



God's Charge: All Mankind Under Sin

- 3:9-18

God's assessment of mankind - 3:9-12

Romans 3:9 (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;

Question: Who is the “we” (2x)? - “we” is a pronoun so what is the antecedent ?
Who is the “they” (2x)? - “they” is a pronoun, so what is the antecedent ?

Possible Interpretations:

1. “are we (Jews) better than they (the Gentiles)”
 - In this interpretation Paul identifies and includes himself with the Jews
2. “are we (believers) better than they (the Jews and Gentiles)”
 - In this interpretation Paul identifies himself with believers under Grace (1:5)

How Can We Determine The Interpretation ?

How To Study The Bible - (The Holy Spirit Being Our Guide)

1. **Observation : What Does It Say ?**
2. **Interpretation : What Does It Mean ?**
3. **Correlation : Does The Interpretation Agree With Rest Of Scripture?**
4. **Appropriation : Appropriating The Revealed Truths By Faith**



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Observations:

- **Question # 1:** Has Paul used the personal pronoun “we” where he has identified himself with the Jew previously in the text?

Ref.	Context	Observation
1:16	<i>“..... salvation.. to the Jew first and also to the Gentile”</i>	Paul doesn't include himself
2:9	<i>“..... tribulation.. of the Jew first and also of the Gentile”</i>	Paul doesn't include himself
2:10	<i>“But glory & honor to the Jew first & also to the Gentile</i>	Paul doesn't include himself



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- **Question # 1: (cont'd)** Has Paul used the personal pronoun "we" where he has identified himself with the Jew previously in the text?

Ref.	Pronoun	Noun/s (Antecedent)	Observation
2:17	"you" (sing)	"Jew" (sing)	Paul doesn't include himself
2:19	"you /yourself" (sing)	"Jew" (sing) – previous ref.	Paul doesn't include himself
2:21	"you" – 4x (sing)	"Jew" (sing) – previous ref.	Paul doesn't include himself
2:22	"you" – 4x (sing)	"Jew" (sing) – previous ref.	Paul doesn't include himself
2:23	"you" – 2x (sing)	"Jew" (sing) – previous ref.	Paul doesn't include himself
2:24	"you" (plural)	"Jews" (plural) – OT quote	Paul doesn't include himself
2:25	"you" – 3x (sing)	"Jew" (sing) – previous ref.	Paul doesn't include himself
3:1	(no pronouns)	"the Jew (sing) & the Circumcision (sing)	Paul doesn't include himself
3:2	"them/they" (plural)	"Jew & Circumcision" – 3:1	Paul doesn't include himself
3:3	"some", "their"(plural)	"Jew & Circumcision" – 3:1	Paul doesn't include himself

- **Observation # 1:** Nowhere in the previous passages has Paul identified or included himself with the Jews – thus it doesn't appear he is including himself in 3:9



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- **Question # 2:** If “we” (= Jews) then isn't there somewhat of a contradiction between 3:1,2 & 3:9?
 - 3:1,2 – Ques: Is there an advantage & profit (benefit) to the Jew?
Ans: Much in every way! – Great in every respect!
 - 3:9 - Ques: Are we (Jews) better than they (the Gentiles)
Ans: No, in no way! – Not at all!
 - The Amplified bible reads as follows: - **Romans 3:9**
Well then, are we [Jews] superior and better off than they? No, not at all. We have already charged that all men, both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles), are under sin [held down by and subject to its power and control].
- **Observation # 2:**
 - “we” is interpreted as “Jews (including Paul)”
 - However if “superior and better off” are consistent with “advantage & profit” then there would be a contradiction between 3:1,2 & 3:9



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- Question # 3:

- Does the “we” (2x) in 3:9 each have the same antecedent? i.e. “Jews, including Paul”?

- If the same – it would read like this:

“What then? are we (Jews, including Paul) better *than they (Gentiles)*? No, in no way: for we (Jews, including Paul) have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

- If not the same – it would read like this:

“What then? are we (Jews, including Paul) better *than they (Gentiles)*? No, in no way: for we (believers) have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

- Observation # 3:

- There doesn't appear to be any contextual reason to have different antecedents for two “we”s in 3:9
- And if the antecedent of “we” = “Jews, including Paul” then the verse doesn't make contextual sense



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- Question # 4:
 - Is the antecedent of “we” in 3:9 any different from the antecedents for “we” in 3:8?
 - What is the antecedent for “we - 2x” in 3:8?
 - It appears obvious from the context that the “we” in both cases is Paul and those believers ministering grace (the Church) - Rom 1:5
- Observation # 4: There is no grammatical or contextual reasons for the “we”s to be different in 3:8 & in 3:9 – Thus interpret them as the same
- Expanded Translation:
 - Romans 3:8 - And not *rather*, (as we (believers) be slanderously reported, and as some (unbelievers) affirm that we (believers) say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? Whose (unbelievers) damnation is just.
 - Romans 3:9 - What then? are we (believers = the Church) better (excel or are superior in and of ourselves – midd. voice) *than they (Jews & Gentiles)?* No, in no wise (way): for we (believers = the Church) have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;



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- Question: Why does the Amplified bible and many (if not most all) bible teachers translate “we” in 3:9 as “Jews, which includes Paul”
- Example:
 - Complete Word Study Dictionary, Spiros Zodhiates on the word “better” in 3:9
 - “Figuratively, to excel, to have preference or preeminence, be superior or better”.
 - “In the NT, only in the mid. proéchomai, to excel, be superior (Rom. 3:9, meaning **“Can we Jews then claim ourselves to be better off than the Gentiles?” [a.t.]* in respect to being sinners before God).**”
- Observe carefully:
 - His assumption is that “we Jews, including Paul” are “sinners”
 - Question: Does God see Paul as a sinner? – Are we (believer) sinners?
Or are we saints in Christ?

* = author's translation



ROMANS

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All Mankind Under Sin

Its Dominion

Its Power

Its Penalty

↓
Condemnation

