

## Summary of Portion 1, Section 1 of ROMANS

- In sub-section 1, Paul maintains that every human being, without exception, is subject to being faced with the wrath of God in the final day of judgment. Every human being, without exception, is fundamentally hostile to God and everything that he stands for. Paul describes the inner dynamic of this hostility toward God. It affects what a man desires and it affects what he is willing to think and believe. Accordingly, every last person stands condemned in the eyes of God because of who he is in the fabric of his being. He knows the right way to be. He is fully capable of condemning others for their moral and spiritual failings. But this only highlights his own impending doom. For the very same sorts of things he condemns in others, he in fact does himself. Every man, therefore, stands condemned and without a defense.
- At the end of sub-section 1, therefore, we are left with an inescapable reality: unless God grants a person *dikaosune* as an undeserved gift out of his profound mercy, he is hopelessly condemned to receive God's wrath at the final judgment. Paul will make this very point explicit a few times later in the letter. Here it is simply the implicit conclusion to his argument in sub-section 1.
- Then, in sub-section 2, having established that only God's granting mercy can rescue a person from condemnation, Paul warns against foolishly presuming upon the mercy of God. Whether he be Jew or Gentile—the one who foolishly presumes on God's mercy is simply storing up wrath for himself. God does not grant mercy to just any old being who walks upright on two legs and wants Life rather than condemnation. There is a definite condition that must be met if one is to receive mercy from God. The one to whom God will grant mercy is the one who, motivated by an inner yearning for the good things that God has promised, perseveres in striving to pursue what is good. The man who persists in pursuing evil will not receive mercy; he will receive condemnation.
- Paul then turns his attention to the distinctive presumption of the Jews of his day. It is not those who have mastered the content of *Torah* who will be considered *dikaos* in God's eyes. It is the those who strive to do what *Torah* requires that will be considered *dikaos* in God's eyes. And God shows no favoritism. Jew and Gentile will be judged by exactly the same standard. If the Gentile strives to do what *Torah* requires, he will be deemed *dikaos* in God's eyes. And if the Jew does not strive to do what *Torah* requires, he will not be deemed *dikaos* in God's eyes. He will be given no special advantage just because he has mastered the content of the *Torah*.
- Paul then proceeds to maintain that the Jews of his day give no evidence that they are *dikaos* in the eyes of God. In fact, they give no evidence that they are true Jews—that is, Jews who stand to inherit the promises made to Abraham and benefit from their status as Jews. The true Jew is the one who, driven by an inner transformation of his heart which has been produced by the activity of God's Spirit in his inner man, strives to meet the demands of the Covenant. The Jew whose identity as a Jew consists only of his outwardly living like a Jew is not really an authentic Jew. The Gentile who strives to meet the

demands of the Covenant will receive the benefits of being a Jew before the ethnic Jew who lives like a Jew but has no inward drive to truly meet the demands of the Covenant.

- In brief, then, Paul has maintained that merely being an ethnic Jew who outwardly lives like a Jew is not sufficient to render one *dikaios* in the eyes of God. To think otherwise is to presume on the mercy of God. Even further, Paul has maintained that to be *dikaios* in the eyes of God, it is not actually necessary to be or to live like a Jew. The Gentile who is inwardly oriented to do the things required by the Covenant will be deemed *dikaios* by God, regardless of his not having or knowing the Covenant.
- Implicit in all of this, then, is the following important fact: outwardly conforming one’s life and actions to the demands of the Mosaic Covenant is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for receiving the merciful gift of *dikaiosune* from God.
- Therefore, in sub-section 3, Paul asks, parenthetically, whether there remains any advantage or benefit to being an ethnic Jew. If being ethnically Jewish neither guarantees nor aids in one attaining *dikaiosune*, then what advantage is there? Paul contends that there is a very significant benefit to being ethnically Jewish—namely, God has made particular promises to the Jews that single them out as a unique and privileged people. But none of those promises give the particular ethnic Jew any particular advantage when it comes to his attaining *dikaiosune* before God.
- Furthermore, while the Jews are a privileged people group, Jews are not any better morally than Gentiles. As Paul has already maintained and as the Jewish Scriptures make clear, every human being—Jew or Gentile—is entirely evil and fully deserving of condemnation by God. Jews under the Covenant know as well or better than anyone that no human being will ever attain *dikaiosune* because his performance with respect to the demands of the Covenant has demonstrated how good and worthy he is.
- Finally, then, in sub-section 4, Paul arrives at the primary point he is trying to make in Section 1. He has already established (in sub-section 2) that outward conformity of one’s life and actions to the demands of the Mosaic Covenant is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for being granted *dikaiosune* from God. Accordingly, now that we have been confronted by the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus, there exists a whole new basis for *dikaiosune*. Now, *dikaiosune* is granted to the one who believes the truth with regard to Jesus. And such *dikaiosune* is granted irrespective of whether one seeks to meet the demands of the Covenant. Meeting the demands of the Covenant was neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for receiving *dikaiosune* under the terms of the Mosaic Covenant; so certainly it is not a necessary condition for those who seek *dikaiosune* by belief in Jesus. In light of this new reality of *dikaiosune* by believing in Jesus, the boast of the Jew is eliminated. Since *dikaiosune* is no longer measured in terms of the standard of the Mosaic Covenant, the Jew has no advantage in any sense over the Gentile. Jew and Gentile are now decreed *dikaios* on exactly the same terms: belief in Jesus, and that alone. So, no longer do either Jew or Gentile need to meet the demands of the Covenant in order to attain *dikaiosune* through belief in Jesus.