

## Studies in Romans 1 - 8 (2)

**Reading: Study 2** – Romans 1 v 18 – 21, 24a, 26a, 28, 32 and 2 v 1 – 6, 12 – 16

In the latter part of chapter 1 the heathen, or the Gentiles, are examined and Paul states v20 “so that they are without excuse”. In chapter 2 the spotlight turns on the Jews and again the writer states v1 “*thou art inexcusable, O man*”. In 3 v 9 the conclusion is “*both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin*”.

### **1 v 18 – 32 The Gentiles**

v17 closes with the principle “*The just shall live by faith*.” There are no exceptions to this principle; God’s righteous dealing with men is on the basis of faith alone, faith in the gospel of Christ. The alternative to faith is meeting God as judge v18 “*the wrath of God is revealed from heaven*”. The verses that follow in chapter 1 make very depressing reading as the depravity of man is described. In these verses the apostle traces the downward steps of man and leads to death, v32 “*they which commit such things are worthy of death*”.

Paul first states v19 – 20 “*they are without excuse*”. God has revealed himself in creation. God has also given men faculties that enable us to appreciate God. One of the differences between man and animals, a God consciousness (in 2 v 15 another related difference is mentioned, the conscience of man). In creation God has made known “*his eternal power and Godhead*”. This is something that David understood Ps 19 v 1 “*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork*.” These things, says Paul, are “*clearly seen*”; they are not beyond man’s understanding. To ignore or deny God’s revelation of himself in creation leaves man guilty and without excuse.

In v21 – 32 we have the downward spiral of man that clearly proves that Gentiles 3 v 9 “*they are all under sin*”. The course of man who ignores or denies the God of creation is laid out in these verses. There are four steps in the downward course, each sinking deeper into depravity and sin. These steps are highlighted by the repetition of the phrase “*God gave them up*” v24, 26 and 28. “*gave them up*” i.e. to hand over to the power of another. God allows man to follow their own lusts, the restraining hand is removed and the inevitable consequence is reached.

### **v21 – 23 Idolatry** v23 “*changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image*”

God has made himself known “*by the things that are made*”, but v21 man refuses to praise and give thanks to God. In v22 man professes wisdom, but in reality they are fools (this is clearly seen in our nation today, as man seeks to explain God out of “*things that are made*”). Man is made to worship and to respond to God; if the God of creation is abandoned, something else must fill the void – idolatry, worship of images, creatures made by God. As a result of this v24 “*Wherefore God also gave them up*”.

### **v24, 25 Lusts** v 24 “*uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts*”

Following their own lusts led men to “*dishonour their own bodies*” i.e. to treat shamefully. In v25 man sinks deeper for they exchange “*the truth of God for a lie*”. Rather than serving and worshipping the creator God, man served and worshipped the creature. Then v26 “*For this cause God gave them up*”.

### **v26 – 28a Sexual Immorality** v26 “*change the natural use into that which is against nature*”

That which is taught by nature they rejected, pursuing practices that were unnatural – practices that are commonly reported in our nation today. These practices have a consequence, v27 “*receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet*.” Mr Vine says “natural laws have a self executing power in a corresponding requital” e.g. explosion of sexually transmitted disease in the UK. The principle from Gal 6 v 7 is true. In v28 man refuses to acknowledge God and “*God gave them over*”.

## **v28b – 32 Unrestrained Wickedness** v28 *“to do those things which are not convenient”*

The influence that would restrain wicked men is removed and man is filled with all kinds of evil. A similar list is seen in 11 Tim 3 where Paul discusses conditions *“in the last days”*. This shall be seen in full form in the days of the Antichrist when 11 Thes 2 v7 *“he that now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.”*

Conclusion – guilty, without excuse v32 *“worthy of death”*.

## **Chapter 2 – The Jews**

Paul now turns the spotlight on the Jews and immediately states *“thou art inexcusable, O man”*. Inexcusable, for as with their mouth they condemn and judge the Gentiles they *“practice the same things”* (compare the teaching of the Lord Jesus in Matt 7).

## **v1 – 6 The Judgement of God** v6 *“to every man according to his deeds”*

The judgement of God is mentioned in v2, 3 and 5. The Jews judged the Gentiles for rejecting God and for sin they practice, but they are guilty of the same thing. The Jew may not have sunk to the same level of depravity as the Gentiles, but v23 *“Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?”* The Gentiles rejected the revelation of God in creation, the Jews the revelation of God in the law.

In v2 *“the judgment of God is according to truth”* i.e. God’s judgement is righteous and it will be *“to every man according to his deeds”*. Paul can say of this *“we are sure”* or we know. The truth that is being taught is not fables, is not made up by man, but is truth. Not only is the judgement of God *“according to truth”*, but in v3 it is inescapable. The Jew who judges others, but fails to keep the law of God shall not escape the judgement (compare Heb 2 v 3).

In v4, 5 the Jew misunderstands God; wilfully ignoring and despising the goodness and mercy of God. They failed to realise *“that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance”* (see 11 Pet 3 v 9). Man’s insensibility to *“the riches of his goodness”* leads to *“treasurest up unto thyself wrath”*. The day is coming when God’s forbearance will come to an end and *“the righteous judgement of God”* will be seen.

## **v7 – 11 The Working of God** v11 *“there is no respect of persons with God”*

In these verses we have contrasts between what is good and what is evil.

( v7 *“patient continuance in well doing”* (what God expects of men) → the reward, *“eternal life”*  
( v 8 *“they that are contentious”* (marked by strife) → the judgement, *“indignation and wrath”*

( v9 *“every soul of man that doeth evil”* → the judgement, *“tribulation and anguish”*

( v10 *“every man that worketh good”* → the reward, *“glory and honour”*

v11 states *“no respect of persons with God”*. In God’s dealing with men, whether Jew or Gentile, he is righteous and impartial *“to every man according to his deeds.”* In v9 and 10 it is *“to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile”*. The Jew was the subject of greater privileges and therefore greater responsibility.

## **v12 - 16 The Impartiality of God** v11 *“there is no respect of persons with God”*

The day is fixed, Paul has said in v2 *“we are sure”*, when God shall judge the secrets of men, whether Jew or Gentile. God’s judgement will be righteous and will take into account privilege and revelation (v12).

In the authorised version of the bible v13 – 15 is in parenthesis. In v13 a truth often stated is found *“not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers shall be justified”*. The Gentiles, who did not have the privilege of the law, not only can know God as revealed in creation, but also has a natural understanding of right and wrong. The conscience of man bears witness to God’s law *“accusing or else excusing”*.