

NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDUCTIVE STUDY OF PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS - PART TWO

In chapter one Paul introduced us to himself, his boss, his job and his message.(1:1) He gave us three reasons why his message is true.(1:2-4) He told us what it takes for his job and ours to succeed - God's love, God's call and God's grace, and our faith and obedience in being prepared to be saints.(1:5-7)

He prayed for his readers,(1:8-10) with the emphasis first on thanksgiving for what God has done and then on asking to be part of the means in what God will do next.

He explained what he saw Christian ministry to be about - giving, which becomes a two-way process.(1:11-13) He revealed his inner compulsion by which God motivated him to preach at whatever cost to himself.(1:14,15)

He told us why the gospel is so exciting and has to be shared.(1:16,17) These two verses are the theme of the whole book of Romans. The next 15 1/2 chapters explain them. By faith in Christ's death we can be righteous before God in heaven.(1-4) By faith in Christ's resurrection life we can be righteous on earth.(5-8) There are no exceptions.(9-11) Here is what being righteous on earth looks like in practice.(12-16)

The first half of chapter one describes the good news, the gospel, now the second half turns to the bad news, why we need the gospel. The bad news is not just that we do wrong things, unrighteousness, but that there is a root cause, ungodliness, which is true of all mankind. Ungodliness is the lack of God in our lives, and therefore the lack of godlikeness in our character and behaviour. The disease ungodliness has various symptoms, unrighteousness.(1:18)

Everyone knows that there is a God through creation but many have chosen to suppress what they know, put man at the centre of the world, and worship him and his work.(1:19,20) Unrighteousness takes three forms - intellectual arrogance,(1:21-23) religious darkness,(1:24,25) and moral perversion.(1:26-32) Because man gave up on God, God gave us over to these things in the hope that we would learn the hard way from our self inflicted misery.(1:24,26,28)

The first example Paul picked of moral perversion was homosexuality,(1:26,27) clearly forbidden in the Old Testament.(Lev.18:22; 20:13) It is plainly the result of ungodliness but at the same time he goes on,(1:28-32) to a long list of other symptoms of ungodliness which are no better and no worse than homosexuality. Most of this list are attitudes of mind, activities of the tongue, and all of them hurt those closest to us. All sin is equal in God's eyes because it all springs from unbelief towards Him,(Jn.16:9) but if there is one sin which is greater in its damage to others, it is false teaching that denies the gospel of Christ.(1:18,32)

In the next chapter, Paul began to explore some of the objections people have to this very simple proposition.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER TWO

2:1-29 Q.1 What three excuses do we commonly make for not accepting the bad news that all of us are ungodly?

2:1-3 Q.2 What is wrong with judging the behaviour of others? Why do we love to do it? How is judging others really an excuse?

2:4,5 Q.3 How and when will God judge men? What according to this passage is especially deserving of God's judgment? Is He judging us now? If not, why not?

2:4 Q.4 How should we understand adversity at present? Is it God's judgment? How is God responding to our sin in the present time? Does this give us a clue as to how we should be dealing with sin in the lives of others?

2:6-10 Q.5 How can we escape the judgment of God?(Jn.5:24) If we have escaped, how will it show? If we have not, how will it be obvious?

2:11-13 Q.6 Does the bad news apply to all those who have never heard the gospel? Is that fair? How does God deal with them? What is the basis of God's judgment?

2:14-16 Q.7 Doesn't it seem like the Law of God just caused us problems? Would it therefore be better never to hear the gospel? How is the Law written on our hearts? Give real life examples of how this works? How do we make the heathen who have not heard an excuse for rejecting the gospel?

2:17-29 Q.8 Surely the bad news that we are all ungodly and unrighteous does not apply to religious people, does it?

2:17-23 Q.9 What is the biggest trap for those who rely on their religious observance to make them acceptable to God? What examples does Paul use of religious behaviour that has nothing to do with a real relationship with God?

2:24 Q.10 What effect does seeing such religious activity have upon unbelievers? Again give modern day examples.

2:25 Q.11 How was circumcision originally a meaningful outward symbol of a Jewish faith? (Gen.17:9-14) What had gone wrong in the use of it as a picture? What would be equivalent examples in the Christian church?

2:26-29 Q.12 What does it mean to be circumcised in the heart? How does this show? Whom are we wanting to impress? How does this relate back to the first problem in this chapter of our judgment of one another?

