

Notes on the Greek New Testament Week 94 – Romans 1:28-2:29

Day 466: Romans 1:28-32

Verse 28

καὶ καθὼς οὐκ ἔδοκίμασαν τὸν θεὸν ἔχειν ἐν ἐπιγνώσει, παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν, ποιεῖν τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα,

δοκιμάζω test, approve

δοκιμάζω has the sense of to prove by testing or approve, it is used here in the sense of 'see fit', 'consider it worthwhile.'

ἐπιγνώσις, εὼς f knowledge
παραδίδωμι hand or give over, deliver up
ἀδοκιμος, ον failing to meet the test, disqualified, worthless

Note the word play. The word means not approved, hence 'rejected,' 'worthless.' It is not our proof/approval of God but his of us which is of lasting significance.

νοῦς, νοός, νοί, νοῦν m mind, thought, reason, understanding

Sin affects the mind – our thinking. "Turning away from true knowledge of God means cutting ourselves off from any ultimately accurate understanding of this world and our place within it." Moo.

καθηκεῖ impersonal verb it is fitting

Verses 29-31

Moo suggests that the following list falls into 3 sections, accurately reflected in a three sentence structure in the NIV – v29a to κακία, v29b and vv 30-31. He comments, "The syntactical structure reflects a certain logical order as well. The first sentence contains a list of general terms for sin; the second focuses on basic sins affecting human relationships; and the third list is more a potpourri of sinful conduct. Similar lists of sins – usually called 'vice lists' – appear elsewhere in the New Testament (Matt 15:19; Gal 5:19-21; Col 3:5; 1 Tim 1:9-10; 1 Peter 2:1; 4:3) and imitate a widespread secular form."

Verse 29

πεπληρωμένους πάση ἀδικίᾳ πονηρίᾳ πλεονεξίᾳ κακίᾳ, μεστοὺς φθόνου φόνου ἔριδος δόλου κακοηθείας, ψιθυριστάς,

Note how the character of the mind or disposition of the heart (νοῦς) is reflected in patterns of behaviour.

πεπληρωμένους Verb, perf pass ptc, m acc
πλ πληρω fill, make full

Emphasises the extent of depravity. "Such people are full, Paul says twice, of all kinds of evil; like jugs filled to overflowing with noxious liquids, they are brimfull of wickedness, ready to spill over at any moment." Wright.

ἀδικία, ας f wrongdoing, evil, sin
πονηρία, ας f evil, wickedness

There are several variations in MSS regarding the order of elements in this list. Many MSS, followed by the TR include πορνεία before πονηρία. Metzger thinks this more likely to be "an intrusion into the text either accidentally or deliberately" than πορνεία having dropped out of the original.

πλεονεξία, ας f greed, covetousness
κακία, ας evil, wickedness
μεστος, η, ον full
φθονος, ου m envy, jealousy, spite
φονος, ου m murder, killing
ἔρις, ιδος f strife, rivalry
δολος, ου m deceit, treachery
κακοηθεια, ας f meanness, evil done for the sake of evil
ψιθυριστης, ου m one who bears harmful gossip against another, tale-bearer

Verse 30

καταλάλους, θεοστυγεις, ὕβριστάς, ὑπερηφάνους, ἀλαζόνας, ἐφευρετάς κακῶν, γονεῦσιν ἀπειθεῖς,

καταλαλος, ου m slanderer, one who speaks evil of another
θεοστυγης, ες hating God, hateful to God

An ambiguous term, probably having the first of the above meanings in this list of sinful attributes.

ὕβριστης, ου m insolent person
ὑπερηφανος, ον arrogant, proud
ἀλαζων, ονος m arrogant boaster
ἐφευρετης, ου m one who schemes or plans
κακος, η, ον evil, bad, wrong, harm
γονευσ, εως m parent
ἀπειθεῖς Adjective, m & f, nom/acc pl
ἀπειθης, ες disobedient, rebellious

This might seem lightweight among the vices listed earlier but this is not the Biblical perception. This is transgression of one of the ten commandments and is evidence of a rebellious heart or mind (cf. Ex 20:12; Lev 19:3; Prov 20:20; Matt 15:4; 19:19; Eph 6:2).

Verse 31

ἄσυνέτους, ἄσυνθέτους, ἀστοργούς,
ἀνελεήμονας·

ἄσυνετος, ον without understanding,
senseless, foolish

ἄσυνθετος, ον faithless, disloyal

ἀστοργος, ον lacking normal human
affection, inhuman

"It was not at all unusual for pagans to drown, or in some other way to destroy unwanted offspring. In this connection think of present-day *abortion*, for which all kinds of excuses are invented." Hendriksen.

ἀνελεημων, ον unmerciful

Verse 32

οἵτινες τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπιγνόντες,
ὅτι οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες ἄξιοι
θανάτου εἰσίν, οὐ μόνον αὐτὰ ποιοῦσιν
ἀλλὰ καὶ συνευδοκοῦσιν τοῖς πράσσουσιν.

οἵτινες Pronoun, m nom pl ὅστις, ἡτις, ὁ
τι who, whoever

δικαίωμα, τος η regulation, requirement

Cf. 8:4.

ἐπιγινωσκω understand, recognise

τοιουτος, αυτη, ουτον correlative pronoun
and adjective such, of such kind

πρασσω practice, do

ἄξιος, α, ον worthy, deserving

θανατος, ου m death

Reflecting Genesis 3.

μονον adv only, alone

συνευδοκεω approve of, agree to

It is shameful enough when people engage in evil acts which they know are wrong and which they condemn in others, but it is greater depravity still when evil is called good and approved of both in oneself and others. "Once light and darkness have been renamed, the process of dehumanisation is complete and may well prove irreversible." Wright.

Day 467: Romans 2:1-8

2:1-11

Paul shifts from using third person plural verbs to second person singular. "In fact, Paul here begins to use a popular ancient literary form, in which a speaker or writer instructs his audience by letting them listen in on a discussion between himself and the representative of another viewpoint." (Moo). Some (e.g. Calvin), think Paul has in mind educated pagans who thought themselves superior to others, but most think Paul is now beginning to address Jews (so Murray and Moo). Moo writes, "By the time Paul writes Romans, he has been preaching the gospel for at least twenty-two years. He knows exactly how people will respond to the various points he makes. How often must Paul have condemned the Gentiles for their sin only to note Jews in the audience joining in with his criticism and priding themselves on being far superior to them. Thus, we can almost see Paul at the beginning of chapter 2 fixing his gaze on these self-satisfied Jews and blasting them in the same way he has condemned the Gentiles..."

"To be sure, Paul does not directly address his 'opponent' as a Jew until 2:17. But the language he uses in verses 1-5 points unmistakably to a Jewish situation. Paul has shown in 1:21-32 that Gentiles have suppressed the truth that God revealed to them in nature and that they therefore have 'no excuse' before God. He now begins to show that Jews also suppress the truth God has given them and that they, too, are 'without excuse.'" Moo suggests that there are strong parallels between Romans 1:21-32 and Wisdom of Solomon 12:23-14:31. In reading the latter part of the first chapter the Gentile Christians among the church at Rome may have been "upset that Paul, apostle to the Gentiles, repeats the standard Jewish diatribe about Gentiles" while the Jewish Christians may have been "tempted to gloat... But the reaction of both groups takes a dramatic turn when they begin reading Romans 2."

Verse 1

Διὸ ἀναπολόγητος εἶ, ὃ ἄνθρωπε πᾶς ὁ
κρίνων· ἐν ᾧ γὰρ κρίνεις τὸν ἕτερον,
σεαυτὸν κατακρίνεις, τὰ γὰρ αὐτὰ
πράσσεις ὁ κρίνων.

διο therefore, for this reason

διο can be taken with what precedes or with what follows. If the latter, it means in effect, 'for this reason (which I will now give you)...' Moo suggests it points *back* particularly to the universal indictment of 1:18-20, "Jews are without excuse because they are, along with all people, guilty of suppressing the truth."

ἀναπολογητος, ον without excuse
ὦ O!

κρινω judge, condemn
ἕτερος, α, ον other, another, different
σεαυτου, ης reflexive pronoun yourself
κατακρινω condemn, pass judgement on
πρασσω see 1:32

The basic charge here, which is applied chiefly to the Jews, is that of hypocrisy: failure to recognise in themselves the sins they condemn in others. Not that idolatry or homosexuality were common among Jews in the first century, but they did commit many of the sins Paul lists in 1:29-31.

Verse 2

οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τὸ κρίμα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστὶν κατὰ ἀλήθειαν ἐπὶ τοὺς τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντας.

οἶδα (verb perf in form but with present meaning) know, understand

Some MSS read οἶδαμεν γὰρ rather than οἶδαμεν δε. Metzger argues that δε is both better supported and better fits the context – δε implies a new point whereas γὰρ would imply continuation of the previous point.

κρίμα, τος n judgement, verdict
ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality

God's judgment corresponds with the reality of the situation. "There is no hiding place at the last assize." Wright.

τοιουτος, αυτη, ουτον correlative pronoun and adjective such, of such kind, similar

Verse 3

λογίζη δὲ τοῦτο, ὡ ἄνθρωπε ὁ κρίνων τοὺς τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντας καὶ ποιῶν αὐτά, ὅτι σὺ ἐκφεύξῃ τὸ κρίμα τοῦ θεοῦ;

λογιζομαι reckon, calculate,
ὦ O!

ἐκφεύξῃ Verb, fut midd dep indic, 2 s
ἐκφευγω escape, flee, run away

The impossibility of escape rests on the fact of God's righteous judgement (v.2).

Verse 4

ἢ τοῦ πλούτου τῆς χρηστότητος αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀνοχῆς καὶ τῆς μακροθυμίας καταφρονεῖς, ἀγνοῶν ὅτι τὸ χρηστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς μετάνοιαν σε ἄγει;

ἢ or

πλουτος, ου m & n riches, wealth
χρηστοτης, ητος f kindness, goodness,
mercy

ἀνοχη, ης f forbearance, tolerance

Only here and 3:25.

μακροθυμια, ας f longsuffering, patience

God is not quick to judge (see Neh 9:17) but that does not mean he will not judge.

καταφρονεω despise, treat with contempt
ἀγνοεω not know, be ignorant, fail to understand

χρηστος, η, ον kind, loving, good; το χ. kindness

μετανοια, ας f repentance, change of heart, change of way

See 2 Peter 3:9. Paul here opposes a view current among any Jews that their election delivered them from God's wrath. "God's kindness, Paul says, was intended to lead 'you toward repentance.' Instead, apparently, the Jews were regarding it as a *carte blanche* to sin with impunity. As a result, concludes the apostle, the Jews are 'storing up wrath' against themselves, a wrath that will be inflicted on the day of God's coming righteous judgment (v.5)." Moo.

Verse 5

κατὰ δὲ τὴν σκληρότητα σου καὶ ἀμετανόητον καρδίαν θησαυρίζεις σεαυτῷ ὀργὴν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως δικαιοκρισίας τοῦ θεοῦ,

σκληροτης, ητος f hardness

ἀμετανοητος, ον unrepentant, obstinate

God's longsuffering should melt the heart into repentance, but here it is spoken of as having the opposite effect of hardening the unrepentant heart.

θησαυριζω store up, save, put aside

σεαυτου, ης see v.1

ὀργη, ης f wrath, anger

The passage of time does not make the prospect of judgement less likely but rather heaps up the weight of judgement to come.

ἀποκαλυψις, εως f revelation

δικαιοκρισια, ας f righteous judgement

Verses 6-11

Paul makes the point that God assesses Jews and Gentiles on the same basis. The structure is chiasmic – A B C C' B' A'. The main point is in the opening and closing statements (A=v.6, A'=v.11)

Verse 6

ὃς ἀποδώσει ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ,
ἀποδιδωμι give, give back, repay
ἐκαστος, η, ον each, every

Paul is quoting from the OT, cf. Prov 24:12 also Ps 62:12; Eccles 1:14; Hos 12:2. Moo considers the various views on whether, in this and the following verses, Paul is affirming salvation by works. He hesitantly endorses the view of Murray to the effect that, "Paul may not be referring to anyone in particular. His purpose here is to enunciate the basis on which, outside of Christ, God judges people. Whether anyone actually persists in good works adequately enough to earn salvation Paul simply does not say. His subsequent argument reveals that, in fact, no one can do so (see 3:9, 20)."

Wright comments, "This deep-rooted Jewish tradition is not denied by Paul, but rather celebrated. If one of the purposes of the letter is to show that God's justice upstages that of Caesar and Rome, we could expect nothing less. We must reserve for a later point the important question of how this final judgment according to works, described as 'justification' in v. 13, relates too the 'justification by faith' spoken of in chap. 3 and elsewhere."

Verse 7

τοῖς μὲν καθ' ὑπομονὴν ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ
δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν καὶ ἀφθαρσίαν ζητοῦσιν,
ζωὴν αἰώνιον·

ὑπομονη, ης f patience, endurance
ἀγαθος, η, ον good, useful, fitting

'To those that by patience in good work seek glory and ...'

δοξα, ης f glory

Cf. 5:2; 8:18,21,30.

τιμη, ης f honour, respect, price
ἀφθαρσια, ας f imperishability,
immortality

ζητεω seek, search for, look for
ζωη, ης f life

"Works without redemptive aspiration are dead works. Aspiration without good works is presumption." Murray.

Verse 8

τοῖς δὲ ἐξ ἐριθείας καὶ ἀπειθοῦσι τῇ
ἀληθείᾳ πειθομένοις δὲ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ, ὀργὴ
καὶ θυμὸς –

ἐριθεια, ας f selfishness, selfish
ambition

There is some debate over the meaning of this word. Murray argues that its meaning is 'contention' and that the thought is that of rebellion against God. Most, however, understand it to mean concern for personal gain (self-seeking):

ἐριθος a hireling

ἐριθευειν act as a hireling

ἐριθεια the mind of a hireling

ἀπειθεω disobey, be an unbeliever

ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality

πειθω pass obey, be a follower of

ἀδικια, ας f wrongdoing, evil, sin

ὀργη see v.5.

θυμος, ου m anger, rage, fury

Emphasises the intensity of God's wrath.

Day 468: Romans 2:9-16**Verse 9**

θλίψις καὶ στενοχωρία ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ψυχὴν
ἀνθρώπου τοῦ κατεργαζομένου τὸ κακόν,
Ἰουδαίου τε πρώτον καὶ Ἕλληνο·

θλιψις, εως f trouble, suffering

στενοχωρια, ας f distress, trouble

ψυχη, ης f 'soul', living being, person

κατεργαζομαι do, accomplish

κακος, η, ον evil, bad, wrong, harm

πρωτον adv. first, first of all

Ἕλληνη, ηνος m a Greek, non-Jew

Cf. 1:16. The priority of the Jew applies to judgment and condemnation as well as to salvation.

Verse 10

δόξα δὲ καὶ τιμὴ καὶ εἰρήνη παντὶ τῷ
ἐργαζομένῳ τὸ ἀγαθόν, Ἰουδαίῳ τε
πρωτον καὶ Ἕλληνι·

δοξα δε και τιμη cf. v.7

εἰρηνη, ης f peace

The Semitic concept of peace, Shalom, here replaces the Greek ἀφθαρσια of verse 7.

ἐργαζομαι work, do, perform

ἀγαθος, η, ον good, useful, fitting

Verse 11

οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν προσωποληψία παρὰ τῷ θεῷ.

προσωποληψια, ας f favouritism,
treating one person better than another

Verse 12

ὅσοι γὰρ ἀνόμως ἤμαρτον, ἀνόμως καὶ ἀπολοῦνται· καὶ ὅσοι ἐν νόμῳ ἤμαρτον, διὰ νόμου κριθήσονται·

Paul now turns to the topic of the law.

ὅσος, η, ον as much as; pl. as many as,
all

ἀνόμως adv without the (Jewish) law

I.e. Gentiles.

ἁμαρτανω sin, commit sin

ἀπολλυμι destroy; midd perish, die

There is no support for the notion that ignorance of the law may excuse sin.

κρινω judge, pass judgement on,
condemn

"The law is no talisman calculated to preserve those who possess it, it is an instrument of judgment." Barrett. The reason is provided in v.13.

Verse 13

οὐ γὰρ οἱ ἀκροαταὶ νόμου δίκαιοι παρὰ [τῷ] θεῷ, ἀλλ' οἱ ποιηταὶ νόμου δικαιωθήσονται.

ἀκροατης, ου m hearer

δικαιος, α, ον righteous, just

ποιητης, ου m one who does or carries
out, doer

δικαιωω justify, acquit, declare & treat as
righteous

"Whether or not there are such perfect ποιηται του νομου the apostle does not say in this passage, but only opposes the true standard to the false standard of the Jews that ἀκροαται του νομου are just before God. The entire reasoning of the Roman epistle tends to this conclusion, that no man is by nature such a ποιητης του νομου, or can be." Philippi.
Cf. the note from Moo at v.6.

Wright comments, "It will take him [Paul] eight or ten more chapters to explain finally what he means by 'doing' Torah, and we must follow the argument through to understand him at that point (see on 8:1-4; 10:5-11). For the moment, he is content to assert the point: Israel's ethnic privilege, backed up by possession of Torah, will be of no avail at the final judgment if Israel has not kept Torah. Justification, at the last, will be on the basis of performance, not possession."

Verses 14-15

It is perhaps best to link vv 14-15 to v.12 (so Calvin, Hodge, Murray, Moo) and regard it as providing the answer to the question arising from v.12, namely: If the Gentiles are without the law how can they be regarded as having sinned? For "Where there is no law there is no transgression" (4:15; 5:13).

Wright considers the various interpretations of vv.14-15. On the one hand are those who suggest that Paul is putting up a purely hypothetical case which in has no genuine exepars. On the other hand there are those who suggest that Paul did not really really believe in the universality of human sin.

Wright thinks both these options untenable and adds, "The third way though is that, just as in chapter 1 Paul was hinting at Jews sharing in the judgment that would fall on pagans, a theme waiting to be explored more fully in due course, so here he is hinting at a theme he will explore later in the letter, namely that the people in question are *Christian* Gentiles (vv. 14-15) – indeed, Christian Jews and Gentiles alike (vv. 7,10). There are problems with this reading, too, but they are not so insuperable as sometimes supposed."

"... Paul's view, to anticipate the later argument, is that those who are in Christ, who are indwelt by the Spirit, do in fact 'do the law,' even though, in the case of Gentiles, they have never heard of it. The law, in Paul's view, pointed to that fulness of life and obedience to God which comes about in the Messiah; those who attain that fulness of life and obedience are therefore 'doing the Torah' in the senses that, to Paul, really matter. He is well aware that this is really paradoxical, but well aware also that to say anything else would be to imply, which he never does, either that the Torah was a bad thing, now happily left behind, or that Gentile Christians are second-class citizens in the kingdom of the Messiah. He will have it both ways; they are not under the Torah, but at the same time they are essentially doing what Torah really wanted."

Verse 14

ὅταν γὰρ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν, οὗτοι νόμον μὴ ἔχοντες ἑαυτοῖς εἰσὶν νόμος·

ὅταν when, whenever, as often as
ἔθνη Noun, nom & acc pl ἔθνος, οὗς n
nation, people; τα ἑ. Gentiles
φύσει Noun, dat s φύσις, εὼς f nature,
natural condition

Wright links φύσει to the words preceding it rather than following it. Paul is speaking about Gentiles who, in the nature of the case, do not have the Torah.

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον him/her/itself

"Their moral nature, with its voice of conscience commanding and forbidding, supplies to their own Ego the place of the revealed law possessed by the Jews." Meyer. "For the Greeks, the 'natural law' or 'unwritten law' was an important idea, establishing the basis for universal moral norms and for the 'positive' law enacted in the city-states. The Stoics, a school of philosophers influential in Paul's day, rooted this law in nature. Jews familiar with this tradition then used *physis* in a similar way to demonstrate the universal applicability of the moral standards found in the law of Moses. Paul clearly reflects this tradition in 2:14, and first-century readers would immediately have understood that he was endorsing this widespread tradition about the unwritten universal moral law." Moo. These are an example of 'doers of the law' who are not 'hearers' of it.

Verse 15

οἵτινες ἐνδείκνυνται τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν, συμμαρτυροῦσης αὐτῶν τῆς συνειδήσεως καὶ μεταξὺ ἀλλήλων τῶν λογισμῶν κατηγορούντων ἢ καὶ ἀπολογουμένων,

οἵτινες Pronoun, m nom pl ὅστις, ἥτις, ὅτι who, which

Here, bears the sense of "These ..."

ἐνδεικνυμαι show, give indication of, do
γραπτος, η, ον written, inscribed

Murray points out that it is not the law which is written on their hearts (a phrase used of the believer) but the *works* of the law. John Owen suggests that this is the remnant or remaining spark of 'inbred law' which was present in unfallen man and is renewed in the Christian. Wright, however, reads this as the fulfilment of the new covenant promise of Jeremiah 31:33 etc., adding, "Paul clearly believed, and elaborated this at various points, that the covenant had been renewed, according to this promise, through Jesus, and that this renewal was being implemented by the Spirit in those who were 'in Christ.' This phrase is a further indication that he has Christian Gentiles in mind."

συμμαρτυρω show to be true, give
evidence in support of

συνειδησις, εὼς f conscience,
awareness

μεταξυ prep with gen between, among
ἀλλήλων, οἰς, οὗς one another
λογισμος, ου m thought, reasoning

μεταξυ ἀλλήλων τῶν λογισμῶν 'among their various/conflicting thoughts' either within one person or between one Gentile and another. The reference to conscience suggests the former (so Barrett).

κατηγορω accuse, bring charges
against

ἢ or

ἀπολογεομαι defend oneself, excuse

Verse 16

ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὅτε κρίνει ὁ θεὸς τὰ κρυπτὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου διὰ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

This verse seems not to follow on simply from verse 15, but to look back to verses 13 or 12 (so NIV which treats vv. 14 and 15 as a parenthesis) and to the main argument of this whole section, cf. v.5. However, Moo suggests "It is better to take verse 16 with the final verbs in verse 15. The constant self-criticism of the Gentiles finds its ultimate meaning in the judgment of God at the end of history. That judgment, Paul affirms, takes place 'through Jesus Christ,' whom God has appointed as the arbiter (see, e.g., 'the judgment seat of Christ' in 2 Cor 5:10). This Christologically oriented judgment is fully in accord with the gospel Paul preaches." (So also Barrett.)

Wright comments, "God's justice will be revealed, fulfilling scriptural promises and putting all other justice (Caesar's included) to shame. Why so? Not least precisely because this revelation will expose and assess the secrets of all human hearts. Just as Jews cannot hide from the judgment by pleading their Jewishness, so no human can hide from the judgment by relying on outward appearances and covering up the secrets of the heart."

ὅτε conj when, at which time
κρυπτος, η, ον hidden, secret, private

These inner conflicts (v.15) and judgments are now made public and are ratified by the judge of all the earth.

εὐαγγελιον, ου n good news, gospel

The proclamation of God's judgement is also an aspect of the Gospel, cf. 1:18.

Day 469: Romans 2:17-24

Verses 17-29

The remainder of this chapter focusses on the two distinctives of Judaism: possession of the law, vv. 17-24; and circumcision, vv. 25-29. "In discussing their value in these verses, then. Paul is discussing the ultimate value of being Jewish." Moo.
Wright comments, "We now arrive at the point to which the whole section has been building up. Israel, resting on God's special vocation, has not fulfilled that vocation, and must face the challenge from those who, though not ethnically Jewish, are now inheriting Israel's role in God's purposes..."

"The passage, then, is not simply part of a long demonstration that all humans are sinful. That is indeed one of the major thrusts of the section 1:18-3:20, but within that overarching purpose these verses introduce a quite different idea. Faced with a general denunciation of the pagan world, many educated Jews – including, presumably, Paul himself in his pre-Christian life – would say that this is of course true of pagans, but that God has chosen Israel as the light to the nations and has given Israel the Torah so that it can fulfil this role. Israel is the solution to the world's plight (see, among countless possible examples, 2 Bar 48:20-24). The problem he is outlining at this point in the argument, and to which he will offer a solution in the section beginning at 3:21, is not simply that all are sinful and in need of salvation, but that the bearers of the solution have become part of the problem. Israel, called to be the light of the world, has become part of the darkness. How then can God's covenant plan be fulfilled? The problem of Israel is thus also a problem for God. It is, in fact, a further dimension of God's righteousness. Only if we appreciate this will the transition from chapter 2 to chapter 3 make sense."

Verse 17

Εἰ δὲ σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ἐπονομάζη καὶ ἐπαναπαύῃ νόμῳ καὶ καυχᾶσαι ἐν θεῷ

The TR, following most minuscules, reads Ἴδε σου rather than Εἰ δε σου; the latter text is strongly supported.

ἐπονομαζομαι call oneself

Ἰουδαῖος "The term *Jew* originally referred to a person from the region occupied by the descendants of Judah, but it was applied generally to Israelite people after the exile. By Paul's day, the term was widely used in this more general sense. The name signified that one belonged to that people, distinct from all others, whom God had chosen to be his own. All other benefits flow from this fundamental one." Moo. Paul returns to this theme in vv 28-29 when he defines what really constitutes a Jew – i.e. what really makes someone a member of the people of God.

ἐπαναπαυομαι rest upon, rely on

"It is a matter of finding security and comfort, not a matter of using the Torah as a ladder of good works, up which to climb to a position of moral superiority or a self-earned salvation. The attitude Paul describes would say: 'God gave Israel the Torah; our possession of it is the rock on which we stand; it is what makes us Jews God's special people.'" Wright.

καυχᾶσαι Verb, pres midd/pass dep indic, irreg 2 s καυχασμαι **boast, boast about, celebrate**

Cf. Mic 3:11.

Verse 18

καὶ γινώσκεις τὸ θέλημα καὶ δοκιμάζεις τὰ διαφέροντα κατηχούμενος ἐκ τοῦ νόμου,

θέλημα, ατος n **will, wish, desire**

το θέλημα here meaning the revealed will of God – i.e. they knew the Scriptures.

δοκιμαζω **test, examine, approve, discern**
διαφερω **be worth more than, be superior to**

'approve what is superior'

κατηχεω **inform, instruct**

I.e. and so be in a position to instruct the nations.

Verse 19

πέποιθᾶς τε σεαυτὸν ὀδηγὸν εἶναι τυφλῶν, ῥῶς τῶν ἐν σκότει,

πέποιθᾶς Verb, perf act indic, 2 s πειθω **persuade; perf have confidence, be confident**

σεαυτου, ης reflexive pronoun **yourself**

ὀδηγος, ου m **guide, leader**

τυφλος, η, ον **blind**

φως, φωτος n **light**

σκότει Noun, dat s σκοτος, ους n **darkness**

It has been suggested that this verse reflects the Servant Songs of Isaiah (cf. Is. 42:6-7; 49:19). Paul seems to be saying that Israel, who considered herself the Servant of the Lord, did not live up to the description given in the Servant Songs.

Verse 20

παιδευτὴν ἀφρόνων, διδάσκαλον νηπίων, ἔχοντα τὴν μόρφωσιν τῆς γνώσεως καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐν τῷ νόμῳ –

παιδευτης, ου m **teacher, one who disciplines or corrects**

ἀφρόνων Adjective, gen pl ἀφρων, ον gen ονος **foolish, ignorant**

διδασκαλος, ου m **teacher**

νηπιος, α, ον **baby, infant, child**

μορφωσις, εως f **outward form, embodiment**

γνωσις, εως f **knowledge, understanding**

ἀληθεια, ας f **truth, reality**

"Paul is acknowledging, and endorsing, a remarkably high, almost incarnational, view of Torah, which should be kept in mind during subsequent discussions." Wright.

"Paul breaks off his conditional sentence at the end of 2:20... He does this so that he can get the maximum rhetorical effect from the charge that he now levels against the Jews. By repeating in summary form some of the privileges he listed in verses 17-20, Paul highlights effectively the contrast between claim and reality." Moo.

Verse 21

ὁ οὖν διδάσκων ἕτερον σεαυτὸν οὐ διδάσκεις; ὁ κηρύσσων μὴ κλέπτειν κλέπτεις;

διδασκω **teach**

ἕτερος, α, ον **other, another, different**

σεαυτου, ης see v.19

κηρυσσω **preach, proclaim**

κλεπτω **steal**

There are two possible ways of interpreting this and the following verse:

- i) Literal – Paul knows of immorality among the Jews and is making the general point that they are no more moral than the Gentiles;
- ii) Metaphorical – they commit heart sins which correspond to the outward sins they condemn in others.

Barett comments, "When theft, adultery and sacrilege are strictly and radically understood, there is no man who is not guilty of these."

Wright comments, "Remembering that the 'you' in question is not 'every Jewish individual,' but 'Israel as a whole,' the answer must be: Israel has squandered its inheritance. Like the biblical prophets, one of whom he will presently quote, Paul charges Israel with infidelity (see also Ps 50:16-20 and the other passages quoted in 3:10-18)."

Verse 22

ὁ λέγων μὴ μοιχεύειν μοιχεύεις; ὁ βδελυσσόμενος τὰ εἰδῶλα ἱεροσυλεῖς;

μοιχευω **commit adultery**

βδελυσσομαι **detest**

εἰδῶλον, ου n **idol**

ἱεροσυλεω **commit sacrilege, rob temples**

If taken metaphorically, adultery could refer to unfaithfulness to God (cf. Hos 1-3; Jer 3:8 etc.), 'robbing temples' could refer to self-assertion, making oneself God, the ultimate idolatry.

Wright, however, comments, "One is unlikely to demonstrate to the watching pagan world that there is a better way of being human by stealing from pagan temples. This practice, though probably not widespread, was not unknown. Some Jews had evidently used the scriptural polemic against idols to argue that, since idols have no real existence, things given to them are nobody's property, and hence may be taken with impunity. Paul's point is that the practice exists and brings discredit on Israel precisely among the people to whom 'the Jew' is supposed to be acting as a light to the world."

Verse 23

ὅς ἐν νόμῳ καυχᾶσαι, διὰ τῆς παραβάσεως τοῦ νόμου τὸν θεὸν ἀτιμάζεις;

καυχᾶσαι see v.17

παραβασις, εως f transgression, disobedience, sin

ἀτιμαζω treat shamefully, dishonour

This verse is punctuated as a question though many prefer to read it as a statement (punctuation is secondary).

Verse 24

τὸ γὰρ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ δι' ὑμᾶς βλασφημεῖται ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, καθὼς γέγραπται.

Wright comments, "This opens up the substance of the charge. The real problem is Israel's failure to bring God worldwide honour. That was the purpose for which the Torah had been given. What Israel has done with Torah has instead brought dishonour: the pagan nations scorn the true God on the basis of the behaviour of the covenant people."

ὄνομα, τος n name, person, reputation
βλασφημεω speak against, slander, insult
ἔθνεσιν Noun, dat pl ἔθνος, ους n nation;
τα ἔ. Gentiles

γέγραπται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γραφω

See Is 52:5 "Although blaspheming God's name in Isaiah comes about because of pagan oppression of Israel, Paul creates an ironic twist by attributing this blasphemy to Israel's sinfulness in the midst of pagans. But he is still fair to the larger context from which he draws the quotation, for Israel's oppression by pagan nations is itself a result of her sin." Moo. In Wright's words, "Israel's 'exile' is still continuing, not in a geographical, but in a theological, spiritual, and moral sense.". See furthermore Ezek 36:20.

Day 470: Romans 2:25-29

Verse 25

περιτομή μὲν γὰρ ὠφελεῖ ἐὰν νόμον πράσσης· ἐὰν δὲ παραβάτης νόμου ᾦς, ἡ περιτομή σου ἀκροβυστία γέγονεν.

περιτομή, ης f circumcision

Circumcision was considered such a vital distinctive of the Jew, marking them off as the people of God, that the term itself was used of Judaism, cf. Eph 2:11.

ὠφελω gain, profit, achieve, benefit

ἐὰν if, if it should be

πρασσω practice, do

Moo thinks that v.25a makes a negative point. "Circumcision has no value to rescue Jews from God's wrath because their obedience to the law never reaches the level required for salvation. The second part of verse 25 simply states the negative corollary of this point: Failing to obey the law can annul the value of circumcision."

It is probably better to view Paul as simply making the point that circumcision is a mark not merely of privilege but also of obligation, and that those who pride themselves in the sign have failed to live up to their obligation or calling. Cf. 1 Cor 7:19.

παραβατης, ου m one who breaks God's law, transgressor

ᾦς Verb, pres subj, 2 s εἶμι

ἀκροβυστία, ας f uncircumcision, non-Jews

γέγονεν Verb, perf act indic, 3s γινομαι

Verse 26

ἐὰν οὖν ἡ ἀκροβυστία τὰ δικαιώματα τοῦ νόμου φυλάσσει, οὐχ ἡ ἀκροβυστία αὐτοῦ εἰς περιτομήν λογισθήσεται;

δικαίωμα, τος n regulation, requirement

That which the law requires if a person is to be righteous before God.

φυλασσω keep

λογισθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s
λογίζομαι reckon, count

Godet, followed by Murray, thinks that Paul here refers to Gentile Christians who, though uncircumcised, live in obedience to the demands of God, cf. 8:4 where Paul again uses the phrase το δικαίωμα του νομου. Moo, however, favours the (unfulfilled) hypothetical: "The apostle makes clear elsewhere that there is, in fact, no person who can do the law and be saved (3:20). Thus, he must again here be speaking hypothetically, theorising about the existence of a law-observant Gentile and what the consequences would be." The argument for the former view is strengthened by v.29 and is strongly argued by Wright who believes that "Paul's description of this parallel 'Jewishness,' this new sort of 'circumcision,' is replete with overtones of 'new covenant' passages both in scripture and elsewhere in his writings." He argues that Paul's words are an abbreviated version of Ezek 36:27, and that his thoughts here are developed further in 10:5-11.

Verse 27

καὶ κρινεῖ ἢ ἐκ φύσεως ἀκροβυστία τὸν νόμον τελοῦσα σὲ τὸν διὰ γράμματος καὶ περιτομῆς παραβάτην νόμου.

κρινεῖ Verb, fut act indic, 3 s κρινω
φυσις, εως f nature, natural condition
τελεω fulfill, carry out
γραμμα, τος n letter (of alphabet), letter

δια γραμματος 'possessing the written law'
δια of 'attendant circumstances'

Verse 28

οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἐν τῷ φανερῷ Ἰουδαίος ἐστίν, οὐδὲ ἢ ἐν τῷ φανερῷ ἐν σαρκὶ περιτομή·

φανερος, α, ον evident, plain, visible
σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body,
human nature

Verse 29

ἀλλ· ὁ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ Ἰουδαίος, καὶ περιτομή καρδίας ἐν πνεύματι οὐ γράμματι, οὐ ὁ ἔπαινος οὐκ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀλλ· ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ.

"In referring to the secret/heart/spirit people, Paul clearly means to designate those in whom the gospel of the Messiah has done its work. The promises of God through Deuteronomy 30, Ezekiel 36, and elsewhere have come true. God has done, in Jesus and the Spirit, what he had promised; the result is the creation of the people of the new covenant. Paul's clearest statement of this point may be found in 2 Cor 3:1-6, where the letter/spirit contrast is again prominent. There are several other passages in which a similar theological understanding may be discerned, not least Romans 8 and 10." Wright.

κρυπτος, η, ον hidden, secret, private

Perhaps the 'inner man' cf. Eph 3:16.

περιτομή καρδίας cf. Deut 10:16, also Jer 4:4 and Phil 3:3.

πνευματι a reference to the Spirit (not man's spirit). Paul contrasts the life-giving power of the Spirit of God with the powerlessness of the mere letter of the law, cf. 8:4-17.

ἔπαινος, ου m praise, approval

The name 'Judah' (and hence the title 'Jew') means 'praise', cf. Gen 29:35; 49:8. Hence these are the people who receive the name 'Judah' from God.

"What he does, then, at the end of this chapter, is to anticipate the direction of his argument. He will show that only those who, through faith in Christ, have received the Spirit of God make up God's true people. Implicit here is a radical redefinition of 'Jew' that will require a lot more explanation as Paul moves forward in this letter." Moo.