

Romans 2

The World of Culture Condemned *Romans 2:1-16*

1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

2:1 Among the world of culture and refinement the educated rise to pronounce disgust and abhorrence for the lewdness of the pagan. However, though the voice of condemnation is loud and even eloquent, are their lives any cleaner and more acceptable to God?

2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

2:2-3 Having been well educated himself Paul knows that knowledge is not enough. Philosophy does not preserve individuals from the dark side of the soul being expressed. Culture does not cleanse the heart nor does education change the nature of the flesh. It is against all doers of evil that the judgment of God according to truth will be expressed. To praise virtue while

engaging in vice will not deceive the One who looks upon the heart.

4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

2:4 To their peril and shame men misunderstand God. Because a sentence against evil is not executed quickly the heart of the atheist assumes that God does not exist. The heart of the deist declares He does not care. The heart of the New Age devotee dares to believe man is God himself! Meanwhile, extended grace to repent is lost.

5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

2:5 Every person will go to his own place be it paradise (Luke 23:43) or perdition (Acts 1:25). Each rebel against the righteous God, every sinner which tries to extinguish the glorious light of the gospel, ever soul which violates his own conscience will care his own brimstone and fire of wrath with him to hell. He is marking his own destiny with destruction..

6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

2:6 In verses 7 – 15 great principles of judgment are set forth in order to silence forever anyone who would dare to charge God with being unfair and unrighteous because some have more gospel privileges than others. The first principle is that judgment will be rendered according to deeds (Rom. 2:6). When the gospel of salvation by grace through faith alone is rejected the only basis left to judge are deeds. And so one day the books will be opened and every unbeliever will be judged according to his works (Rev. 20:12).

7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

2:7 Humans are by nature religious. Many seek to do well for they long for glory, honor, immortality and eternal life. Those who are the objects of saving grace manifest these characteristics in the heart. But where is the natural man who so lives? The divine commentary is that they seek a god of their imagination not the God of revelation (Psa. 10:4).

8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile [Greek];

2: 8-9 God will not discriminate in His judgment. Light given will be the standard by which souls are judged. If by the light of nature men realize their responsibility to the Creator and seek the Lord, He obligates Himself to give them more light unto the salvation of their souls (Jer. 29:13). But if individuals hate the light and turn and suppress the truth and worship and serve the creature more than the Creator God is not unjust in assigning such people a proper and fearful place of judgment.

10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

11 For there is no respect of persons with God.

12 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;

2:11-12 This is a sound principle. Individuals are held responsible for what they know or could have known. They are not condemned for ignorance unless that ignorance is rooted in a deliberate rejection of light, which is the case of those who perish for men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil (John 3:19).

13 (For not the hearers of the law *are* just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

2:14 God has never left Himself without a witness to the nations of the earth. He has given to all men both the light of nature and the light of conscience.

15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

2:15 The law that is written on the hearts of the Gentiles is the work of the law – the law worketh wrath. Gentiles who had never heard of the Sinaitic code knew it was wrong to kill, steal, covet, lie and commit adultery ‘*their conscience also being witness*’. This proves they are in a position to be held accountable to God and are worthy of being judged by Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31).

2:13-15 These parenthetical verses simply emphasize the principle established that judgment is according to deeds. To know the law of God and to deliberately disobey only increases a certain and just condemnation.

16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

***Examination of the Chosen People
Romans 2:17-29***

17 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,

2:17 Paul speaks to his kinsmen in a detached manner to note the Jew was very proud of being in possession of the divine oracles and mistook that privilege for a state of superiority over the Gentile nations. But there was religious hypocrisy for what the Jew condemned in others was condoned in the heart.

18 And knowest *his* will, and approvest [judges] the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;

19 And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,

20 An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

2:17-20. In these verses Paul gathers together all the Jew pretensions. These are the elements in which they gloried. What they failed to appreciate is that privilege increases responsibility. Being religious is not the same as being regenerate and righteous.

21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

2:21 Throughout the ancient world the Jew was considered to be the thief of all thieves for the clever devices used to extract resources from others and the high interest rates charged in the lending of money. The Gentile knew he would find no mercy in dealing with a Jew.

22 Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege [to traffic in idols]?

2:22 The *Old Testament* prophets rose up in judgment against the sexual sins of the Jews and their propensity to idolatry. Not only did the Jews practice idolatry they trafficked in the same. While professing to abhor images the Jew would often rob temples or negotiate trade in stolen idols or purchase the same from a conquered people (Acts 19:37).

23 Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?

24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

2:24 This indictment could not be denied for it was justly deserved. The prophets declared all Paul had written to be true. The Scriptures declared it to be true. Their own conscience confirmed it to be true.

2:18-24. Embracing sound doctrines avails nothing if practical righteousness is disregarded. Jesus has come to set the captives free and save from sin. The gospel does not leave individuals in bondage and a cesspool for unrighteous behavior so that the name of a Holy God is blasphemed.

25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.

26 Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?

2:25-26 Bearing the sign of the covenant of righteousness in the body while walking in the flesh was only self deception. God would honor the Gentile who did not have the mark of the covenant on his body if he walked in righteousness before the Lord. Religious rhetoric without a corresponding spiritual reality is meaningless to God.

27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by [with] the letter [Scripture] and circumcision dost transgress the law?

28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

29 But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

2:28-29 The word for “Jew” is a contraction of “Judah” meaning “*praise*”. Paul uses a play on words by noting that a true “Jew” is not according to the letter of the law but whose “praise” is of God – meaning even a righteous Gentile could be a true “Jew” in the divine economy.

Study Guide

Romans 2

Questions on Romans 2

1. What two men went to their “*own place*” according to the verses noted in Luke 23:43 and Acts 1:25?
2. What is written on the hearts of Gentiles that does not save but condemns?
3. List two principles by which God will judge righteously.
4. In the divine economy who is a true “Jew”?
5. In Romans 2:21-22 what four rhetorical questions does Paul ask of the Jew to silence him with shame?

Answers to Romans 2

1. In Luke 23:43 a thief on the cross was promised Paradise. Judas too went to his own place in the sphere of the dead.
2. It is the work of the law that is written on the heart of the Gentiles and that condemns.
3. God will judge righteously as he renders a verdict according to truth and according to the deeds that have been done.
4. In God’s sight a true Jew is someone who has the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and walks in righteousness before Him while honoring His law.
5. Paul asks the following questions in Romans 2:21-22.
 - It is right to teach others and not teach one’s self?

- Is it right to preach a man should not still and then be known for stealing?
- Is it right to say a man should not commit adultery and then commit adultery?
- Is it right to pretend to hate idols and then traffic in them?

Personal Application and Reflection

1. Make a list consisting of five or more resolutions that you will commit to in order to demonstrate a holy life to the world.
2. List five modern day pretensions you have observed that religious people hide behind so they can have a sense of righteousness. .
3. Write a paragraph on the importance of not being a religious hypocrite by teaching one way and living another.
4. Write out the Ten Commandments on a separate sheet of paper (Exodus 20)
5. Memorize the Ten Commandments in order if you do not know them by heart (Exodus 20).