

DISCUSSION GUIDE: ROMANS 3:1-8

March 19, 2017

In Romans 3:1-8, Paul answers several objections that he anticipates from his countrymen in response to Romans 2. If Israel has faltered, has God failed to be faithful to his chosen people? If Paul is right, is God's reliability under suspicion? Furthermore, if both Gentiles and Jews alike are evil and justly condemned, why bother trying to follow God's commands? These are the questions Paul refutes in this passage.

1. In chapter 2, Paul dismantled any notion that Jews are saved merely because they are ethnically Jew. A true Jew is one who's heart has been circumcised (as opposed to merely their flesh). The objection then comes in Romans 3:1—what value is there in being ethnically Jew? We'd expect him to say there is no advantage, but instead he says there is great advantage.

—Discuss this unexpected answer by Paul. What do you think he means by saying that in fact the Jew had great advantage?

—How can we apply this to our situation? What advantage do we living where we do around the gospel and a multitude of resources?

—We know these advantages do not in anyway guarantee our salvation, but what should having them produce in us?

2. Ultimately, Paul's point is that God has been faithful. He briefly introduces a massive point that he will develop much further in Romans 9-11—that God has not failed in any way even though the Jews mostly rejected the gospel. The point he will make in those chapters is that salvation has always been by God's sovereign election. As a result, God will gather "true" Israel to Christ by pure grace, not by works. The take home for us is that God has not failed, he can be trusted.

—Discuss how this truth that God has not failed and can be trusted is so important for us to know and remember in the Christian life.

—How can the truth of God's trustworthiness and faithfulness potentially be misapplied? In other words, does this mean God is obligated to bail us out of every temporal difficulty? Or, does God's faithfulness ultimately point towards a more eternal fulfillment?

3. In vv. 5-8, Paul responds to the objection that if both Jews and Gentiles are unable to save themselves and all are sinners by nature, then God must be unfair in judging any of us. In other words, how can God find fault if we are completely

dependent on his grace to save us? This line of reasoning leads to an error called antinomianism (meaning 'against the law' or God's commands).

—Paul's combating the false idea that if we are all sinners by nature, why not just sin so God can demonstrate more of his grace by saving us. How does this logic distort the gospel? (In Romans 6 Paul will deal with this more specifically. It might be helpful to read that chapter with your group).