

## Romans 3:1-8

One of the major challenges to the church in all ages is to strike the right balance between the biblical doctrines of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Some Christians emphasize the sovereignty of God to such a degree that they eliminate the biblical teaching of human responsibility.

Many professing Christians through the centuries have believed that they do not need to obey the law of God. Tragically this is still the case today.

This is a major error. It is called antinomianism or lawlessness.

### Summary

**In Romans 3:1-8, Paul deals with antinomianism within the church.**

#### **1. Answered Objections vv. 1-4**

Paul begins this section of his letter by entering into a conversation with an imagined debate partner. Given what the apostle has already said about the guilty status of the Jews (**Rom 2:1-16**), Paul's Jewish audience would have likely objected, "Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?" (**Rom. 3:1**)?

Paul's answer is simple: Israel's chief advantage was that God had given to them His oracles, His revelation and His Word, (**Rom 3:2**).

Paul then goes on to ask a rhetorical question (**Rom 3:3**).

Paul's answer is quick and direct (**Rom. 3:4**). Just because some of the Jews did not believe, does not disprove God's faithfulness to His word, promises, or covenant.

Paul asserts the faithfulness of God by saying that all men are liars in comparison with the Lord's truthfulness, quoting from **Psalms 51:4**.

God faithfully fulfills His promises to grant salvation by circumcising the hearts of His people, and He is also faithful and righteous when He punishes unbelief.

#### **2. Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility vv. 5-8**

God's sovereign election does not invalidate the biblical truth of human responsibility. This is the next issue that Paul anticipates and answers (**Rom. 8:5-8**).

Should we not sin all the more that God's grace might shine all the more brightly?

Paul was not dealing with a hypothetical situation, because he had to deny the charge that this was the nature of his apostolic teaching (**Rom 3:8**).

These questions and accusations were a perversion of apostolic teaching, which is why it warranted Paul's adamant response, "By no means!"

Throughout the first two chapters of Romans, Paul challenges the various things to which the Jews looked for salvation.

Paul's fellow Jews also had a tendency toward antinomianism (**Rom 2:17-23**). The apostle clearly demonstrates that antinomianism is equally unacceptable to God, even if thinly veiled behind a veneer of pretended piety. In addition, the Jews could not take refuge in the fact that God had not given them circumcised hearts. Yes, there is divine sovereignty, but as Paul has shown here, there is also human responsibility.

We should not take it for granted that God will overlook our sins just because we come from a Christian family or regularly attend a Bible-believing church. Antinomianism is still a problem in the church today. E.g. most of the professing church of the Lord Jesus Christ is familiar with the fourth commandment yet many Christians believe that it no longer applies. They believe that somehow Christians in the New Covenant have only nine commandments, not ten. This is a form of antinomianism. Like the Jews in Paul's day, far too many Christians think their church attendance will cover their sins. They pay lip service to God's law on a Sunday, or perhaps just on a Sunday Morning, but during the rest of the week they live like an unbeliever. On Sunday they promote the law and teach others not to steal, commit adultery, or worship false gods, and then Monday through Saturday, like the Jews of Paul's day, they practice what they condemn on Sunday. Will we take an indifferent attitude toward the law of God, or will we strive to seek God's kingdom and His righteousness? Paul's warnings to his fellow Israelites are equally applicable to the church in our own day.

### 3. Only Refuge

We must not take refuge in anything or anyone but Jesus Christ. Only faith alone, in Christ alone, by God's grace alone, constitutes the divine embassy of peace and refuge from our sin and God's judgment.

We should be aware of the dangers of antinomianism. We cannot be saved by our imperfect obedience to the law, but neither can we dismiss the law. We can be saved only by faith in Christ; we are saved by faith alone, BUT we do not have a faith that is alone. A true believer will produce good works and desire to obey the law, a subject that Paul addresses in the chapters to come (**Romans 12-16**). We should also remember that God is always faithful to His word, whether in His promises to save His people or to judge unbelief and disobedience.

Rather than try to establish our own righteousness through observing the law or disregarding the law, seek shelter in Christ and pray that He would equip us to glorify Him in all that we do.