

Romans

Chapter 2

Romans 2:1-3

“Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.

We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?”

No Excuses

- Paul destroys the argument of the self-righteous moral person who may have been thinking to himself, “I’m not guilty of doing any of these awful horrible sins”!
- The religious or moral person has no excuse because he **practices the very same things**.
- This is the wrong assumption that is common to all work based religions. The false notion that acceptance and rejection depends on the moral standing of the individual’s **good** behavior.

- The relativistic notion of good behavior adding up to being a good person is the value system of a culture that says, “I am good if I do more good than bad; I’m different from those immoral people therefore, I should be accepted by God”!
- Whenever man sets himself up as the standard for morality he **condemns** himself because although we may not do the exact identical sins of others we cannot **escape the truth** that each person is at least guilty of one of them.
- A person could **suppress the truth** and maintain their own religious superiority and miss the blessing of God’s grace and mercy.
- “For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in **one point** has become accountable for all of it. ”-**James 2:10**

The Principle Of Judgment

- Paul is applying the principle of judgment that Jesus spoke about in His Sermon on the Mount.
- Jesus said: “For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”-**Matthew 7:2**
- We have to judge in matters of: truth, law, right and wrong, spiritual matters, and doctrine.
- Jesus is not teaching against **judging** as so many people misinterpret but against the **measure** or **standard** by which we set as a rule to judge.
- Jesus is warning against a person setting up a standard that is applied to others strictly and critically meanwhile ignoring the same standard for our own life.

- And why do you look at the **speck** in your brother's eye, but do not consider the **plank** in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the **speck** from your eye'; and look, a **plank** is in your own eye?-**Matthew 7:3-4**
- The word for **plank** is a joist or a log that holds up the roof; and the word for **speck** is a particle, a chip or a sliver causing an irritation in one way or another.
- The word for **consider** means to observe by fixing one's eyes or mind upon someone or something.
- What Jesus is teaching against is a critical spirit that finds faults in others while not recognizing our own shortcomings as equally sinful before God.
- When we become consumed by another's irritating faults we ignore God and His sanctifying discipline in our own life towards holiness.

- We should not look at other people's faults when we have weaknesses of our own to work on and heal.
- "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. **Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.**"-**Galatians 6:1-2**
- It is commonplace for man to judge another person's behavior by one standard meanwhile judging our own behavior by another standard often being far more kind to ourselves than to others not recognizing that we are capable of the exact same things.
- When people look at themselves through the eyes of God's faultless character it makes it almost impossible to judge anybody else or ourselves from the human standards of good and bad!

- A false view of our superiority over others gives us consent in our minds to judge others faults as greater than our own and in doing so we **condemn** ourselves since we **practice the same things**.
- “For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”-**Galatians 6:3**
- God is the only Judge because His judgment on those who do such things is **based on truth**.
- “You will never make yourself feel that you are a sinner, because there is a mechanism in you as a result of sin that will always be defending you against every accusation. We are all on very good terms with ourselves, and we can always put up a good case for ourselves. Even if we try to make ourselves feel that we are sinners, we will never do it. There is only one way to know that we are sinners, and that is to have a dim, glimmering conception of God” Lloyd-Jones, Martyn

Romans 2:4-5

“Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.”

God's Kindness

- It is wrong for a sinful person to misinterpret God's **kindness** in not judging them in this present world to be a sign that they are blameless of any wrong doing and can continue in their sin.
- They should realize that God in His **kindness** is simply giving them a period of time to repent.
- God's desire is that all people would turn from evil and follow Him.
- "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." -**2 Peter 3:9**

- God's **kindness** is meant to lead people to repentance.
- "The goodness of God to a person of evil life is not intended to encourage him to continue in his sin but to woo and win him away from it. God manifests his infinite gentleness and love so that he may thereby kill man's sin and win man's hard heart to himself by his tender mercy". - Spurgeon, Charles
- God's wrath remains on the person who refuses to repent. The person who repents experiences the richness of God's compassion, kindness and mercy which causes a deep transformation of a repentant heart.

- Jonathan Edwards stated concerning a person who repents, “They **unexpectedly** find him [Jesus] with open arms to embrace them, ready to forever forget all their sins as though they have never been”.
- In other words when a person comes to Jesus they are blown away with His rich kindness and are drawn into His welcoming gentle and lowly heart (**Matt. 11:29**).
- “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”-**Matthew 11:30**
- The word used by Matthew for “**easy**” is the same word Paul uses for “**kindness**” here in **Romans 2:4**.
- “the word here implies all sweetness, and all candidness, and all friendliness, all goodness, and with His whole heart.”-Goodwin, Thomas

- Jesus’ yoke is kindness and is **immeasurable** toward us who believe.
- “So that in the coming ages he might show the **immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us** in Christ Jesus.”-**Ephesians 2:7**
- “If His grace in **kindness** is **immeasurable** , then our failures can never outstrip His grace. Our moments of feeling utterly overwhelmed by life are where God’s heart lives. Our most haunted pockets of failure and regret are where His heart is drawn most unswervingly.”-Ortlund, Dane

Hardened Heart

- A **hardened heart** is a scary proposition because it puts man in a position of his own demise away from God resulting in His wrath.
- If a man stubbornly refuses God's Word then ultimately he has made God out to be a liar.
- Paul is giving us a stern warning against stubbornness towards God and His Word.
- In Contrast, the believer who sees himself in the light of Scripture and through the eyes of a loving and gracious God realizes that in himself is a prideful, sinful and self-centered heart deserving of condemnation but through the sacrifice of Jesus is saved by the **grace and kindness** of God and loved by Him plus nothing.
- A true heart is a softened and repentant heart that comes before God wholly depending on the work of Jesus, exposed to the Spirit's transforming work on the mind and heart, and open to be shaped into the image of Jesus.

Storing Up Wrath

- What is holding back or restraining God's wrath as men are **storing up wrath** for themselves?
- It is God Himself in His **kindness, forbearance and patience** that is holding back the wrath.
- **God's Kindness:** God's kindness is demonstrated **toward us in Christ** (Eph. 2:7). In rejecting Christ men reject God's kindness in Jesus. God's kindness holds back His wrath until all the people that the Father has given the Son come to repentance (John 6:37).

- **God's Forbearance:** God's forbearance speaks of God's self-restraint against sin. Mankind is constantly thinking up new ways to sin, but it could be worse, and it will be worse, but presently the Spirit of God is restraining the world from complete anarchy into sin (**Matt. 24:12;2 Thess. 2:7**).
- **God's Patience:** God's patience tells us that God is long suffering towards the world and sin. The word for longsuffering in the Bible is made up of two Greek words meaning "long" and "temper"; literally, "**long-tempered**." God restrains His temper against sin but His patience will end one day when His **righteous judgment will be revealed**.

Romans 2:6-10

“He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek."

Man's Record before God

- Eventually a Day is coming when the patience of God will reach an end with man as in the day of the great Flood (Gen.6-9) and **He will render to each one according to his works.**
- A self-righteous person may see himself as guiltless but God is adding to his account and will judge him correctly **according to his works.**
- Every person will be judged based upon **truth** and **works**. The liar will not be able to talk his way out of God's judgment since God's **truth** reveals the lie.
- The **self-seeking** person will attempt to claim righteousness before God but his **works** condemn him before a flawless and perfect God.

Man's Works Before God

- Paul says that are two groups of people that will be judged.
- Paul has not changed his mind about how man is saved here in these verses, he still knows that man is **saved by faith apart from works so that no man can boast before God.**
- Paul is quoting from Psalm 62 where the two groups come into clarity for understanding this passage.

- David in **Psalm 62** is contrasting two groups of people: One group is plotting and planning against God and His chosen king while the other group is trusting God for their salvation.
- “**For God alone** my soul waits in silence; from him **comes my salvation**. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken...How long will all of you attack a man to batter him, like a leaning wall, a tottering fence? They only plan to thrust him down from his high position. **They take pleasure in falsehood. They bless with their mouths, but inwardly they curse...**and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love. **For you will render to a man according to his work.”**

Two Groups of People

- In **Romans 2:7-8**, Paul says there are two groups of people who differ in the way in which they approach God.
- The first group approach God by **patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality**.
- **Patience in well-doing**: This speaks of a person who is intentional in his purpose to follow God through even the greatest trials and sufferings life may bring. This person wants what God wants.
- **Seek for glory and honor and immortality**: A person who seeks to follow God does not do good works in order to obtain eternal life. *The good works are an outflow of the Holy Spirit's transforming presence in our heart*. It is in Jesus that we seek **His glory** and **His honor** and in so doing receive eternal life.

- “we are his workmanship, created **in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them...for it is God who **works in you**, both to will and **to work** for his good pleasure.”-**Ephesians 2:10;Phillippians 2:13**
- The second group approaches God by **self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness**.
- **Self-seeking**: This speaks of a person who is seeking to glorify himself and be **his own god** and **his own savior**. This person believes he can obtain eternal life based upon **his own merit**. This is also a warning for the believer since all of us at times can fall into a self-seeking lifestyle and we need to guard our heart (**Proverbs 4:23**)against this attitude.

- **Do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness:** This is a person who refuses to acknowledge the truth presented by God in Jesus but instead listen and obey their “**own/my truth**” created in their own image. They are zealots to disseminate their false ideas and attack anyone who opposes them. They are for anything that is **not** right according to God and scripture.
- “O LORD, do not your eyes look for truth? You have struck them down, but they felt no anguish; you have consumed them, but they refused to take correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to repent.”-**Jeremiah 5:3**
- “They say to God, ‘Depart from us! We do not desire the knowledge of your ways.’”-**Job 21:14**
- God’s heart is **kindness** towards the unrepentant but a person’s continual refusal to repent and to obey the truth results in the **storing up** for themselves the **wrath and fury** of God.

The Jew and the Greek

- The Jews have a special place in God’s heart and because they received and were entrusted with the oracles of God(**Rom. 3:2**) were held to a higher standard by God.
- The Jews were first in line to receive the gospel (**Rom. 1:16**); they are first in line for reward (**Rom.2:10**); and lastly they are first in line for judgment (**Rom. 2:9**).
- God will deal with the both Jew and Gentile alike because God is righteous and true in His judgment and does so **without partiality** to a persons cultural background.

Romans 2:11-13

“For God shows no partiality. For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.”

No Partiality With God

- The word Paul used for **partiality** is better translated as **respecter of persons** and it refers to judging as respect to the outward circumstances of man and not to their intrinsic value.
- People have routinely categorized others as rich or poor, black or white, slave or free or whatever label a person may conjour up to stand above the other people group.
- God is impartial in His judgment towards man. It does not matter to God what our social status or cultural background may be; what matters to God is that we believe the gospel, and though often we fail, live in obedience to Him.
- A significant aspect of the work of Jesus was to break down these walls that have divided humanity and to bring forth one new race of mankind in Him (**Galatians 3:26-28;Ephesians 2:14-15**).

Hearers and Doers of the Law

- A Jew may claim he is justified before God because **he has the law**; whereas a Gentile may claim to be justified because **he does not have the Law**.
- The point that Paul is trying to make is that a person is not condemned because he has or does not have the Law a person is condemned because of **sin**.
- If a person could do the Law perfectly he would be justified before God. Only Jesus lived out the Law perfectly.
- “For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by **all things written** in the Book of the Law, and **do them**.”-**Galatians 3:10**
- “I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then **Christ died for no purpose**.”-**Galatians 2:21**

Romans 2:14-16

“For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.

They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.”

Inborn Law on the Heart

- Paul says that everyone born has an innate **working** of the law **written on their hearts**.
- He is not saying that the law is written on their hearts, as people often say, but that the **work of the law**, what the law requires of people, is written there.”-Morris, Leon
- All people grow up and learn certain actions are either good or evil practices.
- Every culture and subculture have particular behaviors that while **accepted** by one culture is **despised** by another culture such as lying or betrayal.
- Within these cultures there isn’t a guilty conscience about being deceptive.
- The reason a person in a culture that rewards lying does not feel guilty is that they have set up a **law to themselves** where their conscience will either **accuse or even excuse** them.

- Unlike the general working of law upon the heart of man, James told us that when a person is born again, he receives a special working upon the heart by “the **implanted word**, which is able to save your souls” (**James 1:21**).
- Upon coming to salvation and receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior the Living Word of God is **implanted** into our lives and begins to take root deep within the heart of the believer.
- God's word accomplishes the sanctifying process of healing and making a person whole and renewed and alive to the things of God.
- God knows the areas within the soul of believers that need to be tweaked and tinkered as He continues His “good **work in you** [and] will bring it to **completion** at the day of Jesus Christ.”(Php. 1:6)
- Paul said to the believers in Thessalonica, “And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, **the word of God, which is at work in you believers.** ”-**1 Thessalonians 2:13**

Our Conscience

- The conscience of man should never be relied upon for ultimate reality of right and wrong because the conscience is not as it should be since the Fall of man.
- “The New Testament presents the human conscience as a computer-like faculty. It has no pre-programmed data in it, but whatever a person experiences **programs** his or her conscience. If he learns that lying is wrong, for example, his conscience will from then on bring that information to his mind in appropriate situations.”-Constable, Thomas
- However, The conscience of man can to be **defiled** and **seared** (**Titus 1:15;1 Timothy 4:2**).
- Every once and while a person who is not a believer will **do what the law requires**. Love neighbor or do good actions in general.

Jesus the Judge

- “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the **Son**,”-**John 5:22**
- “God therefore will judge all nations according to the use and abuse they have made of his word, whether it was written in the **heart**, or written on tables of **stone**.”-Clarke, Adam
- The **secrets of men** will be judged by Jesus on the Day when men will have to give an account.
- The Gospel and judgment go hand-in-hand because if a person believes in the gospel a wonderful thing will happen on the Day of Judgment: Jesus will take their place!
- If a person refuses to believe the Gospel message then Jesus will condemn that person as his Judge.

- The judgment of God is essential for the Gospel message to have any real meaning and real value.
- If the Gospel was without judgment then salvation would have no meaningful value to those who are receiving salvation.
- If there was no reality of God’s wrath in this world nor in the future judgment then the Cross is emptied of its glory and the work of Jesus made void.
- “There are but two objects that I have ever desired...to behold; the one, is **my own vileness**; and the other is, the **glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ**: and I have always thought that they should be viewed together.”-Simeon, Charles

Romans 2:17-24

“But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth”

“you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

The Religious Person

- This section is most definitely referring to the person who **calls** himself **a Jew** but it could be written to anyone who is religious in proclaiming but not in practicing.
- The reason the Jew believed that he could **boast in God** was according to Paul:
 - A Jew **relies on the Law.**
 - A Jew **knows God's will and approve what is excellent.**
 - A Jew is **instructed from the Law.**

- A Jew is a **light to those who are in darkness.**
- A Jew is **an instructor of the foolish.**
- A Jew is **a teacher of children.**
- A Jew has **the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth.**
- Paul is not saying that there is anything wrong with being a Jew and trying to live a moral life according to the Law.
- The problem was and is for every religious person to **rely** and **boast** in one's own religious and moral superiority over others.
- “Moralism is extremely common, and always has been. It is the biggest religion in the world today. It is the religion of people who compare themselves with others, who notice that they are ‘a lot more decent than other people,’ and conclude: If there is a God, he’ll certainly accept me. I’m a good person.”-Keller, Timothy

- The issue the religious moral person needs to guard against is the attitude of pride that comes in and tells us, "we have it all together".
- Pride is a troubling problem for the believer in that of all the sins that capitalize on my weaknesses pride glorifies in my victories.
- Pride steps in and begins to make us think that we are some kind of spiritual giant and that we have it all together.
- "He also told this parable to some who **trusted in themselves** that they were **righteous**, and treated others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus:

- '**God, I thank you that I am not like other men**, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."-**Luke 18:9-14**
- "It is easy to denounce wrong in the world outside of me, anyone without a spark of the grace of God can do that; easy to denounce the sins of others while all the time I may be allowing all sorts of worldly things in my own religious life."-Chambers, Oswald

Practice what you Preach

- Paul claimed the Jews could **boast in the law** and yet dishonor **God by breaking the law**.
- They Jews were teaching and preaching against the things the law spoke against but had fallen into the deception, **do as I say not as I do, what is bad for you to do is good for me to do**.
- The greatest obstructors of the success of the word are those whose bad lives contradict their good doctrine, who in the pulpit preach so well that it is a pity they should ever come out, and out of the pulpit live so ill that it is a pity they should ever come in."-Henry, Matthew

The Name of God

- The preaching of God's word without practice by God's people causes those observing to speak ill towards the **name of God**.
- This means God's character is maligned among the nations by the hypocrisy of His people.
- How do we guard against hypocrisy in our own lives?

- “As you read your Bible day by day, do you **apply the truth** to yourself? What is your motive when you read the Bible? Is it just to have knowledge of it so that you can show others how much you know, and argue with them, or are you **applying the truth** to yourselves?...As you read...say to yourself, ‘This is me! What is it saying about me? Allow the Scripture to search you, otherwise it can be very dangerous. There is a sense in which the more you know of the Bible, the more dangerous it is to you, if you do not **apply** it to yourself.”-Lloyd-Jones, Martin

Romans 2:25-29

“For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?

“Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.”

The Heart Matters

- **Circumcision** was a label that suggested the Jews were being obedient to God, guaranteeing salvation, even if they **break the law**.
- It would be like a person saying because he was baptized as an infant it now no longer matters how he lives because he has been baptized.
- The baptism is merely a label he has attached to his life as he lives according his own desires all the while believing himself to be o.k. with God because of an earlier baptism.

- To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you have a **name** that you are alive, and **yet** you are dead.-**Revelation 3:1**
- The contents of a can is always more important than the label. No one throws the corn away and eats the label.
- **Circumcision** symbolizes the covenant that God made between Himself and Abraham to indicate the relationship they shared.
- "Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it counted to him?

- Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. **He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.** The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also **walk in the footsteps of the faith** that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised."-**Romans 4:9-12**
- Circumcision **symbolizes** God's work through the Spirit to cut around our heart and **free** it from the **enslaved state** of a sinful world this side of Eden (**Php. 3:3**).

- The Law of Moses always intended for circumcision to be a principle to be applied to the heart.
- “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you except to fear the LORD your God by walking in all his ways, to love him, and to worship the LORD your God with all your heart and all your soul? Keep the LORD’s commands and statutes I am giving you today, for your own good...the LORD had his heart set on your ancestors and loved them. He chose their descendants after them—he chose you out of all the peoples, as it is today. Therefore, **circumcise your hearts** and don’t be stiff-necked any longer.-**Deuteronomy 10:12-13;15-16**
- In contrast, those who practice a religion with out a relationship with Jesus based on works simply continue to **mutilate** the heart and keep it enslaved (**Php. 3:2**).