

Romans Summary
Week 3, Wednesday September 21, 2016
Romans 2:1-16

Paul, having painted a verbal picture of sinful humanity, now turns his attention to anyone who might agree with Paul against a certain segment of the population. The issue is recognizing ourselves in his picture. This is a hypothetical person and this is a rhetorical device that Paul uses throughout his letter. His main point however, is that no-one escapes God's judgment by condemning someone else.

Rather, God's practice of patience and mercy is meant to lead people to repentance and salvation. So, this person would be in the position of rejecting God's mercy by insisting they have no need of it, which leads to God's wrath (his final just judgment) being stored up (made complete).

The final picture is that everyone will finally receive (in the last judgment) what they are seeking for; God will render it to them in accord with their deeds. Those who seek glory, honour, and immortality will receive it. Those who see selfish ambition, obeying unrighteousness, will receive tribulation and distress. Again, this goes for the Jew first and then equally to the Greek (Gentile). Paul emphasizes that God is not partial.

How will this judgment come? For those without law (Gentile), they will be judged apart from the law and will perish. Those who are under the law (Jew) will be judged by the law. The implicit question is who is it that those with the law will perish? Because, it's not hearers or possessors of the law who will be justified, but doers of it.

This raises a third category. We have first, those who have the law by nature (Jews); they have it, hear it, but don't do it (generally speaking). Then, we have those who do not have the law by nature (Gentiles). They do not possess it, they do not hear it, and they do not do it. But now, there is a third person, one who does not have the law by nature (Gentile), but does it.

This is not a natural theology of some Gentiles somehow innately accomplishing the requirements of the law. Rather, this describes Gentile Christians. They are Gentiles by birth, so they do not have the law by nature, but somehow they are doing what the law requires, showing it is written on their heart — the very thing promised to exilic Israel by God. This shows they will be approved by God on the last day through Jesus Christ.

“Not Ashamed of Jesus” reflection and discussion questions:

1. Why is the fact that Christ died an ungodly death for ungodly people the scandal of the cross?
2. How is the cross trivialized in your experience?
3. Who do you say Jesus is?
4. How is Paul's claim that Jesus was raised from the dead connected to the promise that nothing will separate us from the love of God?