

# DEVOTIONAL

WHEN IN ROME III // NO ADVANTAGE  
JULY 11, 2021

GRACE  
FELLOWSHIP

**Discussion Starter:** What attitude should a Christian have toward sin and why?

**Key Text:** *“Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?<sup>2</sup> Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.<sup>3</sup> What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?<sup>4</sup> By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, ‘That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.’<sup>5</sup> But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.)<sup>6</sup> By no means! For then how could God judge the world?<sup>7</sup> But if through my lie God’s truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner?<sup>8</sup> And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.” (Romans 3:1-8)*

In the 1970’s comedy movie “The Pink Panther Strikes Again,” the beloved but bumbling Inspector Clouseau checks into a hotel and sees a dog lying on the hotel lobby floor. He asks the hotel clerk, “Does your dog bite?” The hotel clerk responds, “No.” When Clouseau reaches down to pet the dog, the dog viciously bites his hand. The surprised Inspector says, “I thought you said your dog doesn’t bite!” The hotel clerk responds, “That is not my dog.” Inspector Clouseau learned the hard way that it is important to ask good, clear questions in order to get good, clear answers!

The Apostle Paul used the strategy of asking good, clear questions followed by good, clear answers in today’s text. Paul imagines a dialogue in which he asks three questions he anticipates his readers will ask, and then he provides the answers himself.

## **Question #1: What advantage is there in being a Jew?**

*“Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?<sup>2</sup> Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.” (v.1-2)*

Paul had already established earlier in Romans that the Jews’ race, religion, and rituals would not qualify them for Heaven. The fact that they have the law and even are circumcised would not keep them from answering to God for their own personal sin. In that sense, there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles. However, Paul says that God’s chosen people benefit in many ways, starting with the fact that they were entrusted with the “*oracles of God*” (v.2)—they were privileged to receive and hand down the very words of God to all people. The Old and New Testament writers inspired by God were all Jewish. Paul’s point in Romans 2 was not that belonging to Israel was of no value at all. His point was that simply being Jewish alone would not keep any person from answering to God’s judgment for his or her sin. Paul will list more of the benefits that come with being Jewish in Romans 9:1–5.

**Discuss:** What are three things you’re most thankful for about the Bible?

## Question #2: Does a person's lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness?

*"What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? <sup>4</sup> By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, 'That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.'" (v.3-4)*

Paul anticipated that his readers might wonder if disobedience and lack of faith on the part of the Jews would cause God to give up on the Jewish people—to cancel His promises to them. Paul answers his own question strongly, "By no means!" (v.4) (This phrase "By no means!" is a favorite of Paul's—he uses it thirteen times in his writings; nine times in the Book of Romans.) Paul insists that God's faithfulness does not depend on human faithfulness: "Let God be true though every one were a liar" (v.4). God's words and judgments are justified. He never ever breaks His side of any covenant agreement.

**Discuss:** What are some of your favorite promises of God? Why these?

## Question #3: Doesn't my sin help God out by making His forgiveness look good—and if so, shouldn't I be applauded for sinning?

*"But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way). But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? <sup>8</sup> And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just." (v.5-8)*

Paul says that this question uses twisted, faulty logic—"I speak in a human way" (v.5)—to indicate that the question shows exactly what he is *not* saying. Imagine a husband who goes out and commits adultery over and over again, but his wife remains faithful to him. He says to her, "My unfaithfulness to you shows how patient and forgiving you are, so you ought to thank me for constantly cheating on you." This makes no sense—it won't work in a marriage, and it won't work in a relationship with God. It's the insane thinking of a condemned man trying to talk himself out of punishment he has earned (v.7-8). Their "condemnation is just" (v.8). God's grace is not a license to sin. The fact that God remains righteous and faithful in the midst of our sinfulness does not mean that God wants us to sin more; rather, it means that He is being consistent to His own nature. Paul develops this idea more in Romans 6:11-15 – he even uses "by no means" again!

Because of our new nature (2 Corinthians 5:17), our desire is to no longer live in sin. Yes, we still stumble and sin, but instead of wallowing in sin as we once did, we now hate it and want to be delivered from it. Using God's grace as a license to sin is unthinkable for a true follower of Christ.

**Discuss:** How can God's faithfulness motivate us to avoid sin, not embrace it?

### For Further Study:

*Something Needs to Change* by David Platt

"How Can I Overcome Sin in My Life?" article at [www.gotquestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)

"Resting in the Faithfulness of God" article at [www.crosswalk.com](http://www.crosswalk.com)