

ROMANS 2

I) God's Righteous and Impartial Judgment (2:1-16)

- A) Inexcusable for a Jew (or anyone) to judge others guilty of what they themselves practice
 - 1) Paul begins now to turn his focus on the Jews (see v. 17 "you")
 - 2) Hypocritical judgment (cf. Matt. 7:1-5)
 - 3) Will not escape the judgment of God – some thought they would? (Matt. 3:7-11; Jn. 8:33)
- B) Unfaithful Jews despise the goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering of God
 - 1) These merciful attributes of God were shown to sinners, both Gentile and Jew
 - 2) Should have led them to repentance
 - 3) A hardened and impenitent heart treasures up the wrath of God
- C) **No partiality** with God – will render to each one according to his deeds, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (cf. Acts 10:34; 1 Pet. 1:17)
 - 1) **Eternal life** – to those who patiently continue in doing [working] good and seek for glory, honor, and immortality
 - 2) **Indignation, wrath, tribulation, anguish** – to those who are self-seeking and do not obey truth but obey unrighteousness [does evil]
 - 3) Sin without law [of Moses] – perish without law; sinned in the law – judged by the law
 - a) Gentiles were not under the law of Moses, but still under law to God – judged as sinners
 - b) Secrets of men will be judged in the last day by Jesus according to gospel
- D) Some Gentiles, who do not have the law, and by nature do the things contained in the law, although not having the law, are a law to themselves
 - 1) Not hearers, but doers of law will be **justified** – principle of divine judgment
 - 2) Gentiles were under law before God, otherwise could not be judged sinners (see 4:15)
 - 3) Did not have codified law (i.e. law of Moses) but did things contained in law (by nature – learned both by what was handed down and observed in nature)
 - 4) Showed the work of the law written in their hearts (conduct reveals knowledge)
 - 5) Their conscience, bearing witness, accused or excused them (role of conscience)

Having condemned the Gentile world of sin before God, Paul now turns to the Jews, who will not escape the judgment of God. The Jews themselves were guilty of sin even as they hypocritically pronounced others guilty of the same. God was longsuffering, but they had despised it and turned from it. God shows no partiality, neither to Jew nor Gentile, but will render judgment to each one according to his deeds.

To the shame of the Jews, who had the written Law of Moses, the Gentiles who did not have that law, by nature did the things contained in the law, showing the law written on their hearts, and which was policed by their consciences. It is those who are doers of the law that will be justified, not just hearers, regardless of whether one is a Jew or Gentile.

The "law written in their hearts" refers to the fact that, though they did not have the codified Law of Moses, they had learned and practiced what was lawful before God. It was "by nature," that is, they had gained knowledge of moral righteousness without a codified law – through knowledge revealed and handed down through the generations along with what is observed and learned in nature itself.

Some have used this passage to argue that non-Christians today are under the same “universal moral law” that the Gentiles were under when Israel was under the Law of Moses, and that they can be saved under this law outside of the knowledge of Christ. This passage does not teach this – it is an assumption that actually contradicts those passages that teach that all men must come to Christ for salvation (Rom. 1:16; Mk. 16:15-16; 1 Tim. 2:4; Acts 4:12).

II) Jews do not Practice what They Teach (2:17-24)

A) The boast of the Jews:

1) Called a Jew, rest [rely] on the law, make boast in God, know His will, approve the things that are excellent, instructed out of the law; confident as a guide to the blind, light to those who are in darkness, instructor of the foolish, teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law

B) If you teach another, do you not teach yourself? (“practice what you preach?”)

1) Examples – stealing, adultery, robbing idol temples (Deut. 7:25)

2) Boast in law, but dishonor God through breaking the law

3) Name of God blasphemed among the Gentiles because of them (see Ezek. 36:19-22; Isa. 52:5)

The Jew felt he had plenty to boast in as a Jew (and rightly so), but none of it excused his failure to practice the truth that he taught others to do. Such hypocrisy would give others a reason to blaspheme the name of God.

III) Outward Circumcision Avails Nothing (2:25-29)

A) If a Jew breaks the law, circumcision becomes uncircumcision – worthless, of no avail

1) If uncircumcised keep the law, will be counted as circumcision (approved of God)

2) Faithful uncircumcised will judge unfaithful circumcised as a transgressor of the law

B) True Jew is one circumcised inwardly – of the heart – in the spirit, and not in the letter (cf. Deut. 10:16; Acts 7:51)

1) Praise is from God, not from men (cp. Jn. 12:43)

a) Play on words – “Jew” come from “Judah” which means “praise”

2) Justification comes through obedient hearts of faith, not by perfect law-keeping

God is a fair, impartial judge, and those who keep the law will be approved of God, regardless of whether one is circumcised (Jew) or uncircumcised (Gentile). A true child of God has always been determined by the inward state of the heart. Not “in the letter” indicates that perfect keeping of law is not the basis of our salvation. Obedient hearts of faith receive the gift of grace from a loving God, which shall be explained further in the next chapter.