

Although this interpretation is certainly possible, yet it does not seem to fit the flow of Paul's argument, or the conclusion to which he brings his readers in 3:19-20. And it certainly does not fit with 2:13 ("the doers of the Law will be Justified"), unless the requirements of the Law of God are lowered or the "doing" is partial or token or representative, in which case "justified" takes on a different coloration from that of the context.

Paul has now deliberately brought us to the depths of despair, so far as any attempts on our part to earn a righteous standing before God by trying to fulfill the demands of the Law.

In one interpretation of Romans 2:6-13 there are no persons who persist in doing good and perfectly obey the Law of God except Jesus Christ. In the other interpretation a partial obedience to the Law of God will not merit a righteous standing before God for believers who persevere in doing good. Thus either interpretation leads to despair.

In the first major strand of thought in this section, Paul has amply demonstrated that all unsaved human beings are unrighteous.

In the second major strand of thought he has shown us that unrighteous human beings deserve condemnation for their sins, that they are standing under God's wrath, and that in the day of God's righteous judgment they will not be declared righteous, but rather will be declared guilty and treated accordingly. Paul says that there will be wrath and anger, trouble and distress for every human being who does evil.

The apostle has painted a very dark picture of mankind in this first section of the epistle. Man's past and his present disclose the great fact of SIN. Man's future discloses the great fact of JUDGMENT. Is there no hope for mankind?

Paul gives the answer to this question in the second major section of the epistle, found in 3:21-5:21.