

Romans

Dr. Charles "Buddy" Parrish
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Romans 2:1-6



Vss. 1-2

- People today talk about the church being divided, divided over things like worship style and music, divided over theological issues like Calvinism, divided over cultural/political issues like LGBTQ. And as people speak about those divisions, we speak as if such divisions are the worst things ever and have never happened before. But the truth is that as long as Christ's Church is made up of people there will always be divisions, and there always have been. Ultimately it was division in the Church that split the Roman Empire into East and West and already here in just the second chapter of Romans, Paul is addressing the division between the Gentiles and Jews in the church of Rome.
- As Paul starts Ch. 2, he is specifically speaking to the Jews. Through most of Ch. 1 he is laying out a picture of life as a pagan Gentile in Rome. Despite the Gentiles in the church having repented and been saved, living as disciples of Jesus, the Jewish members of the church still took a position of spiritual and moral superiority against their fellow church members. Evidently someone had written to Paul that the Jews of the Roman church were still taking the traditional view that God would severely judge the Gentiles, but that God had a special relationship with the Jews that safeguarded them from judgement.
- So Paul tells the Jews bluntly, "YOU have no excuse". He points out that as they condemn others for *THEIR* sin, the Jews are in fact condemning themselves. Why? Because they practice the same sinful lifestyle as the pagans and *THEY* do it while professing Christ!
- The Jews believed that "God will judge the Gentiles with one measure and the Jews with another." The rabbis taught, "All Israelites will have part in the world to come" and that "Abraham sits beside the gates of hell and does not permit any wicked Israelite to go through." When Justin Martyr was arguing with a Jew about that position of the Jews in the "Dialogue with Trypho", the Jew said, "They who are the seed of Abraham according to the flesh shall in any case, even if they be sinners and unbelieving and disobedient towards God, share in the eternal Kingdom."

Vss. 3-6

- In vs. 3, Paul asks the Jews rhetorically, "Do you really think that you can live like a pagan and still escape the judgement of God?"

- And in vs. 4, he begins to answer his own question with yet another rhetorical question. But here he touches on three of the primary qualities of God that the Jews are walking all over: God's kindness, tolerance, and patience.
- Kindness – **chrestotes** : as there are primarily three different Greek words for Love, there are two for “kindness”. One is “agathos”. When a good father disciplines his children he is being “agathos”, as Jesus was when He cleared the Temple. But when Jesus was dealing with the woman caught in adultery or the woman at the well, He was being “chrestotes”. Paul is telling the Jews of the Roman church that they are trampling all over the sweetest, most tender kindness of God.
- Tolerance/forbearance – **anochē** : “Anochē” is the word for a truce. In other words, God is calling a truce, giving you time to do the right thing. God is not giving you extra time just to sin and disregard The Way of Christ, He is giving you time to reconsider your life and repent. A person can not simply go on living a life of wanton sin without consequences and judgment eventually coming down on them.
- Patience – **makrothumia** : This word has more to do with the patience shown me than my own patience. The early church Father, Chrysostom, defined it as the characteristic of the man who has it in his power to avenge himself and deliberately does not use it. As we saw in our study of Revelation, that God's punishment does not immediately follow sin is not a proof of his powerlessness, it is a proof of His patience. We owe our lives to the patience of God.
- So in truth, Paul is saying to the Jews, the judgment coming down on them will be more terrible than that of the pagan Gentiles, for they knew the Truth of God and perverted it. And they have no one to blame but themselves due to their “stubbornness and their unrepentant hearts”.
- Paul quotes Psalm 62:12 and Proverbs 24:12 where both say that God will render to us according to our work/deeds. You see it again at The Judgment in Revelation 20:12-13 where the dead are judged, “everyone of them according to their deeds”. People may claim to be saved because they are Children of Abraham, or because they Baptist, or something else, but in Matthew 3:9 and Luke 3:8, Jesus said that God is able to raise up Children of Abraham from a bunch of rocks. It's what flows out of one's heart that counts.