

The Wonder of God's Sovereignty

Romans, Part XIV

Romans 3:5-8

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I. God's Faithfulness Established

II. A Litany of Objections

- What then is the advantage of being a Jew? (3:1-2) *Much in every way!*
- Jewish unfaithfulness doesn't nullify God's faithfulness, does it? (3:3-4) *Certainly not!*
- God's ability to turn unrighteousness to His glory doesn't undermine His righteous judgment or human responsibility, does it? (3:5-8)
- So are Jews better than Gentiles? (3:9-20)

III. Two Related Questions (cf. Rom 9:14-21)

A. The Question of God's Justice (5-6 cf. 1:18; 9:19ff)

Paul declared that God's wrath is directed against all *unrighteousness* of men: "*the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*" (1:18). But now the question arises, "*If the unrighteousness of men doesn't thwart God's purposes in the world, if in fact our unrighteousness demonstrates God's righteousness, then isn't God unjust to judge men?*"

⁵But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.) ⁶Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world?

B. The Question of Human Responsibility (7-8)

Even when men lie and deceive, God accomplishes His true and righteous purposes – He fulfills His Word. So does this excuse our sin?

⁷For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner? ⁸And 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.

Those who use God's sovereign power as justification for practicing unrighteousness will most certainly be condemned.

IV. The Wonder of God's Sovereignty

A. I speak as a man (cf. Job 40:3-5; 42:2-3)

Paul refuses to limit God's _____ in order to assert human _____. God is absolutely and completely sovereign and, simultaneously, men are wholly and completely responsible for their actions. Is this a great mystery? Absolutely! But Scripture asserts that mystery and so we are called to embrace it. As Job acknowledged:

²I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. ³You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. (Job 42:2-3)

An Outline of Romans

- I. Introduction
 - A. Opening Greeting (1:1-7)
 - B. Travel Plans (1:8-15)
 - C. Theme (1:16-17)
- II. Credenda: "The Righteous by Faith" Shall Live
 - A. God's Wrath vs. Unrighteousness (1:18-3:20)
 - B. The Revelation of God's Righteousness (3:21-5)
 - C. The Triumph of God's Righteousness (6-8)
 - D. The Universality of God's Righteousness (9-11)
- III. Agenda: The Righteous "Shall Live by Faith"
 - A. Transformed not Conformed (12-13)
 - B. Patient not Proud (14-15:13)
- IV. Conclusion
 - A. Paul, Minister to the Gentiles (15:14-21)
 - B. Travel Plans (15:22-33)
 - C. Closing Greetings and Benediction (16)

B. God's Sovereignty and God's Righteousness

1. Does the *unrighteousness of men* demonstrate *God's righteousness*?

As we saw last week, the clear answer to this question is, "_____!" "*The Lord has made all for Himself, Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom*" (Pr 16:4). Consider the following examples:

- i. The unrighteousness of Joseph's brothers (Gen 50:20)
- ii. The unrighteousness of Samson's lust (Judg 14:4 cf. Dt 7:3)

2. So is God unjust to judge the unrighteousness of men? (Ps 7:11-13)

But if our *unrighteousness* demonstrates His *righteousness*, isn't it unfair of Him to judge us? Is God unjust to judge the *unrighteousness* of men? Paul answers, "*Certainly not!*" Consider the case of ancient Assyria (Is 10:5-7):

⁵"Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger And the staff in whose hand is My indignation. ⁶I will send him against an ungodly nation, And against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, To seize the spoil, to take the prey, And to tread them down like the mire of the streets. ⁷Yet he does not mean so, Nor does his heart think so; But it is in his heart to destroy, And cut off not a few nations.

So does God control all things and govern all things, including the wicked actions of wicked men? Yes! Is He, therefore, unjust? No!

The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in His providence, that it extends itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, but such as has joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering, and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to His own holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceeds only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin (WCF 5.4).

C. God's Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

1. Is the *truth of God* increased to His glory *through human lies*?

- i. God's prophecy to Abraham and Joseph's brothers (cf. Gen 15:13-14)
- ii. God's prophecies to Moses and Pharaoh's heart (Ex 4:21; 7:3-5)

God prophesied, _____ *Moses even went to Egypt*, that He Himself was going to harden Pharaoh's heart so that Pharaoh would not listen to Moses:

²¹And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.... ³And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. ⁴But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies and My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. ⁵And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD..."

2. Does this undermine human responsibility?

Does God's sovereign control of all human actions and decisions undermine human responsibility? Certainly not! Consider the case of Judas (Acts 1:16-17, 20):

¹⁶"Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; ¹⁷for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry." ... ²⁰"For it is written in the Book of Psalms: 'Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it'; and, 'Let another take his office.'"

V. Conclusion (Acts 2:22-24 cf. Rev 13:8)

²²"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—²³Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; ²⁴whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death...