expression of true repentance.

David's Repentance

This was David's penitential Psalm when convicted of his sin against Uriah. He had contradicted God in his conduct, then complicated it with a command concerning Bathsheba's husband, Uriah. God said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Ex 20:14), yet David did. God said, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife" (Ex 20:17), yet David did. The Lord said, "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex 20:13), yet David sent Uriah into the heat of the battle, making his death certain. God said, "Thou shalt not steal" (Ex 20:15), yet David stole Uriah's wife.

Will God let this matter go unchallenged? Indeed, He will not. In a subtle way, God had been judged. His Word had been ignored, as though it was unjust and could be broken with impunity. You already know the account. God sent the prophet Nathan to David to confront him with his sin. The result was that David repented, eventually writing the 51st Psalm (2 Sam 12:7-20).

David was willing to "Let God be true, and every man a liar." In the end, he came to his senses. His faith compelled him to seek for God to be justified in "ALL of His sayings." He did not seek to justify himself, but brought his will into harmony with that of his Lord. He took hold of this immovable and irrevocable truth: "**GOD IS TRUE!**" When clothed in his right mind, the man after God's own heart did not question that God was right. He therefore brought his will into alignment with that of his Lord.

But allow me to take this matter a little further. God had made a promise to David, that He would raise up from the fruit of his own body, a King to sit upon his throne (2 Sam 7:12). This was BEFORE David's transgression with Bathsheba, and against Uriah. Did David's unfaithfulness negate that promise? Indeed, it did not, even though it cost David great sorrow and affliction. How well it is stated in the 132nd Psalm. "The LORD hath sworn in truth unto

David; He will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne."

David was eventually brought back to the Lord and His commitment. In so doing, he justified God, showing Him to be faithful, and himself unfaithful. The variance between him and God was settled this side of the veil.

THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM

The promises and commitments of God are not in harmony with the mind of the flesh. In fact, they sharply conflict with it. Abraham is a case in point. We will see that he also justified God, accounting that He was true.

When God promised Abraham he would be a father of many nations, it contradicted all natural laws. Indeed, it was something that was impossible from

Abraham was old—even past the age of begetting children. His wife Sarah was barren, and could not bear children. How would Abraham react to the promise of God? Would he let God be true?

the standpoint of the flesh. Abraham was old—even past the age of begetting children. His wife Sarah was barren, and could not bear children. How would Abraham react to the promise of God? Would he let God be true?

The Word of God speaks clearly on this point, bringing great honor to God, and revealing the superiority of faith. "As it is written, 'I have made you a father of many nations' in the presence of Him whom HE BELIEVED; God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; who, CONTRARY TO HOPE, IN HOPE BELIEVED, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, 'So shall your descendants be.' And NOT BEING WEAK IN FAITH, he

DID NOT CONSIDER HIS OWN BODY, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), AND THE DEADNESS OF SARAH'S WOMB. He DID NOT WAVER at the promise of God through unbelief, but was STRENGTHENED IN FAITH, giving glory to God, and being FULLY CONVINCED that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore 'it was accounted to him for righteousness'" ^{NKJV} (Rom 4:17-22). Our faith Abraham "let God be true."

The text continues that this was not written for Abraham's sake alone, "but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification" (4:24-25).

WHEN GOD IS JUSTIFIED

The thought of God being justified is not a strange one. There is a word said about those who were baptized by John, that touches on this subject. "And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God **against themselves**, being **not** baptized of him" ^{NKJV} (Lk 7:29-30). In submitting to John's baptism, the people were letting God be true, and every man a liar.

The Pharisees and lawyers, however, in **not** being baptized by John, rejected "God's purpose" for them, thereby judging the Lord. For whatever reason, when they rejected God's counsel, they proved they were liars. What is more, if they did not resolve this conflict before they left this world, it will be brought up once again on the day of judgment.

PERILOUS TIMES

One of the perils of our times is the popularity of questioning God and judging His Word. Also, some theologies rob the people of a sense of God's greatness, teaching them to rely upon their own abilities, and affirming that God no longer intervenes in the affairs of men. Such thoughts evidence unbelief.

All of this is done under the false guise of superior wisdom, and understanding. The fruit such approaches to Scripture have yielded confirms the source from whence they came. It has reproached God, neutralized the effect of the truth, and weakened His people.

God's word always corresponds with reality. It is never philosophical in nature, but declarative of the real situation. His Word is always spoken with the panorama of all things (past present, and future) in mind. It also strictly conforms with His eternal purpose, which never varies.

THE DAY

There is an appointed day in which the Lord will judge *"the secrets of men by Jesus Christ"* (Rom 2:16). In that day every variant thought will be exposed. God will be shown to be true before an assembled universe, and no one will dispute the case. Those who are bold enough to judge God now, will themselves be judged by Him. As well, the very word they have refused to accept will judge them. As Jesus said, *"He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him; the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day"*^{NKJV} (John 12:48).

The thought of men judging God is fearful to consider—but that is precisely what takes place when they do not embrace His word. Those who declare they are angry or upset with God because of their lot in life have judged Him! Those who balk at His commandments, not obeying the Lord, have judged Him! Those who refuse to preach the message He has given of His Son have judged Him! But in the end, God will overcome.

In the *"great and notable day of the Lord,"* all words and thoughts that

contradicted the Word of God will be brought to light. It will be made clear that God was judged unfit to be believed by the transgressors. There will be no suitable defense for contradicting the Lord, or refusing to receive what He said and did without doubting. Before an assembled universe, it will become apparent that *"God is true."* Everything from false gospels to misplaced emphases will be

some erroneously conclude. He has not denied the Divine origin of the Jews, nor the advantages and favors granted to them. He HAS confirmed that sin so dominated them, they could not change their condition, even when they were given such marvelous advantages. They too needed a righteousness God. The worth of these advantages is not diminished by their failure to take hold of

In the *"great and notable day of the Lord,"* all words and thoughts that contradicted the Word of God will be brought to light. It will be made clear that God was judged unfit to be believed by the transgressors. There will be no suitable defense for contradicting the Lord, or refusing to receive what He said and did without doubting.

dashed to the ground as the truth of God is lifted high.

A due consideration of these realities will change the way men refer to the Word of God. It will alter the way they preach, and what they emphasize. That, of course, is why these things are written.

Hear the words again, and stand in awe of our God. *"That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged."*^{NKJV} That speaks of ultimate confrontation—one that cannot be avoided!

THE SPIRIT GUARDS AGAINST FALSE CONCLUSIONS

In this passage, the Holy spirit carefully guards against false conclusions. The indictment of the Jews is not to be construed as proof that God has abandoned His covenant with them, as

them by faith.

SOMETHING PRACTICAL

There is a very wonderful practical truth to be seen here. Even though the Law has pronounced us guilty and condemned us, yet a recovery from our helpless condition can be realized. God has promised those who call upon His name will be saved (Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21; Rom 10:13). God is justified in that saying every time someone calls upon His name, believing His Gospel, and yielding to His will. It makes no difference how deeply a person may have sinned, or how dull the sensitivity of the heart may have grown. If that person will hear what the Spirit is saying, God will hear from heaven, deliver the individual, and receive praise from his mouth (Psa 50:15). Thus, even in this world, God will be justified in His sayings. Every believer is proof of that, which brings great joy to the heart.

IF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS DEMONSTRATES GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

"But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a

man.)⁶ Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world?" Here is a lofty form of spiritual reasoning. God is the heart of the reasoning, and His

purpose is its direction and focus.

What is *"our unrighteousness?"* It is more than wicked deeds, or immorality, as

The righteous judgment of the Lord is indiscriminating, and based on righteous criteria, by Given O. Blakely

ordinarily perceived. It is being unlike God in both thought and deed.

It includes unbelief. *“For what if some did not believe?”* (3:5). An unbelieving heart is an *“evil heart of unbelief”* (Heb 3:12). Unbelief is the preeminent sin of which the Spirit convicts men. As it is written, *“And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin . . . because they do not believe in Me”* (John 16:8-9). A failure to embrace the Gospel, or to trust in the Lord with all of the heart, is unrighteous, and cannot be overlooked by the Lord. As a rule, however, I have found the modern church does not regard unbelief in this manner.

It also includes the ungodliness that characterized the Gentile world, a general state of moral decline. *“Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them”* (1:32). Lives that are basically self-indulgent are unrighteous lives. When the will of God is exchanged for self-will, the individual is proved to be unrighteous, and worthy of condemnation.

There is also the personal sin committed by David, which stands for all personal acts of unrighteousness. *“That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged”* (3:4; Psa 51:4). While the nature of sin remains the same, some sin works itself out in reprehensible human conduct. Some of the infamous sins of Scripture include the following.

- (1) Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit.
- (2) Cain murdering Abel.
- (3) The attempt to build the tower of Babel.
- (4) Ishmael mocking Isaac.
- (5) Esau despising his birthright.
- (6) The selling of Joseph by his brethren.
- (7) The murmuring of Israel.
- (8) The refusal of Israel to go into Canaan.
- (9) The rebellion of Korah.
- (10) The betrayal of Jesus by Judas.

“Our unrighteousness” is any aspect of life that is at variance with the Lord. Unbelief is at the core of unrighteousness. A state of spiritual deterioration is found in all unrighteousness. Unrighteousness also erupts in specific acts that dishonor

“darkened” (Rom 1:21). No matter how you culture and discipline the mind of the natural man, God has *“destroyed the wisdom of the wise,”* and reduced the *“understanding of the prudent”* to *“nothing”* (1 Cor 1:19).

Men have modified the heinousness of sin and transgression by giving it other names: sickness, addiction, life style, chemical dependence, inherited tendencies, family curses, alcoholism, homosexuality, mistakes, etc. By employing these fallacious terms, sin is not seen as worthy of punishment.

Thus, when Paul speaks *“as a man,”* he is showing us the absurdity of human reasoning. He is putting forth a argument that flesh presents to justify its involvement in sin. Here is how flesh reasons. **If God forgives sin, and if my exoneration from sin glorifies God, then why should I be concerned about sin? If God is honored by remitting my sin, why is sin so bad?**

This Is How Flesh Reasons

Particularly when exposed to the Gospel of Christ, this IS how the flesh reasons. Because fleshly reasoning has been dignified by shallow religion does not remove this proclivity. Whether men acknowledge it or not, the reason for continuance in sin is because it is not viewed as a serious and perilous condition. If sin were viewed by men as seriously as it is by God, religious counselors would be out of business over night! Sinners would flee for refuge to Jesus, to procure remission and cleansing from sin, thereby receiving grace to say **“NO”** to ungodliness and worldly lusts (Heb 6:18; Tit 2:12), and power to live by faith.

God and bring judgment on the individual. Speaking of this latter view, the Spirit says, *“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow (“superfluity”^{KJV}) of wickedness . . .”* (James 1:21).

Thus, *“our unrighteousness”* covers the entire spectrum of sin. It cannot be perceived by simply comparing ourselves with others, or confining ourselves to certain immoral acts.

I SPEAK AS A MAN

Here Paul acknowledges that he is not putting forth a valid argument, but showing the fleshly perspective of things. Through the Spirit, he is going to show the absurdity of such reasoning. Apart from Jesus Christ, it is ever true of man, *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”* (Isa 55:8-9). As to the thoughts of unregenerate man, God Himself speaks. *“The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity”* (Psa 94:11). When men fell into sin, and the Divine image was marred within them, they *“became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was*

Men have modified the heinousness of sin and transgression by giving it other names: sickness, addiction, life style, chemical dependence, inherited tendencies, family curses, alcoholism, homosexuality, mistakes, etc. By employing these fallacious terms, sin is not seen as worthy of punishment. Rather, they produce a sort of sympathy for the transgressor, as though they had been victimized against their will. But all such reasoning is *“as a man.”* It is NOT an expression of *“the mind of the Lord,”* but is in militant opposition to it.

The strong wording of this text dashes this kind of reasoning to the ground. It is a form of reasoning that is *“as a man,”* not as a Jew! It represents the way flesh thinks, and unless abandoned in favor of

“the mind of Christ,” will bring the judgment of God upon the individual.

PUTTING A HANDLE ON THE TEXT

The wording of the text significantly differs from the manner in which religious people are accustomed to talk. Much of that difference is owing to the deviate manner of their thinking. Notwithstanding, some clarification of the reading of the text will prove helpful.

Here is how the text reads in various versions. “But if our unrighteousness **commend** the righteousness of God, what shall we say?”^{KJV} “But if our wickedness **serves to show** the justice of God, what shall we say?”^{RSV} “But if our unrighteousness **brings out** God’s righteousness more clearly, what shall we say?”^{NIV} “But if our injustice serves to **confirm** the justice of God, what should we say?”

First, the Spirit is handling an objection presumed to be offered by ungodly men. The argument He is addressing might be stated this way. “**If the righteousness provided by God through Christ, has been accented by the grievous nature of our sin, why should God punish men for their sins?**” To put it another way, “If God is glorified by imputing His righteousness to sinners, is it not unrighteous for Him to punish sinners?”

The Spirit is unveiling the real manner in which flesh reasons. A refusal to accept the righteousness of God, and an insistence upon continuing in sin, are excused upon the supposition that God is love, and is longsuffering toward man’s waywardness. In due time, it is thought, God will help me change.

DOES OUR UNRIGHTEOUSNESS CONFIRM GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS?

In a sense, our unrighteousness does confirm the righteousness of God—but not in the way that flesh reasons. The very word “**UNrighteousness**” declares there is a standard that is contradicted by the sinner. There is an Image from which man has fallen, and concerning which he comes short (Rom 3:23). In this sense, therefore, the righteousness of God is

confirmed by our unrighteousness, i.e., by the stark contrast of human nature with the Divine nature.

From another view, the fact that God raises us from death in trespasses and sins demonstrates His marvelous righteousness. He is thus proclaimed to be “*just and the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus*” (Rom 3:25). He is NOT unrighteous to accept those who come to Him through the Son, because of the thorough atonement accomplished in His death. God is glorified by the transformation of sinners!

When the wrath of God comes against sinners, is it wrong? Was it wrong for Him to judge Cain? Is there a soul who is willing to affirm it was wrong for God to disrupt the building of the tower of Babel? Was it wrong to drive the wicked inhabitants out of Canaan, giving their land to Israel?

But this is not the view being addressed in our text. The question is one posed by the flesh, seeking to justify involvement in sin. We know this by the extension of the question. “*Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)*”

IS THERE UNRIGHTEOUSNESS WITH GOD?

When the wrath of God comes against sinners, is it wrong? Was it wrong for Him to judge Cain? Is there a soul who is willing to affirm it was wrong for God to disrupt the building of the tower of Babel? Was it wrong to drive the wicked inhabitants out of Canaan, giving their land to Israel? Because God sent Israel into the seventy year Babylonian captivity, can He be charged with being unrighteous, inconsiderate, or forgetful of His promises? When Roman legions destroyed Jerusalem, leveling the Temple and ravaging the Jews, was God being

unrighteous?

If God is glorified in showing mercy, why did He not forgive them, and lavish His love upon them? This is how the flesh reasons. It seeks to divert the attention away from its own recalcitrance and wickedness to God Himself. The flesh seeks to justify the sinner **IN** his sin, rather than seeking justification **FROM** it.

Although flesh does not reason in these precise words, the Spirit identifies its real mode of thought. He does not give credit to the flesh, or allow it to express itself in its own words. The truth of the matter is that those refusing to receive God’s righteousness see no real need for it. They are content with their own manner of life. When God punishes them because of their ways, they impute unrighteousness to God, saying He was not fair, or was inconsiderate, or did not understand the real situation. Like Jonah, they become angry with God, even thinking they are right in doing so (Jonah 4:4,9).

This is the root of men become angry or upset with God. They are seeking to justify themselves, and are doing so at the expense of God. It is not an innocent reaction, but a blasphemous one, contradicting every aspect of faith.

Men are not to presume upon the grace of God, or imagine that God will be good to them just because they are His “*offspring*” (Acts 17:28-29). They must not allow themselves to think sin will be ignored by God, or left unpunished. The goodness of God by no means justifies involvement in sin. The forgiveness of God is no reason to suppose He does not hate it, or will not punish those who continue in sin. God’s goodness leads to repentance, not to transgression!

HOW SHALL GOD JUDGE THE WORLD?

“*God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?*” Here is an arresting consideration. If God is not right in punishing the wicked, how could He then judge the world? The day of judgment itself would then prove to be an act of unrighteousness—in fact, the ultimate act of unrighteousness.

If men are not personally responsible for their sin, how can God judge them for their sin? If sin is only a helpless technicality addressed and overthrown by grace, what reason is there to judge the world at all? How can God judge the world if it is not personally at fault?

It should not surprise us that the judgment of God is a most unpopular subject in the contemporary church. Many young believers have never heard it proclaimed. The organized church has been inoculated with spurious theology, and no longer thinks of the day when *"God will judge the world in righteousness by that Man"* (Acts 17:31).

The Day of Judgment Is Necessary

The very term "judgment" implies that sin must be condemned, and righteousness extolled. If these two things were not essential, judgment would be a farce. Remember, early in this book we were told, *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men"* (Rom 1:18).

I want to labor the point of this reality. **It is not possible for ungodliness and unrighteousness to escape the wrath of God!** It should not surprise you that this is not generally believed. If it was, sin would be quickly and energetically abandoned! If men doubt this is the case, let them consider the Son of God Himself. When the sins of the world were placed upon Him (Isa 53:6), He endured the wrath and cursing of the Almighty. The localization of all sin in the body of Christ (1 Pet 2:24), required that sin be *"condemned in the flesh"* of the One who bore them (Rom 8:3). Thus, the Son was *"made a curse for us"* (Gal 3:13).

The only way to advantage from His vicarious death is to be born again, have our sins remitted, and receive the righteousness of God. The Lord has revealed that He will ultimately confront the ungodly, holding them strictly accountable for their refusal of His righteousness. Men may excuse their sin in this world, but they will not be able to do so on the day of judgment. Be sure, your sins will find you out!

God will uncover the *"secrets of men,"* exposing their hearts. As it is written, *"God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel"* (Rom 2:16). The Lord *"will make manifest the counsels of the hearts"* for all to see (1 Cor 4:5). When standing before *"the judgment seat of Christ,"* before whom we *"must all appear,"* every single person will *"receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"* (2 Cor 5:10). For those who have done *"evil,"* He will show they deliberated rejected His righteousness in preference of their sin.

How often do professed gospels affirm that reality? In some circles, preaching has been so saturated with academia that

After declaring the appointed appearance of all men before Christ's judgment seat, the apostle said this. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor 5:11). He knew nothing of professed seeker-friendly services and palatable religious orations.

it is devoid of any power. Men are exposed to mere religious lectures, or the spouting of theological novelties. However, this is not how holy men preach! After declaring the appointed appearance of all men before Christ's judgment seat, the apostle said this. *"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men"* (2 Cor 5:11). He knew nothing of professed seeker-friendly services and palatable religious orations. He knew the day of judgment was coming closer, and that not one whit of tolerance toward sin would occur at that time. If sin is not hated and renounced in this world, it will be the cause of condemnation on the day of judgment.

The Lord Will Help Us

Hearing this, some may despair, thinking themselves unequal to the

challenge of being godly. However, praise God, our liabilities are covered in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. How glorious are the words of promise. *"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen"* (Jude 24-25). Faith not only produces a fervent desire to continue in the Lord, it also lays hold of the Power that can keep us from falling. God is able to do this, even though you are not able of yourself.

Sin is falling morally. It is stumbling because we are walking in darkness. It is never considered a light matter, or something that is easily resolved. When we possess the righteousness of God, however, He *"keeps us from falling."* Just as surely as the disciples arrived on the other side of a temporarily stormy sea (Matt 14:22-34), so you will arrive safely in glory if you live by faith.

The condition of the trusting one goes beyond being kept from falling. That is only the prelude to what is coming. God is fully capable of presenting us *"faultless"* in the blazing light of His glory. On that day, when His glory exposes everything fully, and nothing is hidden, God is able to present His people as *"faultless,"* unflawed, perfect, and unblemished. The weakest part of them, their flesh-and-blood-bodies, will be forever gone, and they will be clothed with immortality. If that seems too aggressive, God is still *"able"* to do it.

As if that were not enough, the Lord is also *"able"* to present us before His presence *"with exceeding joy."* No fear, no trepidation or trembling, only a swelling and grateful joy! Such rejoicing will bring great glory to the God, whose workmanship we are (Eph 2:10).

BEING SAVED BY HOPE

Before concluding this section, a word should be said about the powerful effects of hope. While flesh tries to justify its involvement in sin, hope forbids such an attempt. This is why it is written, *"For we are saved by hope."* Hope, which is faith

in its forward posture, never attempts an explanation for sin. Rather, it makes sin repulsive, and drives the believer to prepare for the day of judgment. Scripture says it this way. *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.*

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure” (1 John 3:1-3).

Hope knows that God is righteous in judging the world. It knows that sin is unreasonable, and cannot be excused. It is convinced that the wrath of God will come against sin in all of its forms. For this reason, purity of heart, mind, and body, are sought with zeal. Such purity, praise the Lord, is attainable because of the death and exaltation of the Lord Jesus

Christ. We can be cleansed daily (1 John 1:7,9; 2:1).

We acknowledge we are *“not yet perfect,”* and that we still stand in need of a Savior and Intercessor. We joyfully confess that we need the grace of God. With great delight and thankfulness, we admit our need of the Holy Spirit, and constant access to the throne of grace. But we will not excuse our sin, minimize it, explain it, or attempt to cling to it. We long to be where it cannot enter.

TRUTH INCREASED THROUGH A LIE

“For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner?” Here is another argument presented by the flesh. This is not the statement of sound theological thought, as some imagine, but an expression of the foolishness of the flesh. It is an attempt to justify sin and avoid the inevitability of Divine judgment.

Other versions read, *“For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto His glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?”*^{KJV} *“But if through my falsehood God’s truthfulness abounds to His glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner?”*^{RSV} *“But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner?”*^{NASB} *“Someone might argue, ‘If my falsehood enhances God’s truthfulness and so increases His glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?’”*^{NIV} *“But, some might still argue, ‘how can God judge and condemn me as a sinner if my dishonesty highlights His truthfulness and brings him more glory?’”*^{NLT}

Let it be clear, this is not an intellectual form of reasoning, as though these very words coursed through the mind of the sinner. This is more an intuitive way of reasoning than a cognitive one. The Holy Spirit is putting in words an imagination that is entertained by the carnal mind. It is a form of spiritual interpretation, or unveiling the secrets of the heart,.

The foundation of this pseudo-reasoning is the affirmation that God will overcome when He is judged. *“Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: ‘That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged’”*^{NKJV} (3:4). The righteous man

Thus the penitent sinner makes no attempt to explain his sin, or excuse his transgression. Rather, by God’s grace, he brings his thinking into accord with the Lord. Cleansing and recovery are earnestly sought.

will reason like David did, confessing and forsaking his sin. He will plead with the sweet psalmist, ***“Have mercy upon me, O God . . . Blot out my transgressions. . . Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin . . . Purge me with hyssop . . . Make me hear joy and gladness . . . Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. . . Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me . . . Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me . . . Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit”*** (Psa 51:1-12).

Thus the penitent sinner makes no attempt to explain his sin, or excuse his

transgression. Rather, by God’s grace, he brings his thinking into accord with the Lord. Cleansing and recovery are earnestly sought.

The mind of the flesh, however, does not think in this fashion. It seeks to justify itself so aggressively that it does not hesitate to impute unrighteousness to God. Here is the corrupted reasoning of the mind of the flesh. ***If, when I sin, the truth of God becomes more prominent by way of contrast, and if God is glorified the more by that contrast, how can it be just for me to be punished? If my sin has only served to prove that God is righteous, how I can disciplined or condemned for contributing to His glory?*** The seriousness of such a notion cannot be overstated!

TWO NOTABLE EXAMPLES

There is a fundamental flaw in this reasoning. The underlying thought is that God receiving glory automatically accrues to the benefit of those through whom the glory came. But this is not true! Take, for example, the case of Pharaoh. He was raised up in order that God might receive glory through him. As it is written, *“For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth’”*^{NKJV} (Rom 9:17). The declaration of the name of the Lord throughout the whole earth, however, brought no

advantage whatsoever to Pharaoh! He was not rewarded for contributing to God's glory. The reason for this condition is quite simple. He himself had no desire to glorify God. In fact, his will had to be crushed, and his purpose overthrown for God to receive glory. No such person will be rewarded by the Living God!

A similar observation could be made concerning Judas Iscariot. Through him, God was also glorified. His betrayal, energized by Satan himself, was impotent to overturn the purpose of God. Rather, it actually became the means through which salvation was wrought out for us. But Judas received no credit for this, for that was not his aim. He willingly made place for Satan, and sought to obtain gain through his diabolical deed.

"MY LIE"

Here the Spirit refers to man's sin and transgression as a "lie"—a corruption of the truth, diametrically opposed to it, and devoid of any reality. A lie is the antithesis of the truth—directly opposite to it. In its essence, sin is a lie—a delusion from the wicked one. Presenting itself as an advantage, it brings a curse instead upon those who choose to indulge in it.

The First Sin of Humanity

How pointedly this is illustrated in the first sin of humanity. Although strictly charged by God NOT to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Eve indulged in a conversation with the devil about the matter. Following her indulgence of Satan's reasoning, she drew some conclusions. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Gen 3:6).

Her perceptions were not true. What she concluded was a lie! The tree was not good for food! God had already defined what was pleasant to the eye and good for food. "And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food." In

addition to these, were the "tree of life" and "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen 2:9). After being deceived by the devil, however, Eve concluded that the forbidden tree was also pleasant to the eye and good for food. In addition, she imagined it was "to be desired to make one wise." None of those things were true. Therefore, when the fruit was eaten, both Adam and Eve lived out a lie.

Human nature was polluted immediately. Degeneracy was not a slow and lengthy process, but yielded remarkable results right away. As soon as the guilty pair were confronted with God,

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the corruption of their spirit surfaced. When God called out to Adam, he did answer. However, he did not acknowledge his transgression at the first. Instead he answered, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." The Lord then pointedly asked Adam, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"

Adam did not fall on his knees in deep contrition of heart, but immediately sought to excuse the matter. "The woman whom **You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.**" Facing the woman, the Lord asked, "What is this you have done?" Instantly, Eve presented what appeared to be a plausible answer for her reprehensible conduct. "The serpent deceived me, and I ate" (Gen 3:10-13). Technically, both of them told the truth. Eve did give Adam of the tree, and

Satan did deceive the woman. Notwithstanding, this did not excuse their conduct. Thus they were judged, and sin and death entered the world.

To this very day, men have retained this propensity to excuse their sin. But sin is a lie, and thus cannot be excused. Justification does not come to us by fanciful explanations, but through "faith in His blood" (Rom 3:25).

The psychiatrists, regardless of their self-professed value, are wrong in seeking an explanation for deviate conduct. People sin because they have believed a lie. In so doing, they have judged God, considering the testimony of His creation, their own conscience, and His Law to be worthless. No person will be rewarded by God for having to be overruled. When God is glorified by the subduing of a person, that individual will not be honored for providing such an occasion.

ERRONEOUS REASONING

There is a form of erroneous reasoning that is prevalent in some circles. It views God receiving glory through a person as the ultimate goal and benefit. There is an element of truth to the perception. Namely, that God will be glorified in everyone, whether they are saved or lost. No reproach will be brought upon the Lord when people are cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:15). There will be no word spoken against the Lord and His Christ when the words are spoken, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt 7:23). Thus it is written, "For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, **AND** in them that perish: To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor 2:15-16). All men will, in the end, be cause for God to receive glory and honor.

Is the chief end of man to glorify God, as some affirm? There is a tone of truth in the statement, but it comes short of God's revelation of the purpose for man. God has spoken more specifically on this subject, leaving not doubt about it.

Made for Dominion

In the beginning, the Lord stated the reason for creating mankind. *“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth”* (Gen 1:26). Later, the Psalmist elaborated on this intent, expanding our understanding of it. *“Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet”* (Psa 8:6). After the exaltation of Christ, the Holy spirit took the matter even further. *“For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him.* (Heb 2:5-8a).

In elaborating on this, the Spirit says this objective has not yet been realized. *“But now we see not yet all things put under him”* (Heb 2:8b). However, as a pledge of the coming dominion, He declared, *“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man”* (Heb 2:9). All things were made for Him (2:10), and those who are in Him will be *“joint heirs”* with Him (Rom 8:17). The time will come when the saints will *“possess the kingdom,”* receiving the dominion for which man was made (Dan 7:18,22,27). The chief purpose for man, from this perspective, is to have eventual dominion. In Christ, he is being cultured for that marvelous and extensive reign.

Seeking the Lord

From another view, man’s chief purpose is to seek the Lord, endeavoring to find Him and come into fellowship with

Him. This objective is clearly stated by Paul in his exposition of God’s purpose for humanity. *“From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us”^{NIV}* (Acts 17:26-27).

James confirmed this to be the purpose for man when he said, *“After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things”^{NKJV}* (Acts 15:16-17).

From still another view, the appointed purpose for man is to be conformed to the image of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. With unusual power, this is affirmed in Romans 8:29-30.

Conformity to the Image of Christ

From still another view, the appointed purpose for man is to be conformed to the image of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. With unusual power, this is affirmed in Romans 8:29-30. *“For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them he also glorified.”^{KJV}*

The formation of Christ in us (Gal

4:19) is the appointed objective for man. Where this does not happen, God will still be glorified, but no benefit will be given to the individual lacking that conformity to Christ’s image. Here, in this world, the aim is for Christ to *“dwell in our hearts by faith.”* In strict accord with this objective, we are *“strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man,”* in order that this might be fulfilled (Eph 3:16-17). If this does not happen, God will still be glorified through those not conformed to Christ’s image. However, they themselves will be thrust from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power.

WHY SAY SUCH THINGS?

It is necessary to say these things because of the great apostasy in which we are living. Men have been deluded into thinking they can be wed to the cursed order, living out a lie, and still be saved in the end. They imagine that God is somehow glorified BY them in this situation. They view salvation as a sort of safety net that protects us from hitting the bottom, so to speak.

I have frequently heard men say, *“The only difference between the saved and the lost is that the saved are forgiven sinners.”* They imagine that *“accepting Christ”* is an end of itself. But that is not the case. The Spirit says, *“But as many as received him, to them gave He power TO BECOME THE SONS OF GOD, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”* (John 1:12-13). Becoming the sons

of God involves being cultured for appointed dominion. It moves one into the realm where conformity to the image of Christ, and partaking of the Divine nature (2 Pet 1:4) can become realities. It includes a continual seeking for the Lord, to know Him and fellowship with Him in His sufferings, as well as His glory (Phil 3:7-14).

Losing Salvation??

Still others affirm that once in Christ, it is impossible to miss heaven. Once sins are forgiven, it is thought, the person can never again be overcome by sin. Again,

there is a flavor of truth in the view, but very slight.

First, the doctrine assumes that we have received the whole of salvation, which is not the case at all. If our salvation is *“ready to be revealed in the*

conformed to the image of His Son. It includes running, fighting, wrestling, looking, and standing.

What would compel a person, any person, to conclude that it would be unjust for God to reject a person who

people think in this manner, and why such doctrines have been contrived. It is because that is the way flesh thinks! It is because men imagine that God is glorified by saving people who do not want to be saved. Somehow the natural man reasons that if everything turns out for God’s glory, everyone should really be saved.

Were not Adam and Eve expelled from the very garden into which God placed them? Did not many who were safely delivered from Egypt fail to arrive in Canaan? Even though Lot’s wife got out of Sodom, did she arrive in a place of safety? Did the man who received a real talent from a real master, and was given a real stewardship, have it taken from him? And was he not cast into outer darkness? The answer to all of these questions is too obvious to say more.

And if God will save a person who continues to live a lie, even though he professes to know Christ, what rule of thought would prohibit us from thinking all sinners would not be saved?

SINNERS WILL BE JUDGED AS SINNERS

The flesh reasons, *“Why am I also still judged as a sinner?”* The question is a fundamentally dishonest one. If Jesus came into the world *“to save sinners”* (1 Tim 1:15), precisely what distinguishes a saved person from an unsaved one? Ultimately, it is faith. But faith is *“the victory that overcomes the world”* (1 John 5:4-5). Those who live in sin are not living by faith. Were it possible to live by faith and still remain in sin, faith would be proved to be impotent.

last time” (1 Pet 1:5), the whole of it is not yet possessed. If Jesus is going to *“appear the second time”* *“for salvation,”* then more is yet to be possessed than we presently have (Heb 9:28). Even our adoption is not yet complete. We have, it is true, received *“the Spirit of adoption”* (Rom 8:15), but there is more to be experienced. As it is written, *“we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body”* (Rom 8:23).

chose to live in sin? If such a person once made a profession of faith, would God be unjust in condemning them for their unbelief? What is the rationale behind this contemptible teaching? What would lead a person to the conclusion that the glory and honor of God would be advanced, and the disobedient saved, in spite of the fact they walked in darkness?

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Men will be judged as sinners when that is, in fact, what they are. They will not be able to justify their sin, for a Propitiation has been provided for it. They cannot claim a right to salvation because God received glory upon them, for they have *“crucified the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame”* (Heb 6:6).

Jesus is *“bringing many sons to glory,”* but they are not yet there (Heb 2:10). Israel did not come into Canaan as soon as they left Egypt, and neither do we enter into heaven as soon as we are forgiven our sins. There is a wilderness journey from here to glory, and we are not to assume it will be completed FOR us. God will complete the work by working IN US *“both to will and to do of His own good pleasure”* (Phil 2:13). That involves being

But I will wax bold and tell you WHY

In the end, a righteousness from God must be possessed, and it can only be obtained by faith. God will allow no excuse for involvement in sin. He has made righteousness available.

A FALSE CHARGE

“And why not say, “Let us do evil that good may come”?; as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.”

Again, I want to emphasize that this is not a literal statement made by the

mouths of all sinners. It is a corrupt manner of reasoning, and is being exposed by the Spirit because it is not evident.

Here the Apostle deals with the response of wicked men to his teaching of God’s grace. With great power, the Spirit spoke through Him of the grace of God,

affirming that salvation is unequivocally *“by grace through faith”* (Eph 2:8). Confirming the superiority of grace, it is affirmed, *“Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound”* (Rom 5:20). Sin, in this case, became an occasion for the reception of God’s grace.

Though sin had ravished us, taking us down to the depths, the grace of God retrieved us, raising us into “heavenly places” (Eph 2:6). Even though “we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life”^{2NKJV} (Tit 3:3-7).

Grace outweighed sin. The more sin there was, the more grace was received. That is a marvelous circumstance. One would think it impossible to corrupt such wonderful teaching. But flesh manages to corrupt it anyway, as is characteristic of it.

The charge brought against Paul was leveled by the Jews, not the Gentiles. They thought that because Paul repudiated the Law as a means to righteousness (Rom 10:4), he actually was encouraging sin in his doctrine. This line of thinking is still held by many people in the Christian community. Paul addresses this matter later, in the sixth chapter. There he shows how foolish the notion is. “*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*” (Rom 6:1-2). Again he says, “*What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid*” (Rom 6:15). Something overlooked by the legalist is that grace makes sin unreasonable and detestable. In the experience of “*the true grace of God*” (1 Pet 5:12), men are effectively taught to “*deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,*” not indulge them (Tit 2:12).

Jude spoke of “*ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness,*

and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 4). They used grace to cover up their own preference for sin, and justify their transgressions.

WHY THE VIEW IS WRONG

While sin necessitates the grace of God, it does not produce or create it. Grace does not come to men because of sin, but because of Divine love and interest in men. Thus, grace is not automatically received when men sin. Sinners must first hear the good news of the Gospel and embrace it by faith, else grace cannot be

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received. God is not disposed to lavish His grace upon men simply because they have sinned. Were that the case, He would be obliged to pour it upon everyone.

Sin is an evil tree than cannot produce good fruit. As Jesus said, “*Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire*” (Matt 7:17-19). It is not possible for good, of itself, to spring out of evil—for grace to be given simply because it is needed.

The sophist will object, pointing to Joseph, for example, who was blessed of God in grievous circumstances. Following the revelation of himself to his brothers, he said, “*But as for you, ye thought evil*

against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Gen 50:20). In this case, God overturned the wicked counsel of Joseph’s brothers in order to bring Joseph good. He was not blessed **because** they did evil. Were it not for the intervention of God, nothing good would have come from Joseph’s hateful treatment by his brothers. Their intent was an evil tree from which no good fruit could come.

Similarly, God overturned the apparently superior counsel of Ahithophel, co-conspirator with wicked Absalom (2 Sam 25:31-34).

Slanderosly Reported

Good doctrine can be distorted by the enemies of God. Thus men took the glorious message of the grace of God, and said Paul was encouraging people to sin, so they could receive even more grace. One might wonder precisely why this charge was made against the Apostle. That wonderment is largely owing to the general absence of such teaching in our time. Allow me to briefly mention some of the pivotal teachings of the Apostle who labored more abundantly than they all. These are taken from the book of Romans, and are only representative.

- ☞ That a message is God’s power to salvation, not human achievement (1:16).
- ☞ None are righteous of themselves (3:10).
- ☞ The righteousness of God has been revealed without the Law (3:21).
- ☞ That there are some people to whom the Lord will not impute sin (4:6-8).
- ☞ That justification comes before the evidence of it, and righteousness is realized before the assurance of it (4:9-11).
- ☞ Righteousness is imputed upon the basis of faith in Christ (4:22-24).
- ☞ The gift of grace abounds to the many by Jesus Christ (5:15).
- ☞ The obedience of One is the basis for many being made righteous (5:19).
- ☞ Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound (5:20).

- ☞ We have become dead to the Law through the body of Christ (7:4).
- ☞ There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (8:1).
- ☞ God's predestined purpose is based upon His foreknowledge (8:29a).
- ☞ God has predetermined that those predestinated will be conformed to the image of His Son (8:29b).
- ☞ Nothing is able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (8:38-39).
- ☞ That grace and works cannot be mingled as a basis for salvation (11:6).

It should be evident to you that these are not common teachings in our day. Yet, they are at the very heart of the Gospel and sound doctrine. They admittedly are abrasive to the flesh, provoking it to speak against them, as though they granted a license for men to sin. All such affirmations are slanderous. There is no truth to them.

Those who preach these truths are often charged with being antinomians – without Law. The person laboring under a system of Law cannot believe that the grace of God is as effective as His commandments. Thus they refrain from teaching grace, viewing it as inferior to the demands of Law.

The power of the new creation

Those who minimize grace, or make no mention of it at all, fail to see the power and nature of the new creature. They continue to cling to the notion that men, provided with the right information and incentives, can extricate themselves from sin. They are really not convinced men need a righteousness from God.

When a person is born again, he is rendered capable of willingly fulfilling the righteousness outlined by the Law. He has been freed “from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2). While the remnants of the old nature remain in him (Rom 7:14-25), that is not the preeminent part of his person. He is primarily a “new creation.” Old things have passed away, and all things have become new (2 Cor 5:17). The essential person has been changed.

Rather than the grace of God

introducing a lenient attitude toward sin, it actually is a more powerful and demanding principle than Law. The person receiving the grace of God works harder, goes further, and is more fervent for God than any person under the Law. You have only to compare the rigorous life of Paul AFTER he tasted the grace of God in truth, with his life under the Law.

Thus Paul is not hesitant to speak against those who twisted the Gospel he preached. They were guilty of slander, as well as unbelief.

The End Does not Justify the Means

There is a secondary application of this text. Doing evil that good may abound may also apply to using ungodly means to

If any one is prone to think we are dealing with inconsequential matters, or mere theological technicalities, the Spirit says of the slanderers, “*Their condemnation is just.*” The KJV reads, “*whose damnation is just.*” The NIV reads, “*Their condemnation is deserved.*”

This is obviously a harsh denunciation, and richly deserving. To take the means appointed by God to deliver men from sin, and make it the occasion for continuing in sin, is a most grievous transgression. Any justification of sin is wrong, but to present God as approving or overlooking it will cause condemnation to come upon the person.

One additional thought on this: we are

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achieve, what is conceived to be, godly purposes. The modern church often employs questionable means to accomplish what it thinks is a good purpose. It is not uncommon for larger churches to use professional fund raisers, for example, to garner sufficient funds for a new building.

Others will go to the professions of the world to correct the moral behavior of their members. It is quite common to have profession counselors on the church staff whose only credentials are their degree in psychology. Additionally, some religious groups hire secular motivators to provoke zeal in their leaders.

Only godly means should be used to achieve godly purposes. If we are going to run the race to glory, it must be run “*lawfully,*” or in strict harmony with the Lord of glory (2 Tim 2:5). As simplistic as that may sound, it is still not clear to many people.

THEIR CONDEMNATION IS JUST

never put at a disadvantage by saying it the way God says it. In fact, the disadvantage comes when we do not use “*words which the Holy Spirit teaches*” (1 Cor 2:13). If the Scriptures say “*God imputes righteousness apart from works*” (Rom 4:6), that is the way we will say it. We have no regard whatsoever concerning those who imagine this gives a license to sin. It is their responsibility to conform their thoughts to God’s Word. It is never in order for us to avoid speaking in Scriptural words to avoid offending the unlearned, or even the wicked. If men will be condemned for refusing to receive the truth of God, we had better not seek to modify that truth, or to make it more palatable for them. If God’s judgment of them is just, we sin grievously if we seek to please them, or reduce the Gospel in order to appeal to them. It is not uncommon to hear people buttress their theological affirmations with statistics, language studies, non-Biblical historical occurrences, and even psychological principles. Such approaches betray the presence of the “*mind of the flesh.*”

CONCLUSION

We have been exposed to some very powerful reasoning in the Spirit. You sense that Paul had no fear of opposing ideas, or those who refused to accept the Gospel he preached. His confidence was in the Lord, and his heart and mind were dominated with the truth of the Gospel. One of the great travesties of our time is the exaltation of the world's wisdom, and earthly disciplines of learning. Academia has been exalted to the throne of human thought. Men representing themselves as ministers of the Gospel, or laborers in the vineyard of the Lord, often rely on these things in their ministries.

It is not uncommon to hear people buttress their theological affirmations with statistics, language studies, non-Biblical historical occurrences, and even psychological principles. For example, I have often heard people base their teaching of responsibilities upon the

alleged differences between the male and female brain, or emotional makeup. These are not innocent departures. They reveal an affinity with the world that will lead people away from God.

Lest you think this has nothing to do with this passage, allow me to draw some things to your attention. Did you notice the total absence of such reasoning in our text? The only appeal is made to the truth of God. Those who are not in agreement with it are soundly denounced. There is no appeal to human logic, or any form of human science. Everything is based upon the Gospel of Christ, and the Divine assessment of humanity. When false reasoning is thrown down, the appeal is made to what God has revealed.

Let us also learn from this never to seek to justify or explain sin. God has already told us why men sin. It is because

they are sinful—because they have fallen, and are ruled by the wicked one. The answer to sin is a Savior, not a method, not a discipline, not a law. If men are going to be righteous before God, they must “*be made the righteousness of God*” in Christ (2 Cor 5:21).

This passage of Scripture has successfully answered every argument against receiving the righteousness of God. If men introduce other arguments, they are simply facets of the ones dealt with in this text. Every objection to imputed righteousness has been answered. Every one who imagines they have no need for righteousness has been put to silence. The notional strength and wisdom of the natural man has been violently thrown down. There is no recourse open to man other than believing the Gospel and receiving the righteousness of God.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 5/5/2000. Continuing in our studies on Romans, we will cover 3:9-20, **THE UNIVERSALITY OF SIN.**” The lengthy treatise of human sin alerts us to the dulness of men concerning their need for righteousness. This text will show that none have escaped sin and guilt. The provision of salvation is for all, because all have sinned. Our meeting will convene at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God.

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