

## Romans: Verse-by-Verse

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### Romans 2 - Introduction

#### **Student Notes:**

- **Paul's conclusion in chapter one:** The entire Gentile world lay under the judgment of God for their rebellion and rejection of the knowledge of God. The original premise: 1:17-18:

“For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.”

- **A Shift in Writing Technique – “Diatribes”:**

“You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself.”

#### **The Question: “Who is the ‘You’ of this passage”?**

A strong possibility: Paul is using the classical Greek “diatribe”: An imaginary conversation with one's opponent. The intended target is in the forefront of Paul's mind throughout the first sixteen verses of Romans 2.

Scholarly division on the identity of “You”: 1. The Jewish people: See Paul's use of “to the Jew first and also to the Greek” in chapter one.

If so, Paul seeks to demonstrate that Jews and Gentiles are equal in sin and therefore equal in their need for salvation.

### **Issues with that view:**

1. He doesn't directly involve the Jews in this conversation until he reaches verse 17.

2. If this section only refers to Jews, it is interesting that Paul has spent such an exhaustive amount of time describing Gentile society in 1: 18-32 but says little about Jewish society.

- **The Gentiles: An All-Inclusive Characterization?**

Not everyone in the Gentile world exactly matches Paul's description in 1:18-32. FF Bruce: "What about a man like Paul's illustrious contemporary Seneca, the Stoic moralist, the tutor of Nero?"

Seneca: The premier moralist of his day. Bruce:

"Not only did Seneca exalt the great moral virtues; he exposed hypocrisy, he preached the equality of all human beings, he acknowledged the pervasive character of evil ..."

The Moralists? It's likely Paul has Gentiles like Seneca in mind as he dictates verses 1-16. (He probably also has the Jews in his thought since he repeats that phrase, "first for the Jew, then for the Gentile".)

- **What Do We Know For Certain About the "You" of This Passage?**

1. Paul's thinking has shifted from the world of shameless Gentile immorality seen in 1:18-32 to the world of self-conscious moralism.

Romans 2:1: "Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things."

### **Two Groups Envisioned:**

1. Both groups have a certain knowledge of God as Creator: See, Romans 1:20 & 2:17
2. But both groups also know God as "Judge". See: 1:32 & 2:3

What is the principle difference between them?

One group knows what they are doing is wrong and they brazenly encourage others to participate in the same sins. (1:32)

The second group knows these sins are wrong, condemn others who do them, but are also guilty of the same sins. (Hypocrisy). See Paul's extension of this in 2:21-22.

- **Summarizing The Introduction:**

1. Paul has switched to the Greek literary device called a "diatribe". 2. His audience may be either non-Jewish Moralists (like Seneca) or the Jews. (There is evidence for both groups but the weight seems to be on the Moralists.)

3. Paul's primary point: "If you judge others for their sins and you do the same things, you judge yourselves."