

Study in Romans

Doctrine > Bad News > Summary of Man's Sinful Condition

Romans 3:9-20

Summary of Man's Sinful Condition, Both the Hedonist and the Moralist

After dealing with the Gentile hedonist in chapter one and the Jewish moralist in chapter two, Paul now brings together both groups and everyone in between for his deeply disturbing conclusion of all people's wretched condition before God. So that we don't think it's just the conclusion of a bitter old man, he issues a series of quotes from the OT Scriptures to make his point. The picture that the HS paints through Paul here should remove any remaining hope that somehow one or two of us will "beat the odds" and slip past God's evaluation if not unnoticed, then at least with our good words and works being enough to merit commendation instead of condemnation. If you can read this conclusion without being offended, then you are either not paying attention or don't understand what is being said! It is indeed a dark background against which the glory of the good news (Gospel) will shine all the brighter when we finally get to 3:21.

1. Conclusion: All people across the "spectrum of sin" are under sin and, by definition, under God's wrath (v. 9)
2. Paul proves his point from the OT Scriptures
 - a. Nobody beats the odds: Everyone is condemned before God's bar of justice! (vv.10-12; quotes Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Eccles. 7:20)
 - b. Our words show this to be the case (vv. 13-14; quotes Ps. 5:9; 140:3; 10:7)
 - c. Our works show this to be the case (vv. 15-17; quotes Is. 59:7-8)
 - d. These visible things reveal the invisible reality of the heart: There is no fear of God (v. 18; Ps. 36:1)
3. The whole world is accountable for God's moral law (v. 19)
4. The purpose of the law is not to help us know how to be righteous before God, but rather to prove that we can't be righteous on our own (v. 20)