

## The Problem of Abused Privilege

*Romans, Part XIII*

Romans 3:3-4

Stuart W. Bryan

### I. Guilt and Privilege

### II. A Litany of Objections

- What then is the advantage of being a Jew? (3:1-2)
- Jewish unfaithfulness doesn't nullify God's faithfulness, does it? (3:3-4)
- 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. Jewish Unfaithfulness and God's Faithfulness

#### A. The Question Posed (3)

*<sup>3</sup>For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? <sup>4</sup>Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged."*

Does Jewish *unfaithfulness* undermine God's *faithfulness*? If some Jews were *unfaithful* to God, does this call into question the value of God's oracles or the ability of God to fulfill His promises?

#### B. The Question Answered (4a cf. Ps 119:89-90)

Paul answers forcefully, "*Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar.*" Human *unfaithfulness* does not nullify God's *faithfulness*. Though \_\_\_\_\_ man on earth were to be *unfaithful*, still *God would be true*.

#### C. The Answer Bolstered (4b cf. Ps 51:4)

Paul bolsters this answer with an appeal to Psalm 51:4, "*As it is written, 'That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged.'*" Psalm 51 was David's psalm of confession following his sin with Bathsheba. David had been *unfaithful* to God. So did David's *unfaithfulness* call into question God's *faithfulness*? Certainly not!

1. *First, God's words prevail: "That You may be justified in Your words..."* Had God failed to make Himself clear to David? Was the problem with God's law? No! The problem was not *the clarity of God's revelation* but *the corruption of David's heart*.
2. *Second, God will be vindicated: "...and may overcome when You are judged."* Did David's *unfaithfulness* subvert God's purposes for the world? No! Though David was *unfaithful*, God remained *faithful* and turned even the sin of David to the fulfillment of His promises.

#### 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)

#### IV. Abused Privileges (Pss 78, 106)

##### A. A sober history of abused privileges (Ps 78:9-72; Hosea 1:2)

The great hope of biblical history is that the *faithfulness* of God overcomes the *unfaithfulness* of men. Our hope for world history is not in the *faithfulness* of men nor even the *faithfulness* of God's covenant people, but in the *faithfulness* of God to His promises. Psalm 78 sings of this. In it, Asaph reveals how God remained *faithful* despite the *unfaithfulness* of Ephraim. Though Jacob had recognized \_\_\_\_\_ as his firstborn and Joshua had erected the tabernacle there, yet God chose Judah, anointed David as king, and singled out Jerusalem as His dwelling place. Why?

<sup>9</sup>*The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, Turned back in the day of battle. <sup>10</sup>They did not keep the covenant of God; They refused to walk in His law, <sup>11</sup>And forgot His works And His wonders that He had shown them.*

Ephraim was \_\_\_\_\_. When Joshua sent them north to seize their inheritance, they failed to drive out the Canaanites as God commanded (Josh 16:10). They did not *keep God's covenant* nor *walk in His law*; they *forgot* God's *works* and His *wonders* – wonders which Asaph recounts throughout the psalm. As Asaph surveys these wonders, he sees clearly that God's *faithfulness* is not dependent on the *faithfulness* of His people. God's purposes stand. Asaph concludes by returning to Ephraim:

<sup>67</sup>*Moreover He rejected the tent of Joseph, And did not choose the tribe of Ephraim, <sup>68</sup>But chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved. <sup>69</sup>And He built His sanctuary like the heights, Like the earth which He has established forever. <sup>70</sup>He also chose David His servant, And took him from the sheepfolds; <sup>71</sup>From following the ewes that had young He brought him, To shepherd Jacob His people, And Israel His inheritance. <sup>72</sup>So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, And guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.*

God rejected Joseph and chose Judah; He cast off Shiloh and chose Mt. Zion. He raised up David to shepherd His people. Why? Because even when some of God's people are *unfaithful*, God remains *faithful*. He accomplishes His purposes in the world.

##### B. Learning from abused privileges (Ps 78:1-8)

<sup>1</sup>*Give ear, O my people, to my law; Incline your ears to the words of my mouth. <sup>2</sup>I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, <sup>3</sup>Which we have heard and known, And our fathers have told us. <sup>4</sup>We will not hide them from their children, Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. <sup>5</sup>For He established a testimony in Jacob, And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers, That they should make them known to their children; <sup>6</sup>That the generation to come might know them, The children who would be born, That they may arise and declare them to their children, <sup>7</sup>That they may set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments; <sup>8</sup>And may not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not set its heart aright, And whose spirit was not faithful to God.*

1. Set our hope in God (7a cf. 34-35, 70-72)
2. Don't forget (7b cf. 10-11, 17-18, 22, 32, 37, 40-41, 56-57; Judg 2:10)
3. Keep His commandments (7c cf. 10b, 37b, 56b, 58; Jn 15:9-10; 1 Jn 3:2-6)

#### V. Conclusion