

Right in God's Sight

Studies from the Book of Romans

Lesson 3 Romans 2:1–29

Romans 2:1–11

God Will Judge Us All!

Paul has clearly stated his mission and his message to the Romans: he is called to preach the gospel—the Good News of salvation—to the lost. In chapter one, Paul began by addressing the Gentiles of their guilt; their sin and even boastful depravity before God. Here in chapter two, Paul tells the Jews—God's chosen people—that they too are in need of God's righteousness.

Read Romans 2:1–29. Today our focus will be verses 1–11.

Anticipating possible questions from his audience of readers, Paul engages in a *diatribe* (a conversation with an imaginary person) by launching into an insulting verbal criticism or denunciation intended to refute any possible opposition. Since he was writing to both Gentiles and Jews alike, he makes the point that absolutely no one merits salvation on their own; everyone must depend on God's saving grace. Having earlier singled out the Gentiles for being without excuse, Paul states that the Jews' self-righteousness makes them worse off than the Gentiles in God's eyes.

1. For what sin are the Jews without excuse according to Paul? v. 1
 - a. What happens to those who judge others—why?

2. Human judgment is based upon self-perception and personal values; upon what is God's judgment based? v. 2

3. Would the Jews as God's chosen people be able to avoid the judgment that the Gentiles would receive? v. 3 See also Matthew 3:7–10.

Humans may pass judgment upon each other, but those judgments will inevitably be judged by God!

4. What does a person reveal about their own heart by judging others? vv. 4–5
 - a. What were those who continued in sin inviting upon themselves? v. 5

5. By what standard will God judge each individual? v. 6
 - a. What will the people who do good merit? vv. 7, 10

 - b. What will the people who do evil merit? vv. 8–9

We have to be careful not to read something into Paul's message that he did not intend to say. Paul was not saying that salvation is based on works, but rather judgment. His focus in this passage is on the fact that greater understanding and privilege also bring greater responsibility and, ultimately, stricter judgment. To whom much is given, much is required. The Gentiles had violated what they *knew about* God—what was written on the heart and conscience—but the Jews had violated the *law given* directly to them by God; both were guilty and would be judged!

6. What is the main point Paul drives home to the Jews? v. 11 What does Paul mean by this?

Selah . . .

God wants *you* to view others according to their worth in His eyes. In showing no partiality, God demonstrates how to extend grace instead of judgment. (Consider how God has extended His grace toward you.) Can you think of someone you have been judgmental toward but who could benefit from your grace? How can you extend grace to that person this week?

Memory Verse:

“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” Romans 2:4

Word Wealth:

Using the resources you have on hand (i.e., additional Bible translations, dictionary, Bible dictionary, concordance, etc.), write a definition for the words below.

judgment (2:2-3) _____

longsuffering (2:4) _____

repentance (2:4) _____

conscience (2:15) _____

“Everything that God does in our lives is designed to bring us to repentance. Our only hope is that we turn around and change directions from the natural bent of our flesh.” Chuck Smith

Romans 2:12–29

Counterfeit Righteousness

The Jews of Paul’s day regarded themselves as superior to the Gentiles because they were in possession of God’s written law—the commands God gave to His people through His faithful servant Moses. They believed that the Gentiles were ignorant of God’s law, which accounted for their immoral lifestyle. Paul’s intention was to show the Jews that their self-righteous attitude made them even more accountable to God.

Read Romans 2:11–29.

1. On what basis will the Gentiles be judged? How are they able to distinguish between right and wrong? vv. 12–15

2. According to vv. 12–15, on what basis will the Jews be judged?

3. When judgment does come, how closely will each life be scrutinized? v. 16

Both the Jews given the law and the Gentiles given a heart and conscience will be held accountable for what has been revealed to them.

- a. Who will mediate God's judgment? v. 16

Look Closer . . .

Jeremiah 17:9–10 says, “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? ‘I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.’*” Since God judges everyone not only for what is said and done but also for our secret thoughts and motives, we are all on equal ground—guilty as charged—in need of His mercy and grace. The good news is those that have put their faith in Christ do not have to pay the penalty for their sin—He already paid it!

- ❖ What assurance does Paul give later on in Romans 8:1? How does this truth encourage you today?

Although the Jews were in possession of God's law they certainly didn't practice keeping it; but they believed God's judgment of them would be less than that of the Gentiles.

4. Paul points to the advantages of being a Jew in verses 17–20. In your own words, list what they were able to boast about because they were God's people.

5. In verses 21–23, the opposite is true; the Jews were “talking the talk” but not “walking the walk.” How does Paul point out their hypocrisy?

The people bragging loudly about their relationship to God were, by their behavior, causing His name to be blasphemed. In verse 24, Paul quotes from Isaiah 52:5, where the word *blasphemed* means: defamed, denounced, or despised. The name of God was considered so holy by His people that they did not dare to mention it out loud; yet, the sin of God's own people was bringing shame and reproach upon His name. Jesus quoted from the prophet Isaiah on this same topic: “*These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship is a farce . . .*” (Mark 7:6–7 NLT).

One of the true marks of those who belong to God is the determination to live out what His Word says. Representing His name means being careful that “the walk” lines up with “the talk.” Paul poses the question: “Who, then, is a real Jew?” His answer is that those who belong to God do not have an outward mark of ownership, but an inward one.

In verses 25–29, Paul makes it clear that the outward manifestations of a walk with God do not constitute a true believer; rather the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart! From the time of Abraham, the Jews believed in the formal rite of circumcision, signifying a covenant relationship with God (Genesis 17:11). This act set apart those who were committed to seriously obeying God’s laws. But Paul argues that a real Jew is not identified by a circumcised body, but a circumcised heart.

6. According to Paul, when does circumcision have value? vv. 25–27
 - a. How did God warn His people about depending on *outward rituals* to “save” them? Jeremiah 9:25–26
 - b. Looking at 1 Samuel 16:6–7, compare man’s estimation of his fellow man with God’s assessment.

For Group Discussion . . .

In Jesus’ day the Jews were still concerned with the outward demonstration of their faith but neglecting the inward man: “*But all their works they do to be seen by men*” (Matthew 23:5). Paul emphasized along with Jesus that the heart itself must be changed.

- ❖ What is the Holy Spirit’s *knife* that performs the circumcision on the heart? Hebrews 4:12
- ❖ Personal: If you’re in a hard place at the moment, consider that God may have allowed it to bring you closer to Him. What type of *heart surgery*—cutting away—are you undergoing right now?
- ❖ If you are hoping to merit salvation through your good behavior, Christian parents, or by maintaining the right friends, you’re learning it can’t be done! Since all have sinned and are guilty before God, only faith in Jesus Christ will provide the way. What does Paul say about it in Ephesians 2:8–9? According to Paul’s words here in verse 9, if it were any other way, what would be possible? (This is the thrust of Paul’s message throughout Romans 2.)

My Romans Road

Listen . . . Learn . . . Live . . . God's Truth!

Take a look back at this week's lesson. Briefly recap what you learned this week and how you intend to live it out.

1. What lesson in your study became real to you this week?

2. How do you intend to apply this lesson to your daily life?

Memory Verse:

Write down what you learned about God from this week's memory verse.

Write out the verse from memory.

Prayer Request:

Write out your most earnest prayer request and lift it to the Lord.
