

Romans: Verse-By-Verse

Romans 3:23-24

Student Notes

- **Paul's Use of Jewish Illustrations** (Despite a partially Gentile audience)

As the Gentiles gathered with other believers from week to week, they were learning the Old Testament scriptures. They were learning the Old and New Covenant literature side-by-side.

- **"All Have Sinned"**

Verse 23: "... For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."

Both Jew and Gentile will be judged according to their light: The Jews, because of "special revelation" and the Gentiles, because of "natural revelation".

There is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles with respect to sin or salvation. See: Romans 10:11-13.

"All have sinned." -- Paul uses a Greek phrase that is identical to the end of Romans 5:12 where he says, "death came to all men, because all sinned."

"Pantes Hemarton" -- (all have sinned) -- expresses the idea that all, like Adam, have sinned. The debate: Does Paul mean this as some form of "original sin"?

"All have sinned" -- not only is there corporate sin; there is also individual sin. In other words, when the time came to choose between God's glory and our own desires, each human chose their own desires.

All have sinned and "come short of the glory of God". Paul's original source: Isaiah 43:7-9:

Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth –

everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”

God's chosen people were “created for His glory” yet they found themselves in captivity. They had eyes, but were blind; they had ears but were deaf. They had fallen short of God's plan for them.

- **“Falling Short”**

Holman's Commentary: “Fallen Short” -- The Greek verb “*hustereo*”: “*coming late*”, “*to be behind*”, or to “*come short*”. ... *The image here is not one of absence, but one of always being behind. Regardless of what we do we never seem to catch up to the “glory of God”.*

Mankind was made for God's glory; through sin they fell short of God's personal perfection and the purpose for which He created them. See: Romans 5:12

- **“Justified Freely by His Grace” – v. 24**

Having said that all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory, Paul adds, “... and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

Note: Just as “all” have sinned and fallen short, now all (who believe) are justified freely by his grace.

God's tool to reverse the universal pronouncement of “guilt”. At salvation, God pronounces us justified. He decrees that there are no longer any grounds upon which He must condemn us.

The reversal many don't notice: While the Law keepers are hoping that at the final day God will declare them justified ... God does it at the beginning of our salvation experience.

Jesus' words in John 5:24: “Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.”

We are not waiting to the end of human history to stand before God –

hoping the death sentence will not be passed on us. Instead, God makes the declaration of our justification at the beginning our salvation.

Westminster Shorter Catechism: Justification is defined as, "An act of God's free grace wherein he pardoneth all our sins and accepteth us as righteous in his sight; only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone" (Romans 3:24) "

The benefit of justification by grace: If, by faith I embrace His justification – I can go on and do His will without the constant sense of falling short. See: 2 Timothy 1:12

- **“The Redemption That Came By Christ Jesus”**

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

Paul is using terminology that comes from the Old Testament: The word for redemption – apolutrosis – refers to the act of buying a slave out of bondage in order to set him free.

Paul refers back to God's merciful dealings with ancient Israel – in their redemption from either the Egyptian bondage or their later deliverance from the Babylonian captivity.

- The Exodus Song: “In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling.” -- Exodus 15:13
- The Babylonian Deliverance: “Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O little Israel, for I myself will help you,” declares the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” -- Isaiah 41:14

In either case God practiced “apolutrosis” – redemption -- as he bought a slave-nation out of bondage in order to set them free. (See: Isaiah 40:2)

Our salvation “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”. The grace of God “justifies” the one who believes. It is clearly effective because of Christ's redemptive work.