

1. After the introduction (1:1-17), Rom. 1:18 to 3:20 is the Bible's most severe description of natural man's sin and sinfulness and what will happen if he does not repent of his sin. It ends with this thought: "Therefore, by the deeds of the law no person will be justified before God, for by the Law is the knowledge of sin." The Law can only show us our sin. It cannot save us.
2. Our text, 2:1-11, is addressed to both Jews and Gentiles. "To the Jew first and then also to the Gentile" occurs twice in our text, vss. 9-10. In this context "Greek" means "non-Jew". But Paul adds in vs. 11: "There is no respect of persons before God." This thought pervades both Testaments (Deut. 10:17; Gal. 2:6; Acts 10:43) and is peculiar to the Bible. The Covenant came first to the Jews but God treats Jews and Gentiles the same. The Jew has no advantage because he was first and the Gentile has no advantage because at first he had no Covenant.
3. Our text can be divided into two sections: Vss. 1-5 which can be summarized with "You are without excuse." And vss. 6-11 which are an exposition of Ps. 62:13: "He (God) will pay back to each one according to his works." Vss. 7-8 distinguish between the faithful Christian and the faithless unbeliever. And vss. 9-10 restate vss. 7-8 with the added thought of "To the Jew first but also to the Gentile." But vs. 11 makes clear that God treats all impartially.
4. Our text does not teach that a person can be saved by his works. These vss. are a good example of what Luther meant when he said: "Faith alone justifies but faith is never alone." Or as James said: "Faith without works is dead." Or Jesus' words at Jn. 15:1-8: "I am the Vine, you are the branches. He that abides in Me and I in him brings forth much fruit." Vss. 6-7 of our text says "according to" not "because of." Where there is faith there will be good works. Gal. 5:6. God does reward the good works of a Christian. Mt. 19:29; Lk. 17:10. But don't forget Paul's word at Rom. 6:23: "The GIFT of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." In fact both salvation and Christian living are both a gift of God. Eph. 2:8-10.
5. At 1:20 Paul had said "they are without excuse." In vss. 18-20 Paul speaks of those who have only a natural knowledge of God, knowledge of God from creation only. Such people are without excuse. They cannot say: "You did not reveal the Gospel to me. I am not to blame." At 2:1 Paul repeats: "You are without excuse." But here in vss. 1-5 Paul is speaking about people who try to deny their sin and sinfulness, who condemn people but excuse those very sins in themselves, who despise the kindness and goodness of God and who in their ignorance do not know that only God's kindness leads people to repent of their sins and believe in their Savior. Then in vs. 5 he shows how the lot of this ignorant man keeps getting worse and worse. The worst part of the unconverted state is that people hypocritically excuse themselves, lie to themselves, deceive themselves into thinking they are getting better when actually they are getting worse. Twice (vss. 1 and 3) Paul says "oh man" because he is addressing both Jews and Gentiles.
6. Do these vss. also speak to Christians? Most definitely. The unconverted man denies what these vss. say. The Christian, since he is still a sinner, admits and confesses that these vss. describe him. He cries "Lord, have mercy on me!!" And He does. He forgives.
7. Sundry thoughts: "People show the worst kind of impenitence when they condemn others while doing the same things themselves." This attitude shows the awful sinfulness of human nature. "Paul is talking especially to people who think they are getting on just fine." "Sinful human nature tends to exalt itself and make itself god." In vs. 10 "glory" denotes everlasting life, "honor" of being with God, and "peace" signifies salvation.
8. The purpose of our text is to cause both unbeliever and believer to repent of his sin. Jesus said: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is here."

Theme: WHY ALL PEOPLE DESPERATELY NEED TO REPENT OF THEIR SINS

Introduction: Man by nature is spiritually blind, dead and an enemy of God. But, what is even worse than that, man denies this. Or he condemns in others what he allows in himself. Or he claims that he can escape the judgment of God. Or he despises the goodness of God which alone can lead him to repentance. Or he thinks that the threats of the Bible don't pertain to him. Sinful man constantly deceives himself.

I-They Deceive Themselves About Themselves

A-They condemn in others what they allow in themselves. Perhaps the best example of this is found at Mt. 7:1-5. There Jesus speaks about the hypocrite who criticizes the splinter in another's eye but does not see the beam in his own eye. That is what He calls unjust judgment. We are to show other people their sins but only to bring them to repentance not to make ourselves look superior to them.

B-They fail to realize that the judgment of God rests on them. Read Lk. 13:1-5. Jesus cites two examples, one of the Galileans whom Pilate had cut down in the Temple and the other of the eighteen who were killed in the reconstruction of the Tower of Siloam. People were greater sinners than they were. But Jesus said: "Unless you repent you too will perish." Human nature is prone to say of God's eternal judgment in hell: "Oh, it won't happen to me." The Lord says: "Don't deceive yourself. It WILL happen to you unless you repent of your sin."

*They thought*

C-They despise the kindness, the forbearance, the patience of God. A good example here would be the unbelieving people in the days of Noah. They married and were given in marriage, they did business as usual, disregarding the warnings of Noah both about the judgment and kindness of God. They said: "It won't happen to me." But it did happen to them. The flood caught them unprepared and they perished.

D-They don't realize that their heart is hard and impenitent. Vs. 5. When human beings are blind to their true sinful condition before God, they are constantly heaping up for themselves a greater store of the anger of God on judgment day. *See Mt. 23:37.*

II-They Deceive Themselves About God

A-They do not recognize His true nature. People have strange notions about the nature of God. Some think of Him as a kind old grandfather who is out of touch with reality. Others think God got the world started but lost control and now does not know what to do about it. Others think of Him only as a stern judge who only wants to punish. But, God is love. That is the story of the Bible. He made a way for all to be saved in Jesus Christ and He truly wills all to come to repentance. That is mentioned in vs. 4 of our text. Only the goodness of God can lead a person to repent of his sins and believe in Christ. God is rich in kindness, forbearance and patience, not willing that any should be lost but that all should come to repentance. Natural man is blind to all of this. It is our duty to bring him to a knowledge of the Truth.

B-They think that God is a respecter of persons. Our text warns us twice that Jew and Gentile will be treated exactly alike. The Jews will not have it easier because the Covenant came to them first. And the Gentiles will not have it easier because at first they had no Covenant at all. God sends His rain to the just and the unjust. He is no respecter of persons. The wages of sin is death. All men die. He is no respecter of persons. He said: "Repent for the Kingdom of God is here." He is no respecter of persons. He means this for all equally.

Conclusion: "All men are liars" said David. By nature they deceive themselves about themselves and God. Avoid this by repenting.