**Lesson 6: Great Privilege = Great Responsibility**

Text: Romans 3:1-8

**Introduction**

In chapter two, Paul effectively disproved the defense of the Jew who depended on his nationality, possession of the law, and circumcision as the means to escape the judgment of God. Nationality and good works will not benefit you when you stand before God. God is impartial in judgment. If Jews and Gentiles will both be judged by God, is there any real advantage to being a Jew? Paul affirmed that there were many advantages. He introduced one in the verses we will study today. Other blessings are mentioned later in Romans 9:4-5. While Paul and unbelieving Jews agreed that being Jewish had advantages, they did not see eye to eye regarding what those advantages meant. The Jews took the privilege as liberty to live as they pleased. Paul said the privileges meant great responsibility. The truth conveyed in these verses is relevant to our lives as well. We need to remember that with great privilege comes great responsibility.

1. **The Jews had a great advantage in that they were entrusted with the Word of God. (v. 1-2)** 
   1. Paul listed this advantage first. No other nation had this privilege. (Deut. 4:8; Psa. 147:19-20)
   2. The word *oracles* refers to the sayings or utterances of God. It is most likely that Paul had in mind the Old Testament as a whole. The Old Testament announces the promises of God. It also pronounced God’s blessing on faithfulness and His curse against unfaithfulness.
   3. Jews preferred to focus on His blessings and dismiss the fact that He also promised to judge sinners. This is not different from the way man likes to think about God today.
   4. Paul continues to interact with the arguments of the unbelieving Jews. Their continued self-defense leads into the following objections.
2. **Objection 1: If some did not believe, does their unfaithfulness cancel God’s faithfulness? (v. 3-4)** 
   1. They were still trying to make the case that God would be faithful to save His people Israel even though they had sinned. They focused on his faithfulness to deliver.
   2. Paul agreed that unfaithfulness on the part of the Jews does not cancel God’s faithfulness to His own promise. (v. 3) The words *without effect* mean to nullify or make invalid. However, Paul and the unbelieving Jews were not looking at this fact from the same angle.
   3. The mindset of the Jews was that God would not judge them because they were His chosen people. However, God is not only faithful to bless, He is also faithful to judge.
   4. The answer to the question in verse 3 is obvious. Absolutely not! God forbid! The unfaithfulness of men does not alter the faithfulness of God.
   5. God tells the truth. He is reliable. Man is given to lies. He is unreliable. (v. 4) Yes, God is reliable regarding the promise to bless His people, but He is also reliable to judge them when they are out of line. Paul quoted Psalm 51:4 as evidence.
      1. Psalm 51 records David’s repentance of adultery with Bathsheba. The point of Paul’s quotation is that God was faithful to bless David when he was obedient, but He was also faithful and right to judge David regarding his sin with Bathsheba.
      2. Paul is driving home the point that God is faithful to both bless and judge.
3. **Objection 2: If man’s unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, is it right that God would pour out His wrath on man’s unrighteousness? (v. 5)**
   1. *Commend* means to demonstrate, show, bring out.
      1. “Does our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God? In a sense, yes, of course. The more you see men fail, the more you appreciate His never failing.” (Bro. Sam Davison)
      2. They reasoned that if that were the case, then it would be unjust for God to judge them.
      3. “I speak as a man” – Paul says he is speaking from man’s perspective even to ask the question.
   2. There is no way that God can be unjust! (v. 6) He is just in judging unbelieving Jews. Otherwise, He would not be able to righteously judge the world.
   3. For the sake of argument, Paul takes their line of thinking to its logical end. If our unrighteousness points out His righteousness, why do we still have to be judged? (v. 7) In other words, if the goal is to demonstrate God’s glory, I can do that by my sin. Mission accomplished…right? Wrong!
   4. If that’s the case, why not take it a step further? If we can glorify God’s righteousness by our sin, why not increase our sin? (v. 8) Some alleged that Paul taught this doctrine. Paul said that their “damnation” (condemnation) was just. This is faulty thinking that leads to faulty living!
   5. The privilege of being entrusted with God’s Word did not permit them to live as they pleased without facing consequences for their actions.
   6. William Barclay’s insight is very helpful: “God said to Israel in giving them the commandments, ‘You are a special people, therefore you must live a special life.’ He never said, ‘You are a special people; therefore you can do what you like.’ Paul taught them that the more opportunity a man has to do right, the greater his condemnation if he does wrong.”
   7. “The problem Paul attacks in these verses is not confined to the people of God of his day. All too often Christians have presumed that God’s grace to us exempts us from any concern about our sin.” (Douglas Moo).
4. **Central Idea: The unbelieving Jews needed to understand that the great privilege they had in receiving the Word of God meant great responsibility to live according to the Word of God.**
5. **Application: Great privilege means great responsibility.** 
   1. Jesus said, “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required:” (Luke 12:48 )
   2. We are blessed to have God’s Word. Rather than making God’s Word central to their lives, many are disregarding His Word altogether.
   3. Salvation is a blessing that comes with great responsibility. Salvation obligates us to live for the Lord and separate from sin.
   4. Many of you were privileged to be raised in church. This great privilege carries great responsibility.
   5. Church membership is a privilege that comes with great responsibility.
   6. Marriage is a great privilege that comes with great responsibility.

**Conclusion**

We can expect God to bail us out of trouble. He is a merciful God. He is a gracious God. That does not grant the liberty to live as we please. The same God who has promised to bless is also the God who deals with sin. Both describe His very essence. Don’t take the blessings He brings into your life lightly. Make no excuses for sin. Cut yourself no slack! Grace motivates godly, responsible living!