

Paul Springs the Trap! (Vv. 3-4)

VERSE 3 But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God (λογίζη δὲ τοῦτο, ὦ ἄνθρωπε ὁ κρίνων τοὺς τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντας καὶ ποιῶν αὐτά, ὅτι σὺ ἐκφεύξῃ τὸ κρίμα τοῦ θεοῦ [*pres.dep.ind.2s. logizomai take into account, suppose + conj de but + pro.acc.nt.s. houtos this + interjection O + noun voc.m.s. anthropos + d.a.w/pres.act.part.voc.m.s. krino judge + d.a.w/pres.act.part.acc.m.p. prasso practice + d.a.w/pro.acc.nt.p. toioutos such thing + conj kai + pres.act.part.voc.m.s. poieo do + pro.acc.nt.p. autos “such things” + conj. hoti that + pro.nom.s. su you + fut.dep.ind.2s. ekpheugo escape + d.a.w/noun acc.nt.s. krima + d.a.w/noun gen.m.s. theos*])?)

VERSE 4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance (ἢ τοῦ πλούτου τῆς χρηστότητος αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀνοχῆς καὶ τῆς μακροθυμίας καταφρονεῖς, ἀγνοῶν ὅτι τὸ χρηστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς μετάνοιάν σε ἄγει [*conj. e or + def.art.w/noun gen.m.s. ploutos riches + d.a.w/noun gen.f.s. chrestotes kindness + pro.gen.m.s. autos “His” + conj kai + d.a.w/noun gen.f.s. anoche forbearance, tolerance + conj kai + d.a.w/noun gen.f.s. makrothumia patience + pres.act.ind.2s. kataphroneo despise; “think lightly” + pres.act.part.nom.m.s. agnoeo be ignorant; “not knowing” + conj hoti + d.a.w/adj.nom.nt.s chrestos kindness + d.a.w/noun gen.m.s. theos + prep eis + noun acc.f.s. metanoia repentance + pro.acc.m.s. su + pres.act.ind.3s. ago lead*])?)

ANALYSIS: VERSES 3-4

1. In these two verses Paul sets up his imaginary opponent [a Jewish person] with two rhetorical questions.
2. The first question is designed to illicit an emphatic negative response, and the second a positive response.
3. In verse 3 the Jewish person is confronted with the contradiction that God’s wrath would not apply to someone practicing the very same sins as a Gentile.

4. Would a religious Jew support the notion that God is partial, but brings wrath on a sinner, while allowing another sinner to skate free just because of one's race?
5. The one who believes (rightly) that God consistently administers judgment for STA activity, and commits the same sins, must logically concur that the one who passes judgment must come under the same judgment.
6. In verse 3 "the judgment of God" refers to temporal wrath as noted in 1:18.
7. So in this verse the Jew ("O man") is confronted with the illogical supposition that divine justice would be abrogated when applied to a Jew.
8. The Jews were blinded to this obvious truth, and Paul's purpose here is to bring potential readers to saving grace.
9. The Jewish doctrinal position is that God must judge all unabated STA activity.
10. The Jew rightly said that Gentiles were up for divine wrath, but did not apply the same doctrinal principal to their race.
11. So simple logic demands that the Jew concurs that sinning Jews are subject to divine judgment, if Gentiles are guilty.
12. If Paul's straw-man agrees that he is subject to divine wrath, then he can move him to the next level of spiritual awakening.
13. The second rhetorical question (v. 4) is designed to demonstrate that the self-righteous Jew is maladjusted to divine benevolence.
14. The "Or" of v. 4 is not to propose an alternative, but to press upon the Jew the magnitude of his ungodliness.
15. By ignoring his sins and focusing on the grossness of Gentile depravity the Jewish moralist considered himself to be secure from divine wrath.
16. This second question exposes the Jew's misconception of what Paul calls "the riches of His kindness."
17. Paul informs his opponent, that you of all people hold in contempt God's kindness (*chrestotes* Rom. 2:4; 3:12; 11:22; 2 Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 2:7; Col. 3:12; Titus 3:4).
18. "Riches" covers all three terms including "tolerance and patience."
19. The abundance of all three terms was exemplified again and again in Jewish history.
20. And especially at the time of writing when Jewish perfidy resulted in the rejection and sufferings of their Messiah!
21. Their role in the repudiation of Jesus set them up for the most extreme manifestation of divine wrath.
22. But God has restrained that wrath.
23. As a race there were, and still are, preserved, and have even prospered under their exile.
24. Yet the Jewish mentality misinterprets this, as do many others.
25. People tend to misinterpret the good things of life.
26. They tend to think all is well, and if they believe in God, that He is pleased with them.
27. By their not acclimating to the true intent of divine kindness, tolerance, and patience, they in fact despise God's benevolence in the face of human sinning.
28. The Jew builds his righteousness on the unrighteousness of others, and like a spoiled child, despises God's goodness.
29. To misunderstand God's benevolence is to despise God.
30. This misunderstanding on the part of the Jew is expressed here as: "not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance (i.e., a change of mind).

31. The purpose of God's benevolence was so clear in their history that failure to understand it was inexcusable.
32. "Repentance" means a turning away from former attitudes and beliefs.
33. Divine benevolence and restraint has always been a prevalent and strong force to induce people to seek God for forgiveness (cf. Acts 14:17).
34. The presumptuous Jew, blinded to his own sinfulness, interpreted good fortune to mean that he was better than the non-Jew.
35. To the Jew, it was the Gentile who needed to repent, not he.
36. In summation: If the Jew agrees that he exhibits the same STA behavior as the Gentiles, and that the Gentiles are subject to temporal wrath, then logically, so is he, the argument moves to the next level (v. 4), which is that the Jew has been misinterpreting divine kindness, tolerance, and forbearance, and therefore needs to change his mind (repentance), and seek God while He can be found.
37. We can take away from this the principle that divine goodness/benevolence and forbearance is designed to induce people to seek God.