

a read-map for Romans 1:18-3:20

GOD'S
REMEDY
FOR
GODLESSNESS,
IMPIETY,
& HUMAN
WICKEDNESS



| The Passage | Romans 1:18-20 | Romans 1:21-32 | Romans 2:1-16 | Romans 2:17-29 | Romans 3:9, 19-20 |
|--|---|--|---|---|---|
| <p>The Subject</p> <p><i>(ie. who is being spoken of)</i></p> | <p>ALL PEOPLE (Not specified)</p> <p><i>Paul's focus in this section is quite literally "all men".</i></p> <p><i>There is no specific reference to Jew/Gentile/Greek until we get to Romans 2:9.</i></p> | <p>PAGAN-LIKE PEOPLE (Not specified exactly who)</p> <p><i>Paul's focus continues to be "all men". While it is understandable that Gentiles come first to mind for us, even Paul's critique of idolatry in these verses is drawn from Psalm 106:20 and Jer 2:11 - passages that refer to Israel's worshipping the golden calf and their later forsaking of God for other deities. Paul may allow his readers to assume that "gentiles" are his focus, while still keeping even Israelites within the frame of his critique.</i></p> | <p>PIOUS PEOPLE (Jew & Gentile)</p> <p><i>For the first time Paul introduces the Jew/Gentile distinction. He does so in order to establish that simply knowing the Law will make no difference to whether one will actually DO what the Law requires.</i></p> | <p>PRIESTLY TEACHERS (Jewish Teachers of Law)</p> <p><i>Paul is here addressing the Jew who (wrongly) thinks that their profound familiarity with God's Law makes them well placed to correct and remedy the Godlessness, wickedness, foolishness, and impiety that Paul has been speaking of in Rom 1:18-2:16.</i></p> <p><i>Paul is heading off any troublesome Jewish Teachers (Rom 16:17) who might propose to the church in Rome that the LAW (rather than Paul's gospel) is the remedy to human sin.</i></p> | <p>ALL PEOPLE (Jew & Gentile)</p> <p><i>Paul is here addressing the common plight that Jews (despite having the Law) equally share with Gentiles.</i></p> |
| <p>The Purpose In Paul's Wider Argument</p> | <p>God's wrath is being revealed against all human godlessness, on account of the universal human tendency to suppress whatever we DO KNOW of God by our wicked behaviour.</p> | <p>All People are without excuse before God, FOR...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even what people DID know of God, they exchanged for idolatry. • Even what people DID know to be righteous behaviour, they exchanged for that which they themselves acknowledged as "unnatural". <p>This is summed up for us in 1:32. Despite what they DID know as true & righteous, they chose to both DO and APPROVE the opposite.</p> <p><i>In the section to follow (2:1-16) Paul anticipates that some will object that they don't APPROVE of the above godless behaviour. In fact, some will boast that they condemn it...</i></p> | <p>Some people will happily PASS JUDGEMENT upon those who approve the godlessness outlined in 1:21-32. And yet...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those who pass judgement on the wrong that others DO, simply condemn themselves, for... • Even if they DON'T choose to APPROVE the evil, they still actually DO it. <p>This is as true for the Jew as it is for the Gentile (v9).</p> <p>Whatever people do happen to know to be good (whether by the law or by nature), this good they still DO NOT DO.</p> <p><i>ie. It makes no difference HOW MUCH one knows. What really matters is what one DOES with what they know.</i></p> | <p>Here Paul anticipates that a teacher of Jewish Law may "pipe-up" and say...</p> <p>"The sin of Rom 1:18-32 is why people need us to fully instruct them in the Law! This will help to correct such foolishness, wickedness, and impiety"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those who imagine they are qualified to instruct others in obeying the Law, are in fact worse than no good (2:24)! <p>FOR...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite what they know to be good, and despite the good that they instruct others to DO... <p>EVEN SO...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This good, they themselves actually still DO NOT DO! And God is blasphemed as a result, not honoured. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All people (Jew and Gentile) are under the power of sin. • Even those who have the Law won't be declared righteous. For despite having the Law, even those teaching the Law DO NOT DO it! <p>What people need then is not an expert instructor in the Law, but rather the proclamation of the Gospel, which calls people to the "obedience of faith" (1:5) rather than the "obedience of Law" (3:20).</p> |