

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

Romans 3:1-8

In the first two chapters of Romans, Paul first showed that the gentiles were guilty of all manner of evil. Then he went on to show that the Jews were just as guilty as the gentiles: they were just as guilty as everybody else.

So, then, the question naturally arises, "What's the point of being a Jew and trying to keep all these detailed laws? What do I gain by being good if everybody else is being bad? Especially when we're all declared to be guilty whether we've tried to be good or not. What's the use?"

This is just the question that Paul now takes up in the third chapter of Romans:

1. "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?"
2. "Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."

Despite their improperly placed pride, despite their failure to match their inward attitude to the outward sign of God's choosing them, the Jews still had many advantages. These were mostly because God committed the Old Testament scriptures into their care until His grace exploded across all of creation at the resurrection of Christ.

Throughout all of history, God has set the rules for salvation. The choosing of Abraham involved the setting-up of the divine way of access to God. The priests shed the blood which made it possible for the sins of Israel to be forgiven.

There was no other way of salvation! If you weren't a Jew, the only way to be saved was to proseletize, become a Jew, and believe God's promise of salvation.

We must never forget that the one basis of salvation has always been the shed blood of the Son of God! Moses himself is in Heaven today, not because he kept the law (for he did not), but because his brother Aaron killed a lamb for the remission of his sins, and that was a picture of the fulfillment of the atonement by Jesus's death. It is by the death and resurrection of Jesus that Moses is saved!

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But the Jews did not remain true to the trust. Such a great responsibility remains a blessing only so long as you faithfully carry out that responsibility.

One day, President Abraham Lincoln was riding in a coach with a colonel from Kentucky. The colonel took a bottle of whiskey out of his pocket. He offered Mr. Lincoln a drink. Mr. Lincoln said, "No thank you, Colonel. I never drink whiskey." In a little while, the colonel took some cigars out of his pocket and offered one to Mr. Lincoln. Again Mr. Lincoln said, "No, thank you, Colonel." Then Mr. Lincoln said, "I want to tell you a story."

"One day, when I was about nine years old, my mother called me to her bed. She was very sick. She said, 'Abe, the doctor tells me that I am not going to get well. I want you to be a good boy. I want you to promise me before I go that you will never use whiskey or tobacco as long as you live.' I promised my mother that I never would, and up to this hour, I kept this promise! Would you advise me to break that promise?"

The colonel put his hand on Mr. Lincoln's shoulder and said, "Mr. Lincoln, I would not have you break that promise for the world! It is one of the best promises you ever made. I would give a thousand dollars today if I had made my mother a promise like that and had kept it like you have done. I would be a much better man than I am!"

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President Lincoln was true to the responsibility which he had accepted. But, consider the case of another public servant who wasn't so true:

Pearl Harbor! The morning of December 7, 1941 found 353 Japanese airplanes swarming all over the Harbor site. Within a couple of hours, America lost 8 big battleships, 6 major airfields, almost all of its planes in the Hawaii area, and 2,400 men. That happened at 7:50 am in what was supposedly a surprise attack. But these are the startling facts:

That morning at 7 am, while the Japanese warplanes were 137 miles (50 minutes) away, two US soldiers on a small radar station in the Pacific scanned the screen and saw dots and dots appearing, until the whole screen was filled. These soldiers notified their youthful supervisor, a lieutenant. No other officer was around, that being a Sunday.

The lieutenant thought these must be planes from California, and without another thought, said these crucial words: "Don't worry about it." There would have been time to scramble the planes at Pearl Harbor, prepare the battleships, and shelter the men, but this lieutenant, at the most

responsible moment of his career, failed the nation.

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It's also not enough to simply remain true to the goal we've chosen. It's also important to choose the right goal in the first place. Often in this life, people set their sights on goals which, even if faithfully worked for and achieved, will have little or no lasting value:

For example, ~~not too long ago~~ the efforts of Carol Frazer, 17, to have a street named after singer Elvis Presley who died in 1977 were realized. The city fathers of suburban Whitehaven have assigned the name of a subdivision lane as "Elvis Place." Miss Frazer said she was so excited she didn't know what to do. Probably go to an Elvis movie. But she has seen them all:

Love Me Tender, 107 times, Loving You, 110 times, King Creole, 91 times, and Jailhouse Rock, 79 times.

Carol who moved from New Orleans to be near Elvis, lives in a tiny Memphis flat with her mother, plus twelve scrapbooks about Elvis, 40,000 pictures of him, and a man-size cardboard replica of him overlooking her bed.

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3. "For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?"

4. "God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."

Romans 3:3 & 4 tell us that even though some who claim the name of God turn out to be liars, hypocrites, and faithless; we can still trust God! He will never fail us!

Consider what is really being asked in these two verses. Shall men's neglect of the truth defeat God's plan? Shall the fact that men, like swine, have trampled the pearls beneath their feet, change the pearls to pebbles?

Shall the Word of God cease to be divine because a preacher of the word turns from it and dishonors God? Shall man's faithlessness cancel out God's faithfulness? Will the Lord of Heaven cease to care for man because some men have ceased to care about God? Shall the introduction of a lie change the nature of truth?

GOD FORBID!

5. "But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man.)"

6. "God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?"

Romans 3: 5 & 6 refute the false doctrine of antinomianism: the idea that if you are saved, you are free to do whatever you want. You're saved by faith, not by works: you're going to Heaven no matter what you do, so do whatever you want. And if our unrighteousness makes the righteousness of God appear even more glorious, why should He complain about it?

I myself was trapped by that Satanic false doctrine for a time. Then I read Romans 3:5 & 6, and it told me the doctrine was wrong! Thank God for His Bible! Thank God that He doesn't leave us without guidance and instruction. Thank God for His patient forbearance and for His leading to the truth.

Looking back on that time, it amazes me that the human heart can have such audacity that it doesn't even flinch from attacking what it cannot comprehend.

The mind finds itself in ignorance, and wishing to be exalted in its own eyes, unwilling to cast itself upon God as bankrupt, flouts what it does not wish to accept, denies that which reduces it to its proper stature, assails that which convicts it of its nothingness, and then boldly proclaims that error is truth.

Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

7. "For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?"

8. "And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just."

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Real truth is rare. Bald-faced lies are also not that common. But mankind has become the master of the plausible half-truth, the mild shading, the convenient fiction!

Sometimes I think that's even worse!

The next time you receive a letter that carries the word "Sincerely" above the signature of the writer, pause a moment and think of the origin of that word. As you may recall, it was first used as "sin cerely," meaning "without wax," by ancient sculptors to mark a flawless piece of work. Wax was then commonly employed to conceal defects, to patch a chipped nose, a poorly shaped finger, etc. Sincerely is too honest a word to be used loosely, but it is a good word when consciously employed.

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And all this wax has made us gullible: often we don't even recognize the most blatant of lies:

Napolean often told this story: Once, while visiting a province he came on an old soldier with one arm severed, dressed in full uniform. On his uniform the proud fighter displayed the coveted Legion of Honor. "Where did you lose your arm?" Napolean asked. "At Austerlitz, sire," came the soldier's brisk reply.

"And for that you received the Legion of Honor?"

"Yes, sire. It is but a small token to pay for the decoration."

"You must be," the emporer said, "the kind of man who regrets he did not lose both arms for his country."

"What then would have been my reward?" asked the one-armed man.

"Then," Napolean replied, "I would have awarded you a double Legion of Honor." With that the proud old fighter drew his sword and immediately cut off his other arm.

This story was circulated for years. One day, someone finally asked, "How?"

Often we accept without question what people tell us, never stopping to think things through or to even momentarily doubt the wisdom of the world.

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I want you this morning to cut through all the crud that

the world tries to hand you about what's good for you and what you need to be happy!

I want you to get down to the real truth!

In John 3:36, Jesus said, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

And in John 14:6, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Jesus is the only way! He is the only truth! He is the only life! He is the only path to joy and Heaven! Everything else is just a cheating, lying trap, set by Satan to try to drag us away from our Father's love.

Hold fast to Jesus!

Hallelujah! Amen!

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