

Romans #11

"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rm. 3:23). This was Paul's conclusion after he had dealt with both Gentiles and Jews as to whether they needed the gospel. Paul does not say, *"For all are sinners"* (although such a statement was true regarding those of whom he wrote); he said *"all have sinned"*. He attributes their state to what each had done regarding God's law. Paul's words implies at least two things. First, both Jew and Gentile were under law. Second, both Jew and Gentile had broken the law they were under. These two conclusions are necessary for sin is the transgression of law and there cannot be sin if there is no law (1 Jn. 3:4; Rm. 4:15).

The conclusion that Gentiles were sinners had been drawn from the fact that there was no excuse for any to deny the existence of God. The invisible things of God are seen in the things He made (Rm. 1:2). Gentiles knew God but they did not glorify Him as God. They were unthankful. Through their vanity of mind, their insensitive heart was darkened (1:21f). They professed themselves to be wise but they became fools. They changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, of birds, of beasts (Rm. 1:22). God let them walk in their own ways and gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness; to vile passions, to a reprobate mind (1:24, 26, 28). They knew the ordinances of God that they who practiced such things were worthy of death, yet they did those things and consented with others who practiced them (Rm. 1:32). None can read Paul's indictment of Gentiles without concluding they were lost. They did need the gospel.

When Paul had proven Gentiles were sinners, his proposition was "half-done". What remained was to show that Jews also were sinners and in need of the gospel. In chapters two and three Paul proved this as well. The Jew looked at the Gentile and condemned him for his lawless and ungodly life showing he recognized the Gentile lived contrary to God's will. Then, he practiced the very thing his condemned in the Gentile (Rm. 2:1f)!

Paul then calls attention to the fact that there is no respect of persons with God; if God would punish Gentiles for violating the law, was the Jew to suppose God would not punish him when he did the same (2:11)? He wrote, *"For as many as have sinned without the law shall also perish without the law: and as many as have sinned under the law shall be judged by the law; for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified..."* (2:12).

Finally, Paul showed that whatever the law said, it said to them who were under the law. The Jew was under the law. What did his law say to him? *"There is none righteous, no not one..."* (3:10). Paul asked, *"What then? Are we better than they? No in no wise; for we before laid to the charge both of Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin..."* (3:9). So, *"All have sinned and cometh short of the glory of God"*. Paul rests his case. He has shown both Jew and Gentile had sinned; that they needed the saving power found in the gospel. What remained now was for the apostle to show that the need for forgiveness had not been supplied prior to the entrance of the gospel into the world. Such will be the subject of our next article.

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