

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: ROMANS: God's Power Salvation

TITLE: The Art of the Question

SCRIPTURE: Romans 3:1-8

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The book of Romans is a masterfully written exposition of the gospel of God. Without a doubt, it is the foundation of authentic Christianity and the most articulate, systematic understanding of our faith found in the Bible. Countless lives have been changed by the truth found in this ancient letter, and it continues to change lives today. Interestingly enough, Romans was written to Christians. So, while the good news found in Romans can certainly bring people to faith in Jesus, the actual focus is on how the gospel helps Christians think rightly about God, life, faith, and Christian community. If you want to grow to know God more personal and intimate way, this letter is for you!

Question-asking is an art form. Whether it's asking clarification questions in personal conversation with a friend to let them know you're listening, or asking huge what's-the-meaning-of-life questions, the questions we ask tell so much about who we are and how we make sense of the world. And because questions have such a high value and function in life, we should all want to excel in the art of the question.

Too often, though, we ask puny, minimalist questions that are more about our comfort than about truly loving God and loving people well. We need to, by God's help, train ourselves to ask maximum questions in life.

The Apostle Paul knows that this is true. He asks over 80 questions in Romans, and in Romans 3:1-8, he asks nine questions in just eight verses! The questions he raises are different responses to what he said in Romans 2: "All people stand equally sinful and needy before God, Jew and Gentile (non-Jew) alike." And if this is true, then Paul's going to get some push back, such as...

- "Hey Paul, if God's really after the heart, then is there really an advantage in being Jewish and having God's law, etc?"
- "Paul, I was thinking, doesn't Israel's faithlessness make God look unfaithful? How does that work?"
- "And Paul, if Jewish unrighteousness and unfaithfulness only prove the further faithfulness of God, how is it fair that God still judges Jews for their infidelity?"

No doubt about it, these questions are dense. And if we took all nine of Paul's questions in Romans 3:1-8 and put them in a blender, we would get a more simpler inquiry: "How does God's faithfulness relate to Israel's faithlessness?" This is a bit more simple to process.

So, what do we do with this question in view of how intensely it is unfolded in this passage? Well, first of all, I think Paul's method of thinking here should be instructive to us. Meaning, *we should learn how to ask questions in the most important way by asking:*

IS GOD AT THE CENTER OF YOUR QUESTION-ASKING?

For Paul, he asks questions about God's truth, justice, faithfulness, righteousness, and glory in this passage. Do you do that? Is that what fills the questions in your mind? Or are your questions about mere felt needs, finances, and what will give you the greatest sense of control in your life? Learning to ask maximum questions means asking them in light of God and what he wants. Again, is God at the center of your question-asking?

And when we consider the content of what Paul is saying here, we are faced with another reality that is an invitation to action:

NO MATTER WHAT YOU FEEL, NO MATTER WHAT YOU THINK, NO MATTER WHAT YOUR PAST, GOD IS AND WILL ALWAYS BE FAITHFUL.

God will always be faithful to his promises, to his word, and to his people. And we are invited to trust God, even when we don't know how he will be faithful in and through a specific situation. Like when Jesus said to Thomas, "You have believed because you have seen, but blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Climatically, however, Paul's answer in Romans is that the gospel of Jesus is the ultimate place where we see God's faithfulness and human faithlessness collide. In the gospel, Jesus takes all of our unfaithfulness to himself. He, the righteous one, takes our unrighteousness into himself. The holy and pure one takes the filth of our sin upon himself. He is isolated that we might belong. Jesus is how God's faithfulness is not compromised and how the faithlessness of humanity finds a remedy, and this is most clearly seen in the cross and resurrection. And this means that we should trust God unreservedly because, in Jesus, he is faithful no matter how many questions we have.

For Discussion ...

1. Name a time in your life where you may not have asked the best question, and it resulted in you not getting the best answer.
2. Is there any advantage in being brought up and having 'God-Bible-faith' consistently in front of you? Is there a disadvantage to this?
3. How should you begin to reshape the questions in your life to be about God and what he wants instead of what will most immediately give you comfort?
4. Personally, what stood out to you the most in this message? Why?
5. Name a time in your life when you have clearly seen the faithfulness of God at work.
6. Who is someone you know who has a humble question-asking posture about life whose questions are focused on God?
7. What is an area of life right now where you don't feel God is faithful, and it's hard for you to trust him? Pray for strength to believe him in and through this time.