

Today's Quick Word Romans 2:1

By Bruce Christian

ROMANS 2:1 *You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgement on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgement do the same things.*

In the first three chapters of Romans, Paul is leading up to the main point he wants to make in 3:23: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

He demonstrates in these chapters that this truth applies to every single human being for all time. It applies to the Jew who has God's Law but fails to keep it; but it applies equally to the Gentile, even to those who know nothing about God and what he requires of Man!

This latter point has a particular bearing on world mission. If it were the case, as some would have us erroneously believe, that those who had never heard the Gospel are somehow exempt from God's Judgement, then it would be better never to take the Good News to them and thus give them the opportunity (as would be the case for the majority) to REJECT it and SO bring themselves under God's just condemnation.

If this erroneous belief were true, it would be better to go to heaven ignorant of what Jesus came to do rather than to be banished to hell for refusing his offer of salvation! But it ISN'T

true, and so obedience to Jesus' COMMAND to "Go and make disciples of ALL nations" (Matthew 28:19) is both IMPERATIVE and URGENT!

What Paul is showing here in Romans is that all human beings, made in the image of God, have the Law of God indelibly imprinted on their hearts (14-15), therefore accusing (or perhaps 'even defending', he adds with some irony) themselves. We all prove the truth of this proposition all the time. On the Day of Judgement, God won't have to refer to his revealed Law as the basis for condemning us, thus perhaps allowing us to plead ignorance (in much the same way as we try to do when the police officer pulls us up for speeding and we say, "But, Officer, I didn't see the sign.")! God will only have to refer to the lesser 'Law' he knows we are aware of because by it we condemn others, either verbally, or just mentally. Paul's point here is really just an exposition of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount: "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Matthew 7:1-2).

Paul's words here should inspire us to consider both our attitude to others and our zeal for mission work and evangelism. And they should also give us a deeper appreciation of God's saving grace in our own lives!

Today's Quick Word Jeremiah 41:9

By Bruce Christian

JEREMIAH 41:9 *Now the cistern where he threw all the bodies of the men he had killed along with Gedaliah was the one King Asa had made as part of his defence against Baasha king of Israel. Ishmael son of Nethaniah filled it with the dead.*

This part of Jeremiah's prophecy makes for very sad, even disturbing, reading. It is the prophet's account of the events in Jerusalem after the first contingent of the inhabitants had been taken captive to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar had left Gedaliah, a Jew, in charge of those who were being left in Judea to keep the land cultivated and to reap its produce.

It was a very delicate and volatile political situation, requiring great diplomacy; and Gedaliah was just the man for the job. Crichton describes him like this: "one who possessed the confidence of his own people and their conquerors; a man of rare wisdom and tact, and of upright, transparent character, whose kindly nature and generous disposition would not allow him to think evil of his brother; a man altogether worthy of the esteem in which he was held by succeeding generations of Jews." O that there were more world leaders today who could fit that description!

Ishmael son of Nethaniah was his rival, and envious of his

popularity and position. What a stark contrast there was between these two men! With unspeakable deception, treachery and cruelty Nethaniah murdered the good man and his faithful supporters, and in so doing put Jeremiah and all the humble-poor civilians in Judea in grave danger.

It is hard for us to imagine what fallen human nature is capable of doing - or at least it was until some things that have been happening throughout our fallen, broken world started being transmitted into our lounge rooms on a daily basis! It is good for us to remember, as we watch the News, that 'there, but for the grace of God, go I'. We can be grateful for the transforming power of God's grace through Christ and the extent to which we have seen it at work in our own lives and in our society.

But we need to be much in prayer for places where man's wickedness proliferates unchecked. Let us pray earnestly that the Holy Spirit will bring about change, and that men, women and children who suffer greatly in such circumstances will be protected and cared for. Let us be faithful in prayer for gospel mission and aid agencies that are striving to effect change in these places, and that God in his mercy will change lives by bringing people to a living faith in the Lord Jesus.

Today's Quick Word Psalm 18:1-2

By Bruce Christian

PSALM 18:1-2 *I love you, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*

Can you identify with David as you reflect on these words he wrote at a time when he was in desperate need? Everything seemed to be going against him, and there was little hope or comfort to be found in his external circumstances. He was under threat for his life from King Saul and those aligned with him.

But, in the midst of this feeling of helplessness, he could find his strength and refuge in the LORD his God. He could say, "I love you, O LORD, my strength", and the word he used for "love"

comes from the root that relates to the womb and carries the idea of deep-seated, heart-felt, passionate affection. He knew the LORD in a very personal way as the One who was able to protect him, provide salvation for him, and be his unassailable refuge.

He KNEW all this, even a thousand years before his God demonstrated its reality in the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the 'Rock of Ages (who was) cleft for me.' As the African-Americans, who suffered under the inescapable trials of slavery, sang: "Jesus is a rock in a weary land, a weary land, a weary land, my Jesus is a rock in a weary land, a shelter in the time of storm" - a Negro Spiritual that was no doubt inspired by David's words in Psalm 18.