

Romans 3:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)

Analysis

But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? A third objection: if human sin highlights (synistēsin, συνίστησιν, "commends/demonstrates") divine righteousness by contrast, is God unjust (adikos, ἀδικος) to punish us? Paul adds kata anthrōpon legō (κατὰ ἄνθρωπον λέγω, "I speak as a man")—this is flawed human reasoning, not Paul's position.

The term orgēn (όργην, "vengeance/wrath") refers to God's settled, righteous opposition to sin, not capricious anger. The objection reveals the moral bankruptcy of fallen reasoning: if my evil serves God's glory, shouldn't I be rewarded rather than punished? This is the precise antinomianism Paul combats—turning grace into license. The question assumes God is somehow benefited by human sin, making Him complicit.

Historical Context

This objection reflects actual accusations against Paul's gospel (see v. 8). Critics charged that justification by faith alone promoted moral laxity. Paul addresses this slander directly while developing the proper relationship between justification and sanctification throughout Romans 6-8.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How do you respond when accused of preaching a gospel that is "too gracious" or seems to minimize holiness?
2. What is the difference between God using evil for His purposes and God being unjust in punishing evil?
3. How does this verse protect against both legalism and antinomianism?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	δὲ	ἢ	ἀδικία	ἡμῶν	θεὸς	δικαιοσύνην
if	But	G3588	unrighteousness	our	Is God	the righteousness
G1487	G1161		G93	G2257	G2316	G1343

συνίστησιν	τί	έροῦμεν	μὴ	ἄδικος	ό	θεὸς	ό
commend	what	shall we say	G3361	unrighteous	G3588	Is God	G3588
G4921	G5101	G2046		G94		G2316	

ἐπιφέρων	τὴν	όργην	κατὰ	ἄνθρωπον	λέγω
who taketh	G3588	vengeance	as	a man	(I speak
G2018		G3709	G2596	G444	G3004

Additional Cross-References

Romans 6:19 (Righteousness): I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

Galatians 3:15 (Parallel theme): Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

1 Corinthians 9:8 (Parallel theme): Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?

Romans 2:5 (Righteousness): But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

Romans 4:1 (Parallel theme): What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

Romans 7:7 (References God): What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

Nahum 1:2 (References God): God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.