

## 22. The Book of Romans—2:1

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(7/19/23)

The Book of Romans begins with Paul's opening salutation and personal introduction of himself and his ministry since he had never been to Rome.

Next, Paul presents the theme of his epistle—*"the gospel of Jesus Christ"* (v.16-17).

Verse 18 of chapter 1 begins the main body of the book which runs thru chapter 15 verse 13.

The topics that Paul will be addressing which will all relate back to the theme (the gospel of Jesus Christ)—are as follows:

- I. Condemnation—*All people apart from Christ are lost and on their way to hell and need God's righteousness for salvation—1:18-3:20*
- II. Justification—*How a person acquires God's righteousness—3:21-5:21*
- III. Sanctification—*How a person lives a righteous life for God once saved—6:1—8:39*
- IV. Restoration—*Using Israel as an example of God's calling being permanent (irrevocable)—9:1-11:36*
- V. Application—*The practical demonstration or outworking of God's righteousness in the believer's life—12:1-15:13*

Followed by the Conclusion and closing Benediction—15:14-16:27

This evening we find ourselves in the first main section of the book (1:18-3:20).

This first section falls under the heading of “**Condemnation**” (judgment) because in it Paul wants to prove that the whole human race, apart from Christ, is condemned by God.

Condemnation is a judicial term denoting that fallen man is guilty before a holy, righteous God of violating His laws and is thereby sentenced by Him to spend eternity in hell for those crimes.

After looking at these verses the question that Paul anticipates his readers will be asking themselves is—

*“What about the good people? The moral people? The people who aren’t murderers, fornicators, adulterers and homosexuals. What about those people who aren’t thieves, liars, idolators or haters of God—you know, the people who are basically good, decent people? Where do they stand with God?”*

The people asking such a question would no doubt agree with what Paul had to say in the previous section about the pagans and how they are worthy of judgment (condemnation) because of the immoral and depraved lives they are living—but certainly *good* people won’t be judged by God—right Paul?!

Well, Paul anticipates this thinking and in chapter 2 he starts out by addressing the ‘*moral*’ pagan who did not commit the sins named in chapter 1 verses 18–32, but who sought to live a moral life (the Jews would also fall into this category—and maybe Paul primarily had them in mind).

And so, in chapter 2 Paul begins by dealing with the *moralist* who thinks they’re right with God because of all the good things they do and all the bad things they don’t do.

And because they can point to their morality—they have a false sense of righteousness and security with regard to judgment.

There are many people in the world today who outwardly seem to be decent, moral people.

They oppose evil and live upright, law-abiding lives.

They love their families, believe in God, go to church and yet are not born-again.

They are what the Bible calls, *'professors but not possessors'*—

**Titus 1:16 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup> They profess to know God, but in works they deny *Him*, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

On the outside they seem to be moral, decent people—but God sees the wickedness in their hearts.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is only understood and benefited from in so far as a person understands that they are guilty and condemned by God.

Whether they are the immoral pagan of chapter 1, or the so-called moral man of the beginning of chapter 2, or the religious Jew Paul mentions later in chapter 2—whether Jew or Gentile, good or bad—all apart from Jesus Christ stand condemned before the Righteous Judge of the earth!

Let me just stop and say that the real contrast Paul is addressing in the first main section of Romans—is between the Gentile pagan and the moral/religious Jew.

The Jews would have agreed with everything Paul said in chapter 1 with regard to the practices of the pagan Gentiles and the judgment of God they were due.

They would have cried “*Amen!*” to Paul’s denunciation of these people while at the same time thinking they were right with God and exempt from such judgment themselves.

They believed they were exempt from judgment for 3 main reasons—3 things they believed in:

**1. They believed in *nationalism*—i.e., ‘they were descendants of Abraham.’**

In fact, they believed that Father Abraham sat outside the gates of hell and would not permit any Israelite, wicked or just, believer or unbeliever, to enter in.

**2. They believed in *legalism*—i.e., ‘salvation by works.’**

They believed that because they were a part of the nation of Israel, kept the traditions of their forefathers, and the works of the Law—that they were righteous before God and exempt from His judgment.

They expected to be treated by God, not as individuals—but as a national unit.

They believed that God was obligated to the whole nation and therefore their individual sins didn’t really matter because they were under a kind of *national* salvation.

**3. They believed in *sacramentalism*—i.e., ‘circumcision.’**

They believed that because they were circumcised that thru the sacrament of circumcision, they became a part of the covenant God made with Israel thru Abraham—and were therefore *immune* (exempt) from God’s judgment.

Sacramentalism is something that both Roman Catholics and many Protestants have fallen into as well.

There are a lot of people who were baptized as infants (sacramentalism)—and coupled with religious and moral works like going to church and trying to do what’s right who believe (because of all these things) they are exempt from God’s judgment.

As one writer put it—“*There is some kind of a still small voice in everybody that constantly convinces them that in the end it’s going to be okay—that God would never judge me because I’m a good person.*”

The moralist sees sin in different shades of severity and justifies himself on the basis that—even though he’s not perfect, his conduct is still not as bad as that of others and so they will be accepted into heaven.

The Pharisees were the classic example of this kind of thinking—as Jesus pointed out: “*You judge yourselves by comparing yourselves with others to prove your righteousness...*”  
(Comment)

The moral, self-righteous person is the hardest to reach—much harder to reach than the hardened sinner who has hit the bottom because their self-righteousness has ‘inoculated’ them to the real thing.

In Revelation chapter 3, Jesus talked about those who are neither ‘hot’ nor ‘cold’—but are instead ‘lukewarm.’ (Comment)

So, Paul moves from the *unrighteous heathen* in chapter 1—to the *self-righteous hypocrite* in chapter 2.

And in so doing, he is going to point out that the ethical, moral person (primarily the Jew but also Gentiles) is going to find themselves in the same hell as the Gentile pagan idolator if they don’t see themselves as sinners and turn their life over to Jesus as their Savior.

Actually, Paul lays out 6 principles of judgment in the first 16 verses of Romans chapter 2:

*1. Knowledge; 2. Truth; 3. Guilt; 4. Deeds; 5. Impartiality; 6. Motives*

Paul builds his case against the *moralist* and *religionist* (often the same person) that they are also guilty before God around these 6 principle or *indictments*.

## 1. Knowledge—v.1

### **Romans 2:1 (NKJV)**

**<sup>1</sup> Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself...**

The verse begins with the word ‘**Therefore**’—which ties this section back to what preceded it in chapter 1.

Paul is saying that what is true of those spoken of in 1:18-32 is also true of you—you the so-called ‘good’ person, the moral person!

You are also without excuse (“**Therefore, you are also inexcusable, O man**”)—Why? Because you know the truth.

And how do unbelievers prove they know the truth—they prove it by judging others!

In other words, if a person didn’t know right from wrong—they couldn’t judge anyone for doing what is wrong!

The very fact that they judge others for breaking God’s standards proves they *know* God’s standards and therefore they also are without excuse.

Often the moralist (who is sometimes an atheist) doesn’t realize that when they condemn others for being immoral—they are actually proving the existence of a moral God! (Talk about C.S. Lewis’ conversation from atheist to Christian)

Many atheists and skeptics are guilty of this—they judge others for not living up to a standard of right and wrong without realizing they are proving the existence of a righteous God who has written His laws of right and wrong in our hearts.

But Paul's point in this section of Romans is that, when a moralist judges and condemns another for certain behaviors—they are often guilty of doing those very behaviors themselves!

And when they point an accusing finger of condemnation at another—3 of their fingers are pointing right back at themselves!

→ Mention Nathan confronting King David—2Sam. 12:1-7

The Jews were extremely judgmental against the pagan gentiles but were guilty of committing many of the same sins they condemned the pagans for committing.

It's always amazed me how horrible my sins look—when you're committing them!

A person doesn't have to sink to the same level of an overt reprobate to still be under the condemnation and judgment of God—

**Matthew 5:20 (NKJV)**

<sup>20</sup> For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

**Romans 2:1 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; **for you who judge practice the same things.** (1:24-32)

Now at this point, the moral Jew in particular, would immediately say—“*Not me! I absolutely do not do those same things!*”

What the Jewish people didn't realize (something that Paul himself didn't understand for much of his life and addresses in chapter 7) is that sin starts in the heart before it ever works its way out into our daily lives.

And that God doesn't just look at the outward actions of our lives to determine our guilt—He also looks at the inward attitudes of our hearts as well.

**Matthew 5:21–22, 27–28 (NKJV)**

<sup>21</sup> “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘*You shall not murder*; and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ <sup>22</sup> But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire...

<sup>27</sup> “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘*You shall not commit adultery*.’ <sup>28</sup> But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

**Matthew 23:25–28, 33 (NKJV)**

<sup>25</sup> “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. <sup>26</sup> Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. <sup>27</sup> “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness. <sup>28</sup> Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness...

<sup>33</sup> Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?

Self-righteous ‘moral’ people make 2 fatal mistakes—

1. *They do not understand the height of God's holiness.*
2. *They don't comprehend the depth of their own sinfulness.*

→ Talk about how ‘good’ in the Bible = ‘moral perfection’ (Matt. 19:16-22)

Paul's logic is clear—

*“You who condemn others for their evil practices prove you know the righteous standard of God (His laws written in your heart) and therefore you condemn yourselves because you are guilty of doing the same things—if not outwardly then inwardly!”*