**Text**: Romans 3:5-8

**Title:** The Just Judgment of God

**Truth**: Don’t twist the teaching of the Bible, since that brings condemnation from God.

**Date/Location**: Sunday April 21, 2013 at FBC

Introduction

Go back to Psalm 51 in your Bible. Recall that King David recorded there his repentance and confession after his sins. In 51:4, he totally opens himself to God by saying that he sinned against God. In effect, he was “justifying” God by agreeing to the charges, pleading guilty, and acknowledging his sin before he reached the future judgment. No one can accuse God of misjudging King David’s case because David has already admitted everything. When the judge comes along later and repeats the charges and the verdict, everyone will agree.

Paul quoted Psalm 51:4 in Romans 3:4. Even if some men are liars, or every man is a liar, God is still faithful, still just, and cannot be adjudged to be wrong. Sinner David admits *he is wrong*; but just as importantly he confesses that *God is right*.

Something happens when you sin and then make confession to God (1 John 1:9). **For one thing**, you put to practice the teaching that God is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. This assures you that your sins and their guilt are removed. **But another thing** is that you highlight the absolute rightness of God—His moral purity. In other words, our sinfulness brings into strong relief the sinlessness of God.

**Transition**: Paul’s doctrine is that even in our unrighteousness, the righteousness of God is brought out. But this thought can be taken two different directions. The faithful Christian will acknowledge that is the case, and continue to strive for righteousness. But some will pervert this truth and take it in a wrong direction.

I. Bad Objection #1: God is Unjust, v. 5-6

A. It doesn’t even feel right to type those words: Is God unjust? *Unjust*? The question should be startling, because to the Christian, any accusation against God’s justice should be startling. That’s why Paul says at the end of the verse, “I speak as a [sinful] man.” He hardly can bring himself to even suggest there is a possibility that God is unjust.

B. The *if* statement is assumed true for the sake of argument.

C. I believe when Paul says “our unrighteousness” he is referring to Jewish sin. That fits the context because all of chapters 2 and 3 have a Jewish focus. The same truth applies to all people. Jews might think they are on God’s good side “just because.” Nay! Even their sin points out God’s purity.

D. Paul asks a possible question: does this make God unjust to inflict wrath? If it is the case that we are doing God a favor by pointing up his righteousness, then how can he judge us *for that*?

This thought might come from a person who feels that God shouldn’t judge the Jewish person. They might object that God is unjust if he inflicts wrath on people. They might think that God is not being faithful (i.e., is unjust) to His Jewish promises if He exercises judgment against the Jew. Or, they might just say, “That’s not fair!”

E. This is quite obviously a false conclusion (v. 6), because it would eliminate the possibility of God judging or punishing anyone in the world. The conclusion is shown to be based on absurd reasoning. Paul calls the false conclusion out by saying “Certainly not!” Gen 18:25 says the Judge of all the earth will do justly.

F. Verse 7 restates in other terms the objection of verse 5.

G. Once again, notice Paul’s response:

1. I speak as a man – I’m using human arguments that are flawed.

2. Certainly not – this is a horrifying thought.

3. Then God couldn’t judge anyone – he shows the absurdity of the argument.

II. Bad Objection #2: More Sin Yields More Good

A. Now the perverted logic is taken to a yet farther extreme in verse 8. That is, if God is unjust to inflict wrath because our sin leads to His glory, then we can live in evil and everything will be great because God will get more glory.

B. “That’s what Paul teaches,” some people said. Those people hated what Paul was teaching. In order to put Paul down, they falsely accused him of teaching the heretical doctrine that we can be hedonists and God likes it.

C. It is a complete mischaracterization of Paul’s message to say that we can do evil and good will come. However, many have objected to the faith we have for that very reason. “You mean that a murderer can be saved because he believes in Jesus, but his victim may be condemned to Hell forever since he didn’t believe? Why not just murder and steal and whatever you want, then believe later?” In other words, do evil now and God will still let you into heaven.

By the way, that is entirely different than saying God will bring good out of bad (Romans 8:28).

D. All Paul can say to that is that it is just for such people to be condemned, not only for slander, but for twisting true doctrine into a false, misshapen, ugly thing. There is no way that you can get out of the gospel the proposition that “it is OK to sin.” It is NOT OK, because Jesus died to pay the penalty for sin. It wasn’t OK for Him. And it’s not OK for us.

E. Modern-Day Example. The people who Paul is “arguing with” in this passage hold some kind of view of theology and the Bible. What kind of belief system would lead them to object in this way to the gospel?

1. There is the antinomian view that says we don’t *have* to obey Scripture. We can sin, God will forgive, and don’t worry about it. These people would actually *agree* with the false statement in verse 8 instead of objecting to it, so it must be another kind of person that is objecting to Paul’s doctrine.

2. There is the view which says you have to do good works to be saved. Such people believe that evil-doers will be punished. Many today believe that God’s justice is distributed mechanically or on a “scale.” Someone who holds this view scoffs at the notion that a wicked sinner can be justified by faith alone—after all, you have to be GOOD to get into heaven, right? They would say that as a logical consequence of salvation by faith alone, we should just live on as sinners and more good will come of it. They actually believe that you have to do good in order for good to come to you.

3. In contrast, the true Christian teaching is that there is none who does good, and the only kind of people God saves are evil people. But that doesn’t mean that we continue in evil all the way! God not only justifies us, but he also regenerates us. Once we are saved, we have a disposition that hates evil. God is glorified even in the death of the wicked and His judgment of them; but He is *more* glorified when our lives reflect His holiness.

III. Re-Cap and Similar Situations Today

A. What is going on in Romans 3:1-8? Paul is facing some objections to his teaching:

The first objection was this: Paul your teaching is wrong because it suggests there is no advantage to being a Jew.

The second was this: Paul, your teaching is wrong because it suggests that the unfaithfulness of some will nullify the faithfulness of God.

The third is this: Paul, your teaching is wrong because it leads to the idea that you can do evil and good will come of it.

B. Against each objection Paul makes a strong case that his (God’s) doctrine is not truly objectionable. What is objectionable is the thinking that the objector has!

C. It is not difficult today to find other examples where people twist a true doctrine into a false conclusion. You frequently hear people attempt to use God’s attributes against Him. For example (and I speak as a man):

1. If God is good, He would not allow suffering. But suffering exists, so God must not be good.

2. If God is loving, He would not send someone to burn in Hell’s fire. But if your beliefs are true and God does send people to Hell, then He cannot be loving.

3. If God is all-powerful, then He can stop all evil. But evil obviously goes on, so God must not be all-powerful.

D. Then there are examples of people who make accusations against you for teaching some doctrine and then attributing to you some other teaching that is related but actually is far out in left field.

1. “He’s a dispensationalist and teaches that there are two ways of salvation.” That worn out accusation should never even come up, but it still does. That is a slanderous accusation about our teaching because we have *always* taught that there is only one way of salvation, and that is by God’s grace through faith.

2. “He doesn’t believe in eternal security because he talks about people who profess not being saved in the end.” To the contrary, you will never find anyone who believes eternal security more than I do. However, there is no eternal security for a person who makes a false profession of faith. “A profession of faith which makes no difference in your life makes no difference to God either” (Kevin DeYoung, 4/16/2013 @RevKevDeYoung).

3. “He doesn’t believe in the importance of works because he says salvation is obtained by faith alone.” Really? I strongly affirm James 2:17, that faith without works is dead. The lives of true Christians must be full of good works.

4. “He believes that salvation requires works because he often mentions James 2:17.” Another false accusation. I strongly affirm Ephesians 2:8-9 and Titus 3:5, that salvation is obtained by faith, apart from works.

These last two examples show the kind of see-saw situation where two truths seem to the “human” mind as in conflict, but in reality there is no conflict. Paul’s problem is like that—it may seem that God’s justice against sin is in conflict with His wrath and righteousness, but that is just not the case. God is just in all His dealings with everyone.

E. If you have a *mindset* where you are looking to destroy the teacher or find some hole in his teaching, you are wrong. Our mindset should be to search out the true teaching of the Scripture and integrate all of it in a God-honoring way, not to level accusations against God or his messengers. The true believer does not look for ways to twist doctrine, but rather looks for ways to learn it accurately.

Conclusion

God is faithful to Himself first; then to His promises and people. You cannot take God’s faithfulness to His covenant people, the Jews, and elevate that to such a level that it wipes out God’s ability to judge justly.

Instead of taking the gospel in a wrong direction, let us take it in the right direction. That direction is to recognize that God will judge evil, and we do not want to have any part of it. We hold fast to the gospel which makes us righteous in standing, and we strive to practice righteousness through the power of the gospel, knowing that this brings the ultimate blessing of God. We should not live in sin so that grace may abound. Rather, we should recognize that because grace abounds, we can live holy lives!

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