

July 25, 2021

Jewish Objections

Romans 3:5-8

Part 3

Don't be intimidated by objections. The sinner's only hope is the gospel of Jesus Christ

LTS: Rom. 8:5-15

The gospel of Jesus Christ is not merely a theological proposition to be believed, it is the power of God unto salvation. That is, it is the power by which sinners who deserve wrath because of their sin, are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. From the moment a sinner believes, God counts him/ her righteous in His sight and set free from the penalty of sin. The theological term here is "Justification," which means that God declares them righteous according to His Law.

Sometimes theologians refer to this as "forensic justification" because declaring one righteous is a legal transaction that takes place in the court of the eternal Judge before whom all of us must one day give an account.

The prospect of being declared righteous by God is truly good news. In fact, it is the most wonderful news the world has ever heard.

Nevertheless, we must be careful NOT to think of the Gospel merely as heavenly paperwork ratifying God's declaration of our acquittal. You see, while the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe, it is also the power of God by which sinners are changed and transformed from the inside-out.

This is profoundly illustrated in the biographical record of the life of Saul of Tarsus. Here's a man who, before encountering the risen Christ, made it his chief ambition to discredit and destroy all who claimed to be disciples of Jesus. After his own encounter with Jesus, however, he became the most passionate and effective herald of the Gospel the world has ever known. It is NO exaggeration to say that when he met Jesus, his whole worldview was changed. He viewed life in a radically different way. He suddenly discovered in his heart a an inexplicable and unrelenting love for Jesus and those who followed him.

Moreover, there is nothing that he was more passionate about than proclaiming the gospel (the Good News) that the long-awaited Messiah had come and was establishing His Kingdom in their hearts.

I suspect many of you experienced a similar transformation of heart on the day you encountered the message of the risen Christ and believed. It was like you suddenly discovered a treasure in a field, and for joy over it you were willing to sell everything to purchase that field and share the treasure with everyone you knew.

However, soon you found yourself more than a little surprised when you discovered that many people didn't want to hear the Good News you were so eager to share. It didn't seem like Good News to them at all. They just thought you were weird, excessively religious or fanatical in your faith.

Some of those people eventually distanced themselves from you. Others, however, voiced their skepticism about the message of Jesus by raising a number objections.

This is the common experience of new believers even to this day. That's why so many books and courses are available today to help believers know how to respond to common objections to the gospel. In fact, if you take advantage of our evangelism course that begins Aug. 1st, you will learn how to respond to many common objections.

In the 3rd chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, he brings us in on a conversation in which some unbelieving Jews are raising objections to His Gospel. Specifically, I see 4 objections in this text that Paul addresses.

But before we get back in the flow of addressing these objections, let's stand together and read the text before us.

Read Rom. 3:1-8

Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? ² Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. ³ What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? ⁴ By no means! Let God be true though everyone were a liar. As it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged." ⁵ But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) ⁶ By no means! For then how could God judge the world? ⁷ But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? ⁸ And why NOT do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

May the Lord add his blessing
to the reading of His word.

As I said a moment ago, there are 4 objections to Paul's Gospel that the Jews have frequently argued. In their way of thinking, if Paul says that unrepentant Jewish men and women will be judged by God for their sin same as Gentile sinners, then either the Jews have misunderstood the O.T. Scriptures in a significant way, or else Paul is a false teacher.

Yesterday, as I was reading Romans for my own edification it occurred to me to ask, “Why do the Jews think Paul’s gospel starts with the BAD NEWS that they (God’s chosen people according to the flesh) are in danger of being declared unfit for heaven because of their sin? So, I did what you would do. I flipped back one chapter to refresh on the context. And here is what I discovered afresh from Chapter two:

Read v. 1-3

Therefore you [Jews] have no excuse, every one of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. ² And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. ³ But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?

Verse 5

But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

V. 9

There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man [every human being] who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek. For God shows no partiality.

And in case these verses are not clear enough, jump ahead to 3:9-11

What then? Are we Jews any better off [than the Gentiles]? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰ as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one;

So, the Jews had it right when they accused Paul of publicly teaching that the Jewish people have just as much cause to fear the looming judgment of God as the Gentiles. And Paul was right to preach it, because salvation can only be received when God’s threat of judgment is believed.¹

But the Jews didn’t believe it! They didn’t believe God would cast any Jewish person into eternal judgment. So, they attacked Paul with their objections. By way of review, then, let’s refresh on the first two objections. The first objection is,

I. Doesn’t Paul’s Gospel nullify Jewish privilege? (1-2)

1. This was a relevant question because God had entered a special covenant with them through which He promised MANY blessings, benefits and advantages that no other nation in the world had been offered. Israel was God’s special treasure. As far as the Jews were concerned, salvation

¹ Dan Kirk

was their birthright. In other words, they believed salvation was theirs by virtue of their Jewishness.

2. In point of fact their Jewishness was the grounds of many blessings from God. In v. 1 they ask, “Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what value is circumcision?” Paul answers, “Much in every way.” For example, the Jews were entrusted with the very oracles of God. It was only to the nation of Israel that God entrusted the enscripturated word. That is, through the Scriptures

- He revealed himself,
- He revealed divine wisdom for life,
- He revealed God’s plan for the ages,
- And most importantly, he revealed how rebellious sinners can be reconciled to God.
- All of this He gave to the Jews alone. And he gave it to them in a book.

3. Paul’s argument, against which the Jews railed, was NOT that they [the Jews] had no special privileges, but that those privileges – as amazing as they were - could not save them from the just and holy judgment of God for their sin. Salvation from God’s judgment could only come through faith in their Messiah, Jesus Christ.

4. The Jew’s second objection to Paul’s Gospel went like this:

II. Doesn’t Paul’s gospel make God unfaithful?

Read v. 3-4

“What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?”
⁴ [Paul counters with], “By no means! Let God be true though everyone were a liar, as it is written, “That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.”

1, In this objection the Jews are appealing to the promises of God. Didn’t God promise that he would bring His people into His kingdom forever? Indeed he did. What they had forgotten, however, was that a true Jew is not merely one outwardly but inwardly by the spirit and not by the letter.

2, And there was something else they had forgotten. Namely, that God’s promises to them were not only to bless and save them if they believed and obeyed, but also to bring upon them tribulation and distress for disobedience, idolatry, and unbelief.

3. In other words, God would be just as faithful to uphold his promises of judgment as his promises of blessing. He is faithful to ALL of His promises!

4. Once again, they mistakenly thought that they were exempt from the threat of judgment on the grounds of their Jewishness. In their minds, to suggest otherwise is tantamount to questioning the faithfulness of God who cannot change. Is this what you are suggesting, Paul? That God is unfaithful to His people?

“Me Ginoita.”

Not now, not ever, not in a million years will God fail to keep his promises. And one of those promises is that He will bring judgment upon every unbelieving Jew just as He did when, because of their unbelief at the border of the promised land, God sentenced them to wander in the wilderness 40 years until every man of that faithless generation died in the desert. And in the end, there could be no doubt – God was faithful to His promises.

5. So, while it is true that the Jews had received many special privileges from God, NONE of those privileges had the power save them from the wrath of God because of their sin.

6. In fact, David (whom Paul quotes in this passage) is a great biblical example of a prominent Jew who knew that he deserved God’s judgment for sin. And he responded to his sin with broken, contrite repentance and faith.

7. Paul was simply imploring the Jews of his day to follow the example of the broken-hearted king of Israel. If anyone merited a pass with regard to the judgment of God upon sin, it was Israel’s king, the “man after God’s own heart.” But David was absolutely convinced that whatever judgment God may have pronounced upon him for his sin, it would be a just, holy, and proper judgment.

- Would you allow me to repeat something I said a few weeks ago?
- O my friends, you and I are the beneficiaries of so many spiritual blessings and privileges.
- It is so easy to deceive ourselves into assuming that God must loves us very much and have a special place reserved in heaven for us because we faithfully attend church, read our Bibles once in a while, and listen to Christian radio, and participate in various ministries.
- But none of these benefits and privileges can pay the price for your sin. Dear friend, listen to me. Religious people die and wake up in Hell every day. That’s why Jesus warned that the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter it are many (Matt. 7:13-14). On the other hand, “The gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.” Why? I suspect it’s because it is so difficult to let go of our pride and throw ourselves upon the mercy of the court.
- I suspect it’s because we prefer to earn our way to heaven.
- And I suspect it’s because we love the approval of others over a relationship with a just and holy God.
- O’ I plead with you this morning to approach the narrow gate and come to Jesus with...
 - Broken-hearted transparency about your sin.
 - Come with broken-hearted repentance and godly grief.
 - Come with broken-hearted cries for mercy.

- Come with broken-hearted love for Christ because He bore the full measure of the wrath of God on the cross in your place.
- The gate may be small and the way hard, but the door is open for you to pass through. Won't you come?

8. Returning now to our text, Paul's response to the latest Jewish objection is "No!" God has never failed to keep His promises. And if he sends them into everlasting punishment prepared for the devil and his angels, He will do it in an act of faithfulness to His promises.

9. This brings us to the 3rd and 4th objections the Jews brought against Paul's Gospel.

III. Doesn't Paul's Gospel make God unrighteousness? (5-6)

1. Once again, the objection of the Jews has to do with the part of Paul's gospel that says "unbelieving Jews will have to face divine judgment because of their sin - same as the Gentiles.

2. Verses 5-6 are especially difficult to get our heads around because we have to insert the objection that Paul assumes we understand.

Read v. 5-6

But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.)⁶ By no means! For then how could God judge the world?

1. There is an unstated premise that the Jews are using as a prop for this misguided objection. The premise is that sin [unrighteousness] of men serves to magnify the glory of God's righteousness.

2. Indeed, this is not a far-fetched idea. We know from the O.T. that God judged sinners for the purpose of setting His glory on display. For example:

- Isaiah 5:16 But the LORD of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.
- Exodus 14:4 "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD."
- Joshua 7:19 Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD God of Israel and give praise to him. And tell me now, what you have done; do not hide it from me."
- Ezekiel 7:27 "The king mourns, the prince is wrapped in despair, and the hands of the people of the land are paralyzed by terror. According to their way I will do to them, and according to their judgments I will judge them, and they shall know that I am the LORD."

- Ezekiel 38:23 “So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

3. So, it is true that the sin of man [and his condemnation for sin] magnifies the glory of God. But the second half of their premise is mistaken. Namely; that since God benefits from man’s sin [that is, by magnifying His glory it is wrong for God to judge them. Or, in the language of this verse, their complaint is that God would be unrighteous to judge those whose sin results in God’s glory.

4. This is a classic example of the fallacy of the Ends justifies the means. The problem with that way of thinking, however, is that if God were to withhold judgment from Jewish sinners, he would have NO grounds upon which to judge the world [the Gentiles]. God cannot be capricious in his judgment. He is Not and unjust judge. Therefore, he must judge the sinner no matter who he is lineage. And every Jew believed that God will judge the world.

- Psalm 9:7–8 “But the LORD sits enthroned forever; he has established the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness.”

5. You see, God has to judge the world. There has to be a judgment. Elaborating on this point, Tom Schreiner suggests that “If there is no Final judgment then there is no moral universe at all. If there is not a final reckoning there is no such thing as good or evil. There’s only preferences.”² Everything is relative. Nothing really matters. But the Jews don’t believe that for one minute! And in reality, no one believes that. Morality only makes sense in a world in which there is a judgment. At the end of the day everyone believes in right and wrong. Everyone knows intuitively that injustice demands justice. It is written on our hearts from our very first heartbeat.

6. So the Jews were wrong. The judgment of Jewish sinners does not make God unrighteous. To the contrary, it proves that He is righteous in all his deeds and justified when he judges. He judges the world with righteousness,

7. And this brings us to the 4th and final objection.

IV. Does Paul’s Gospel make God Unjust? (7-8).

1. This objection is similar to the previous. Here’s how Paul presents it on the behalf of his objectors:

Read 7-8

But if through my lie God’s truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? ⁸ And why not do evil that good

² Thomas Schreiner, audio message *God’s Faithfulness and Justice*.

may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying.
Their condemnation is just.

2. This is basically objection 3 revisited. These Jews are looking for any kind of loophole to exempt themselves from the wrath of God, but none of their sophistry will matter one wit when they stand before the great white throne .

3. Notice that this argument corresponds to Rom 6:1, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? *Me-Ginoita!* Don’t even think about it!

4. God makes no allowance for sin. And the fact that man’s sin gives opportunity for God’s saving grace to shine has no bearing on whether one will face divine judgment for sin.

5. All sin must be punished. There are only two options. Either the person can bear the penalty on their own in eternal condemnation, or He can fly to Christ in broken-hearted repentance and faith in Jesus who is our righteousness, sanctification and redemption and salvation. (1 Cor. 1:30).