

THE BOOK OF ROMANS  
"Silence Before God"  
Romans 3:19, 20

Nov 18, 1984

INTRODUCTION

1. God has a proven case (v. 9). His charges are all substantiated. The first chapter condemns Gentiles and the second Jews. There can be no doubt about it--God's sentence is based on the facts. Being God's decision, there is no reversal and no appeal. Such finality is frightening.

2. Not only is there a proven case, there is also a statement of sins totality. Sin is in human character both negatively (vv. 10, 11) and positively (v. 12). Moreover, sin is in human conduct both in word (vv. 13, 14) and in deed (vv. 15-17). The disruptive cause of all man's dreadful behaviour is his lack of the fear of God (v. 18).

3. Having set the base, Paul now builds His final formal case. God's Court of Justice must hold everyone guilty before Him. This is how it is done:

1. Something to KNOW v. 19a

a. Stated

The verb "know" denotes innate knowledge. It is used about 20 times in Romans (cf. 2:2; 8:28). It is an admitted truth.

b. Related

Note that the Psalms and other O.T. quotations in the previous verses are called "the Law." The reference is really to the O.T. Scriptures but primarily to the Mosaic Law alone. This is all addressed primarily to the Jews (cf. 3:2). Let not the Jew nor moderns avoid the direction of Scripture--toward us!

2. Something to STOP v. 19b

The grammatical construction here is a purpose clause. Thus, Scripture is used as a lever to close every mouth. This is not an eschatological phrase, but an immediate conclusion. The verb "stop" means to "fence in, to block up." Stopping the mouths of created man is often a difficult project. However, God here accomplishes it.

3. Something to DECLARE v. 19c

This is another purpose for the O.T. quotations--to bring the whole world under judgment of God. What a purpose this is. To make every one liable to God! The verb "become" is significant. It changes the world's

view of its. Moreover, the word "guilty" is only found here in the N.T. and notes that man is answerable to God. It states that satisfaction for sin is due God. Mark, this is for the whole world (Jew/Gentile). This effects and awful silence before God.

SUMMARY NOTE: An expanded translation of this verse reads: We know what the message of the Law is, for those who live under it--that every excuse may die on the lips of him who makes it and no living man may think himself beyond the judgment of God (Phillips).

4. Something to REMEMBER v. 20

a. Law brings knowledge of sin

Knowledge here is full knowledge. This is not the only office of the Law, but it is one. Sin is revealed by conscience (2:15), by the Gospel (1 Cor. 15:3), and assuredly by the Holy Spirit (Jn 16:8, 9). The Law was never intended to justify, but to condemn. That it does. Thank God it is a schoolmaster leading to Christ (Gal. 3:24).

b. Law does not justify

The opening word of this verse should be rendered "because." It provides the reason for the previous verse. The Greek notes that "out of" the works of the Law no one is justified. God gave a code to show the sinfulness of sin, but not to give life (Gal. 2:16). There is no one who could give perfect compliance to the Law, hence justification before God must come through Christ. His sight can only be satisfied by a perfect sacrifice, even our Lord Jesus.

CONCLUSION

What right do I have to come into God's heaven? None. The only right is to be found clothed in God's righteousness through faith in Christ's shed blood.

The Holy, meek unspotted Lamb  
Who from the Father's bosom came,  
Who died for me, even me, to atone,  
Now for my Lord, and God, I own.

When from the dust of death I rise  
To claim my mansion in the skies,  
Even then this shall be all my plea--  
Jesus hath lived, hath died for me!