

No Excuse

I. Introduction:

A. Continuation of the argument

Brilliant set-up

Paul has made the case against immoral, godless men, anticipating that the Jews and religious moralists would feel justified in condemning them.

"His main emphasis is clearly seen in his turning from the world of shameless immorality to the world of self-conscious moralism. The person he now addresses is 'O man who judges'...every human being who presumes to pass moral judgment on other people." (Stott, 81)

B. Two ways to avoid God –

Irreligious hedonist

Doesn't *want* gospel – does what he knows is wrong and *approves* of others for doing the same.

Religious moralist

Doesn't believe he *needs* gospel – proud of his own morality and *condemns* others by his own hypocritical standards.

II. God's blameless, righteous, judgment

"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." (Rom1:18)

A. Truth suppression unmasked

Two undeniable realities testify to God's sovereignty

1. Creation

God's power and divine nature are clearly seen by what He has made.

"Know that the Lord is God. It is He that made us, and we are His." (Ps 100:3)

The contemplation of God's goodness in his creation will lead us to thankfulness and trust...

God himself has shown by the order of Creation that he created all things for man's sake.

(Calvin's Institutes 14, 20-21)

What was meant to draw us to God, we suppress, and push Him away.

2. Conscience

"The law is written on their hearts, the conscience bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them."(v. 15)

It proves God's law is not something alien, but woven into the fabric of our DNA, testifying to the existence of a moral, divine being to whom we are accountable.

B. No excuse – No escape

"Because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." (v.5)

III. Hiding behind the fig leaves of our self-righteousness

Four ways *religious* people alienate themselves from God:

A. Judging others for what I do

1. Is Hypocritical

We are quick to condemn sin in others yet blind to our own failures.

How easily we can become "those people who are forced to keep themselves in their own favor by observing the imperfections of other men." (Stott, quoting Hobbes, 82)

2. Condemns me

"You are without excuse, because your criticism arises from the fact that you have a conscience, which now recognizes a sin in another because it is aware of the existence of sin in yourself: and you have never lived up to the light of your own conscience, whatever it may be. Anyone who has ever criticized anything in anybody has thereby written his own condemnation." (Barnhouse)

B. Self justifying pride

Convinced of my own righteousness

"God, I thank you that I'm not like other people, I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get." (Luke 18:10-12)

Pharisaical – adding extra-biblical standards to requirements of the law to attain a "higher level" of spirituality.

C. Religious presumption

Adherence to religious form is what qualifies me before God.

"Woe to you Pharisees and hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness." (Matt 23:23)

Circumcision –relying on a sign - outward conformity makes us insiders with God.

"Human beings are comfortable with what is outward, visible, material and superficial. What matters to God is a deep, inward, secret work of the Holy Spirit in our lives."(Stott, 94)

God wants to give us a heart of flesh that bleeds for the things He bled out for.

D. Contempt for God

We think lightly of the kindness of God because we think highly of self. (Merit - God had to extend more grace and forbearance to "them" because they're less righteous.)

The Father *"has qualified you to share His inheritance in the kingdom of light." (Col 1:12)*
"God's unqualified love is extended to sinners who know they are unqualified." (TCH)

IV. Anticipated objections

A. If obedience to the law doesn't make us right before God, what's the point of being a Jew?

It is an advantage in every way because God has been dealing directly with you. The very Word of God has been entrusted to you.

B. Since my unrighteousness makes the righteousness of God shine all the brighter, why not sin?

Isn't God wrong to judge me when my sin makes Him look good?

Fundamental misunderstanding of God's initiating covenantal love – He saves and makes us His. Our obedience is responsive and reflects His glory. *"This is not salvation by obedience, but obedience as the evidence of salvation. (Stott, 93)*

Grace before law:

"I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery – You shall..." (Ex 20:2,3)

"Saved BY grace, FOR good works that God has prepared beforehand." (Eph 2:8-10)

C. Isn't God being unfaithful since some have turned away from the faith?

Their faithlessness cannot nullify God's faithfulness. He's unerringly true even if everyone is proven to be a liar.

"That You may be justified in Your words, and prevail when You are judged." (Ps 51:4)

V. Our Dilemma

A. Salvation requires perfect, personal, perpetual obedience to God's law.

B. Sin prevents us from perfect obedience to God's law.

C. Therefore we cannot be declared righteous by our obedience to the law.

VI. God's premeditated solution

A. The Conscience

My *"conflicting thoughts accuse and excuse"* me. Both can make me miss God.

Satan, our accuser, *"provokes us to stand before God on the ground of our own righteousness and innocence and there is nothing for us on that ground. All that God has for sinners He has for them on the condition that they will acknowledge that is what they really are...The second effect of his accusations is to cause us to get onto the ground of self-effort and striving. He tells us what we are not - not praying enough, not doing enough not humble enough - in order to get us to struggle in our own strength to make up for it."* (Hession, 86)

There's a difference between accusation and conviction – conviction of Holy Spirit draws us to God and His grace. Psalm 51 gives us help:

B. Run to God

David agrees with God's assessment – admits his sin

*"Against you, and you alone, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, **so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment.**"(v.4)*

C. Rely on God's remedy

David knows he can't take away his own guilt

"Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean...deliver me from blood guiltiness...You will delight in righteous sacrifices (v. 6,14,19))

It required the blood of an innocent, blameless substitute. It would cost God something.

The only thing David can offer to God is a *"broken and contrite heart."* (v. 17)

D. Rest in His love

David throws himself on the infinite love of God.

"Be gracious to me O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions."(v. 1)

E. Realized in Christ

The sacrifice God delights in is the death of Jesus in our place.

"For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified....and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience. (Heb 10:14,21,22)

Resources

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