

Romans 3:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

Analysis

What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. Paul pivots from objections to his thesis. *Ti oun* (Τί οὖν, "What then?") introduces his conclusion. Are Jews *proechometha* (προεχόμεθα, "better/superior")? *Ou pantōs* (Οὐ πάντως, "not at all/by no means")—despite the advantages of verses 1-2, Jews have no moral superiority.

The verb *proētiasametha* (προητιασάμεθα, "we have before proved/charged") references Paul's arguments in 1:18-3:8. Both Jews and Greeks are *hyph' hamartian* (ὑφ' ἀμαρτίαν, "under sin")—depicting sin as a slave master or occupying power. This is not mere moral failure but cosmic bondage. Paul's egalitarianism is devastating: all human ethnic, religious, and moral distinctions are irrelevant before the bar of divine justice.

Historical Context

First-century Judaism sharply distinguished between the righteous (themselves) and sinners (Gentiles). Palestinian Judaism even debated whether Gentiles had any share in the world to come. Paul's assertion of universal guilt would have been scandalous to Jewish pride, though echoes appear in some rabbinic literature acknowledging the evil impulse's power.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What forms of spiritual pride or ethnic superiority must you renounce in light of universal human guilt?
2. How does the phrase "under sin" deepen your understanding of humanity's plight beyond mere moral failure?
3. Why is recognizing your equality in condemnation with all humanity essential to receiving grace?

Interlinear Text

Τί οὖν προεχόμεθα οὐ πάντως προητιασάμεθα

What then are we better than they No in no wise we have before proved

G5101

G3767

G4284

G3756

G3843

G4256

γὰρ Ἰουδαίους τε καὶ Ἕλληνας πάντας ὑφ' ἀμαρτίαν

for

Jews

both

and

Gentiles

all

under

sin

G1063

G2453

G5037

G2532

G1672

G3956

G5259

G266

εἰναι

that they are

G1511

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 3:22 (Sin): But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Isaiah 65:5 (Parallel theme): Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

Romans 6:15 (Sin): What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

Romans 11:32 (Parallel theme): For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

Romans 3:19 (Parallel theme): Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

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