

The Reason for Gentile Guilt: Part 1

Dr. Michael A. Cox

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Text: Romans 1:18-20

Romans: [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

UBS 4th Edition Paragraph Topic: The Guilt of Mankind

Central Idea of Message: All humans who have reached the stage of accountability stand guilty of sinfulness before God.

Introduction: This paragraph begins Paul's charge that all people who have reached the stage of accountability stand guilty of sinfulness before Almighty God.

We will see that both Gentiles (1:18-32) and Jews (2:1-3:8) are included in this universal indictment (3:9-20). The entire human race is inexcusable because mankind, both as a whole and as individuals, has suppressed the truth about God, which God himself has made known, and all people have steadfastly refused to honor God as God.

But wherein lies the guilt? The people of whom Paul wrote did not have the law of Moses, so they could not have been guilty of violating laws they knew nothing about. Neither had they heard of God's supreme self-disclosure in Jesus Christ (cf. MacGorman 24), that is to say the gospel, so they could not have been guilty of rejecting him. Nor did Paul, here, charge them with guilt because of Adam's sin (cf. MacGorman 24). Again, where, then, is the guilt?

Paul charged that the reason for man's guilt is due to God's self-disclosure to the world and the world's response to this self-disclosure, which was rebellion. The Gentile world had been given the truth about God but had suppressed it.

- I. The Wrath of God Is Revealed from Heaven (v. 18)
 - A. Note the origin: from heaven
 - B. Revelation implies that God can be known
 1. **God is knowable because he reveals much about himself through historical activity: this refutes agnosticism [the theory that neither God nor his existence can be known]**

2. **Disclosure of God's righteousness delivers from sin, while disclosure of God's wrath delivers to sin (cf. MacGorman 25)**
- C. Revelation of God's wrath
1. The revealing of God's wrath also reveals his righteousness
 - a) **The righteousness of God is the key to understanding the sinfulness of mankind and God's judgment of man's sinfulness**
 - b) Seeing what brings God's wrath helps define sin; wrath is his inherent reaction to sin
 2. Only an unholy god would not be angry with sin!
 3. **God's wrath is being revealed through his abandonment of people to the consequences of their sinful choices (cf. MacGorman 25)**
 4. Wrath is the temper of God toward sin (cf. Robertson 4:328)
 5. God's wrath is the same toward all ungodliness and unrighteousness
 6. God's wrath cannot be resisted but his grace can be
 7. **God's wrath is not some peevish display of bad temper, but, rather, his relentless opposition to all that would destroy his creation (cf. MacGorman 25), and humans are his creation**
 8. God's wrath differs radically from man's, in that man's wrath is always tainted by sin, whereas God's wrath springs from an untainted sinless nature (cf. Boa 50)
 9. God seeks to dissuade people from their sin by handing them over to the consequences of their sin (cf. MacGorman 25)
- D. Revelation of God's wrath is against all ungodliness and unrighteousness, and, in this context, suppression of the truth about God and immorality are described
1. God's wrath is against those suppressing the truth in unrighteousness, not against those who have never reached accountability
 - a) Babies and the mentally challenged are not guilty of ungodliness, unrighteousness, or suppression of truth
 - b) The accountability of the individuals referred to here by Paul must be understood
 - (1) This universal condemnation does not include those who never reach the stage

of accountability (cf. 2 Sam. 12:23):
Baptists believe that God has made a
provision for them in Christ

- (2) Those who never reach the stage of accountability have no comprehension of God's revelation and are, therefore, not culpable
2. But the rest of mankind know better than immorality and irreligiousness, and all who know are guilty
3. **Ungodliness: spiritual/religious offenses (Cragg 397)**
 - a) Neglect of duty to God (cf. Finney 23)
 - b) No fear for the Lord (cf. McBeth 49)
4. **Unrighteousness: moral offenses (Cragg 397)**
 - a) Neglect of duty to man (cf. Finney 23)
 - b) No standard for man (cf. McBeth 49)
5. **This text outrightly denies the doctrine of inability (cf. Finney 33), because suppression of the truth implies knowledge of the truth (cf. Harrison 23)**
 - a) Paul asserts the opposite position
 - b) **Paul argues that we resist the truths of God, we suppress them and hold them down, not that our reasoning faculties or wills are so depraved that we are unable to obey God's truths**
 - c) Truth, when unrestrained, quickens one to activity and obedience
 - d) Truth about God is suppressed in an effort to avoid feeling conviction and guilt, preferring instead to live our lives on our own terms, not God's terms
 - e) **Resistance to truth brings hardening of heart**

II. The Truth about God Is Evident Within (v. 19)

- A. **General Revelation 1: the truth about God, in a general way, is evident within each person who has reached a stage of accountability**
- B. Knowledge of God is innate and quite evident
- C. God makes himself known within
 1. In the human consciousness (cf. Moody 170) and among humanity
 - a) ἐν αὐτοῖς

- b) **ἔστιν**: present tense verb denotes the permanency of this knowledge of the personal God
 - c) God stamped knowledge of himself once for all time upon human consciousness, denoted by the aorist tense verb for "manifested" (cf. McBeth 52)
 - d) No human being has ever been without this knowledge (cf. McBeth 52): this implies that one has the ability to know, thus eliminating infants and the mentally challenged
- D. **All people have received at least General Revelation within and, with the exception of infants and the mentally challenged, are accountable for it**

III. The Truth about God Is Evident Without (v. 20)

- A. **General Revelation 2: the truth about God, in a general way, is evident outside of each person through creation (also known as Natural Revelation) and history**
- B. Divine truth about God as Creator, Judge, and Redeemer (cf. Barrett 34)
- C. Invisible attributes of God's character are seen in creation through the medium of nature: oxymoron
 - 1. By way of rains and fruitful seasons in order to feed mankind and provide gladness, God's care is declared (cf. Acts 14:17)
 - 2. Through the heavens, expanse, day and night God's glory is declared (cf. Ps. 19:1-6)
 - 3. What is clearly seen is that God is God and that no created thing in the universe is God
- D. God's eternal power is seen through creation
 - 1. Since the beginning, ongoing, sustained, constant
 - 2. Things that are made cannot make themselves
 - 3. God has the power to make something out of nothing: fiat creation
- E. God's divine nature is seen through creation: the Creator transcends the creation
 - 1. **"The face of nature itself testifies to what is beyond nature" (Cragg 398)**
 - 2. The existence of something as tremendous as the universe demands a Being of eternal power and divine attributes (cf. Wuest 2:30)
 - 3. **Creation is God's television station, internet, and YouTube channel all wrapped up into one medium of self-disclosure**

4. That Being deserves worship and total allegiance
- F. Result: mankind is without excuse
1. All of us are implicated
 2. For rejecting God
 3. For falling into sin
 4. **"Their condemnation is based not on their rejecting Christ of whom they have not heard, but on their sinning against the light they have"**
(Witmer 2:442)
- G. **God is the "Revealer" and nature is the medium of his self-disclosure**
1. It is imprecise to say nature reveals God, since God is the one doing the revealing and nature is simply a medium of his disclosure (cf. MacGorman 26)
 2. God's disclosures through conscience and nature do not guarantee a positive response from people (cf. MacGorman 26)
 3. God's disclosures establish the minimal ground of human responsibility (cf. MacGorman 26)
- H. **All people have received at least *General Revelation* within and without and, with the exception of infants and the mentally challenged, are accountable for it**
- I. **Our responsibility before God is based upon our response to the disclosure that God has made available to us (cf. MacGorman 26)**
1. Those who have General Revelation are accountable for responding in faith to it (see Flowers video, "The Fate of the Unevangelized: Pluralism, Exclusivism, Inclusivism, Restrictivism and Calvinism")
 - a) The triune God of the Bible is looked to in faith in response to the General Revelation
 - b) If General Revelation is enough to condemn, then one's faith response to God as a result of General Revelation should also be enough to save
 - (1) All Old Testament believers
 - (a) Knew only of God: Adam, Enoch, Abraham
 - (b) Others knew of the coming Messiah: Isaiah (Isa. 9:7) and David (Ps. 45:6-7)
 - (2) Faith in God is faith in Christ: John Newport reminds us of the "Cosmic

Christ" who is God before the incarnation, transcending time, matter, and space

2. **Not all people possess Gospel Revelation [also known as Special Revelation] (cf. Wuest 2:29; cf. Barrett 35; MacGorman 24)**
 - a) Cf. John 15:22
 - b) Cf. Rom. 10:14
3. **Those who have received Gospel Revelation are accountable for responding in faith to it, whereas those who do not have it will not be held accountable for it, but will be held accountable for how they responded to General Revelation**
4. "What about Those Who Have Never Heard of Christ?" video
<https://www.reasonablefaith.org/media/other-videos/the-problem-of-those-who-have-never-heard-of-christ/>
5. Why evangelize, since it appears people are better off being accountable for less?
 - a) **Christians must evangelize, meaning spread the Gospel Revelation by any and all means, because the Bible commands that it be done (cf. Matt. 28:19-20)**
 - b) **Christians must evangelize because General Revelation alone is seldom responded to by placing faith in the triune God of the Bible (cf. Rom. 1:18-23)**
 - c) **Christians must evangelize because General Revelation alone is frequently responded to by means of false religion (cf. Rom. 1:18-23)**
- J. Mankind suppresses, restrains, or holds back truth, meaning he refuses to obey the truth (cf. Finney 24)
- K. Observation of all forms of created life sufficiently demonstrates that creation itself does not provide the keys to its own existence (cf. Barrett 35)
- L. Sin distorts but does not destroy the mind's ability to know God and respond to his grace: this refutes Calvinism's definition of total depravity
 1. The mind may become reprobate (Rom. 1:28)
 2. The mind may be renewed (Rom. 12:2)

Conclusion: All who have reached a stage of accountability stand guilty of sinfulness before God. Paul charged that the reason for

man's guilt was due to God's self-disclosure to the world and the world's response to this self-disclosure, which was rebellion.