

Student Notes

- **Intro:** The switch in voices

In chapter 2 Paul switches voices as he asks series of questions. He has gone from the third person pronouns, they, them, etc. but now uses “You” – as if he were addressing an opponent.

- **“What About The Good People?”**

John MacArthur: “What about the good people? What about the moral people, the people who aren’t murderers, who aren’t liars and thieves and fornicators and adulterers and homosexuals? What about the basically good, moral folks who are not idolaters, who have not, as it were, abandoned all sense of right and wrong and morality?”

The key issue: There are people in our world who are not confessing Christians, yet appear to have a level of morality in their lives. What are we to think of them in terms of God’s judgment on the Gentiles?

They would have argued that they had not sunk to the same level as their counterparts. They might have insisted that they stood uncondemned compared to their neighbors. So would have the Jews:

- **Romans 3:19-20:** “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. 20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.”
- **The Key To Salvation: Admission of Guilt:**

No one can receive the Gospel without coming to the point of acknowledging that they are guilty before God. “All have sinned and have fallen short of God’s perfection”. (Romans 3:23)

John MacArthur -- “The Christian gospel is only understood insofar as people understand that they are guilty before God, whether they are the immoral man of chapter 1 or the moral man of chapter 2, whether they are the Gentile of chapter 1 or the Jew of chapter 2.”

- **The Fallacy of Moralism:**

The Gentile moralist would be quick to point out that he was not living at the same depraved level of his peers, while the Jew would hurriedly agree with Paul’s condemnation of the goyim (Gentiles).

Jewish Exceptionality:

The Jews of Paul’s era believed that God was going to completely destroy the heathen world, but the Jews would be judged differently.

Historical sayings: 1. “God loves Israel alone of all the nations.” 2. “God will judge the Gentiles with one measure and the Jews with another.” 3. “Abraham sits beside the gates of hell and does not permit any wicked Israelite to go through.”

“Dialogue of Trypho” (Justin Martyr): “They who are the seed of Abraham according to the flesh shall in any case, even if they be sinners and unbelieving and disobedient toward God, still share in the eternal kingdom.”

Arriving At Jewish Exceptionality: A theology of extreme nationalism. The Jews believed they would be exempt from God’s judgment because: 1. They were in the Jewish nation and kept the traditions. 2. Because of their physical identification and their national religious identification.

In their minds, God was obligated to save the Jews as a nation, not as individuals; There were no consequences to their personal sin -- because they were under a sort of a national salvation.

- **Gentile Exceptionality:**

Gentile moralists have the same kind of thinking as the Jews. 1. Keeping the rules. 2. Acting morally. (perhaps attend a church).

Concept: “There is some level of self-righteous – trying to do what is moral – that will keep God from judging them like other heathens. As one theologian put it: “There is some kind of a still little voice in everybody that constantly convinces them that in the end, it’s going to be okay.”

Paul’s pre-conversion thinking: Philippians 3:

“If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

Post-conversion thinking:

“But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.”

- **Next time:** God’s principles when it comes to judging humans.