

ARGUMENT OF ROMANS 1–2

WITH RELATIONS BETWEEN THE LARGER SEMANTIC UNITS

Theme of the Epistle (1:16–17) [STATEMENT of intent]

Thematic statements were used near the end of prologues by Greek rhetoricians to indicate their overall outline. James, for instance, presents his thematic statement or outline in 1:19–20: Let every man be (1) Swift to Hear (1:21–2:26), (2) Slow to Speak (3:1–18), and (3) Slow to Anger (4:1–5:6). Similarly, a thematic statement announces Paul's outline of the Book of Romans: Preface, or Prologue (1:1–15), Thematic Statement (1:16–17), Body, called *kephalaia* "headings" (major arguments of a speech) by the teachers of rhetoric (1:18–15:13), and Epilogue (15:14–16:27). The two headings or sections of Romans are (1) the Gospel Is the Power of God for Salvation to All Who Believe (1:18–11:36) and (2) the Righteous Man Shall Live by Faith (12:1–15:13). Or, principlized, (1) the Good News of Salvation through Faith, and (2) Living by Faith. Modern theologians often refer to them as the doctrinal and practical sections of the Epistle. The gospel, salvation, righteousness, and living by faith are offered to both Jews and Gentiles and are appropriated by faith.

Rejection of Natural Revelation by the Gentiles (1:18–27) [ALTERNATIVE to 1:16–17 and REASON for 1:28–32]

The alternative to "salvation" (1:16) is "the wrath of God" (1:18). Natural revelation clearly points to a Creator and leaves men without excuse (1:19–20). In rejecting natural revelation the Gentiles reject righteousness (1:18), truth (1:18, 25), and God (1:21), preferring to worship and serve idols (1:23). Exchanging the Creator for a creature (1:25) and truth for worthless thoughts (1:21), darkness (1:21) and lies (1:25) is the height folly (1:21–22). God grants their wish and allows them to fulfill their desires (1:24, 26).

Unbridled Sin and Depravity of the Gentiles (1:28–32) [RESULT of 1:18–27 and REASON for 2:1–3]

Paul lists 17 sins (1:29–30) and four undesirable character traits (1:31) Gentiles were guilty of. This is the longest list of sins in the New Testament.

Expectation of Judgment for Jews and Gentiles (2:1–3) [RESULT of 1:28–32 and REASON for 2:12–16]

Jews commit the same sins they judge in Gentiles and condemn themselves. Both can expect judgment and punishment from God.

Possibility of Repentance for Jews (2:4–5) [ALTERNATIVE to 2:1–3 and REASON for 2:6–11]

God, in his kindness, forbearance, and patience, provides a choice: to repent or to be stubborn and not repent. To never repent is to experience God's wrath at the final judgment.

Standards of Righteous Judgment for Repentant and Unrepentant Jews and Gentiles (2:6–11) [RESULT of 2:4–5]

The possibility of repentance creates a need to discuss righteous standards of judgment, rewards, and punishments. All men (2:6), both Jews and Gentiles (2:9, 10), will be judged impartially (2:11) according to their works (2:6). All who repent and do good works will find glory, honor, peace, and eternal life (2:7, 10); all who do not repent, disobey the truth, and do evil will find wrath, indignation, tribulation, and distress (2:8, 9). Note the inverted parallelism: **A** no partiality (2:6), **B** rewards for doing good (2:7), **C** wrath for being disobedient and unrighteous (2:8), **C'** tribulation and distress for doing evil (2:9), **B'** rewards for doing good (2:10), **A'** no partiality (2:11). The center emphasizes the judgment of evildoers in the next life and in this life (2:8–9). The point of turning is from receiving rewards or wrath in the next life (A–C) to receiving rewards or wrath in this life (C'–A').

Standards of Righteous Judgment for Jews and Gentiles (2:12–16) [RESULT of 2:1–3]

An expectation of judgment creates a need to discuss righteous standards of judgment. Gentiles will be judged according to the law written in their hearts (inherent law), and Jews will be judged according to the Mosaic Law. They will be judged according to the law each has received from God.

Advantages of the Jews (2:17–20) [CONCESSION to 2:21–24]

Seven advantages or privileges are listed: a Jew (1) is called a Judean or Jewish (2:17), (2) relies on the Law (2:17), (3) boasts about God (2:17), (4) knows God's will (2:18), (5) tests and approves of things that are valuable (probably promises of blessing for obedience to the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, as in Leviticus 26:2–13 and Deuteronomy 28:1–14; cf. 'the valuable and very great promises' of 2 Peter 1:4) because he is instructed out of the Law (2:18), (6) is a guide to the blind and a light to people in darkness (2:19), and (7) is a corrector of the foolish and a teacher of the immature because he has knowledge and truth in the Law (2:20).

Disobedience of the Jews to the Mosaic Law and Its Consequences (2:21–24) [CONTRAEXPECTATION of 2:17–20]

This list of five Jewish sins counterbalances the list of Gentile sins in 1:28–32. Although the Jews received many advantages (2:17–20), they are no less sinful than Gentiles (2:21–24). Disobedience is not the expected result.

Advantage of Circumcision Depends on Obeying the Mosaic Law (2:25–29) [ILLUSTRATION of 2:17–24]

This is an eighth advantage enjoyed by the Jews—a bodily reminder to obey the Law. But uncircumcised, obedient Gentiles are better than circumcised, disobedient Jews. Circumcision will not exculpate disobedient Jews before God.