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## THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS (8)

### Reflection and Review

In chapter two, Paul, as God's voice has proved that we will be judged according to our works and not according to our privileges. Not only the Jews failed to realize this but we are in equal danger.

He finalized his teaching by driving home the sharp truth that outward conformity to the law in essence is very little different from being a heathen (vs. 29).

On the other hand, a Gentile who would keep the law, without having the privilege of belonging to the Jewish nation (OT Church), may look forward to reaping the blessing God promised.

We must not take this to mean, however, that there is *any* one of us able to do that. Paul isn't implying that natural man, in his fallen state, can earn his own salvation. The next verses in his letter will erase any illusions we may harbor about that. Paul is merely trying to dislodge the false confidence of the Jews who rested on their privileges.

In chapter three Paul deals first with anticipated objections and refutes them. Then he draws his first argument to its soul-withering conclusion about saving ourselves (Romans 3:9-20).

### Chapter 3:1-8

Paul anticipated objections from the Jewish readers which he immediately answered.

1. How would you put the first objection (vs.1) into your own words?
2. How did Paul answer this objection (vs. 2)? Ponder how this applies also to us and our children.
3. Paul's answer on the question of vs. 1 is quite spread out. He listed only one advantage that belonged to being a Jew. Later in this same letter, Paul adds the other advantages that belonged to being a Jew. Where are they listed and how do they apply to us?
4. Let's gather some other Scriptures which support that the Jews then and we today are highly privileged?
5. Someone stated, "If they proved unfaithful to their trust, their case would be worse than of the nations to which God has not revealed Himself." Can we Biblically support this? Does this apply to us also?

The second objection (vs. 3) is harder to understand because the language is so compact. Paul introduced a Jewish objector who, in a question, admitted that some of the Jewish people have not obeyed or believed God, "For what if some did not believe?" Having admitted that, he makes

the observation that this teaching will bring a serious consequence: God will then be unfaithful, “Shall their [*Jewish*] unbelief [*and the punishment in rejection*] make the faith [*faithfulness to His promises*] of God without effect?”

The objector assumed (rightly) that God has chosen the Jews as His people. Since He entered into a covenant with them, he implied that He should keep the Jews from perishing. The Jews evidently believed that they all were the children of Abraham and would be saved. But what Paul taught in chapter 2 means that Jews also would be dealt with like the Gentiles, and actually, they would be punished worse because their rejection of the law. In light of that, what value was the promise of God then?

Another commentator analyzed the thinking **of the objector** as follows, “Since the Jews had not believed in the Messiah, whom the Word of God promised, this advantage was not only of little value, it is actually harmful or detrimental.” (Hendriksen)

6. How did Paul answer this objection in vs. 4? Why was his quote from Ps. 51 so fitting?

The third objection (vs. 5) appears so wicked to Paul’s thinking that he apologizes for even mentioning it. When Paul added, “I speak as a man,” he is adding a disclaimer. It indicates that the bringing up of this sinful mode of reasoning was only in order to refute it with all the energy at his command.

The objection can be paraphrased as, “If man’s unrighteousness will serve to show forth God’s righteousness (or justice), as He punishes the sin, is it therefore not unjust of God to reward such a (good) contribution to His glory with the infliction of His wrath?” Or to say it shorter, “God would be unjust to punish the Jews for their wickedness since it commends His justice.” Simply put, How can God punish any sin that actually helps out to bring the glory of His holy and righteous character to the foreground?

7. How does Paul answer this objection?

The objection mentioned in verse 7 and 8 is similar to the last one. It appears that the objectors are very insistent. The objection is, “If my falsehood makes God’s truth shine more brightly by contrast, it brings great glory to Him; why then does He insist on condemning me as a sinner? The end – God’s glory – is good; why is the means – my sin – counted wrong? Surely the end justifies the means?”

8. How does Paul deal with this last thought?
9. What did you, or what should we, learn from working through such a section in God’s Word?

