

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

INTRODUCTION

A. Last lesson

1. Those who reject the witness of God will pursue unrighteousness.
2. They not only pursue evil but encourage others to do the same.
3. Warren Wiersbe, *How far man fell! He began glorifying God but ended exchanging that glory for idols. He began knowing God but ended refusing to keep the knowledge of God in his mind and heart. He began as the highest of God's creatures, made in the image of God; but he ended lower than the beasts and insects, because he worshiped them as his gods. The verdict? "They are without excuse!"*

B. Outline of Romans

1. Introduction (1:1-17)
2. The need for God's righteousness (1:18-3:20)
 - a. Condemnation on unrighteousness (1:18-32)
 - b. God's principles of judgment (2:1-16)
 - 1) The role of truth in God's judgment (1-5)
 - 2) The role of man's works in God's judgment (6-10)
 - 3) The role of the law in God's judgment (11-16)

C. Notes on Romans 2

1. Tom Constable, *Paul addressed those people who considered themselves exceptions to humankind's general sinfulness in this section of the epistle. Obviously many people could say in his day, and still more say in ours, that they are not as bad as the people Paul described in chapter 1. The writer dealt with this objection more generally in verses 1–16 and more specifically about Jewish objectors in verses 17–29.*
2. James Stiffler, *Paul has still his statement in view, that the Gospel is the only power of God for salvation, and nothing to be ashamed of. If Judaism can save men, the Gospel is an impertinence; hence the radical failure of the Jew must be shown.*
3. Paul makes accusations against *you* in this chapter. He is not accusing the readers of his letter. He is using a literary style called *diatribe* where he is having an imaginary dialogue with an opponent.

ROMANS 2:1-16, GOD'S PRINCIPLES OF JUDGMENT

A. The role of truth in God's judgment (1-5)

1. Judging others brings condemnation (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?***
 - a. *Therefore*
 - 1) There is some discussion as to what *therefore* is connected.
 - 2) It is best connected to 1:18-19 which described the reason mankind is accountable for sin and under the wrath of God, suppressing God's revealed truth. It is the main point in 1:18-32 and resumes Paul's argument.
 - 3) Douglas Moo, . . . *Paul would be saying in 2:1 that because God's wrath is revealed against all people, and because all people have been given knowledge of God, therefore even the person who judges is "without excuse" before God.*
 - b. Condemnation is on those who judge others since they do the very same things and are *without excuse*.
 - 1) Those who are self-righteous with high moral standards are not exempt from God's wrath.
 - a) Paul is addressing anyone who is a moralist but especially the Jew.
 - 1] John Witmer, *Obviously some pagans had high ethical standards and moral lifestyles and condemned the widespread moral corruption of their contemporaries. In addition the Jews morally stood in sharp contrast with the pagan world around them and freely condemned the Gentiles. Both groups of moralists might conclude that God's condemnation did not apply to them because of their higher planes of living. But Paul insisted that they also stood condemned because they were doing the same things for which they judged others.*
 - 2] John Stott, *He seems to be confronting every human being (Jew or Gentile) who is a moralizer, who presumes to pass moral judgments on other people. . . The underlying theme of this section, then, is the judgment of God upon self-appointed judges.*

- b) Illustrations from the New Testament.
 - 1] John 8:7, *And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her."*
 - 2] Matthew 7:2, *For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.*
 - c) John Stott, *Paul uncovers in these verses a strange human foible, namely our tendency to be critical of everybody except ourselves. We are often as harsh in our judgment of others as we are lenient towards ourselves. We work ourselves up into a state of self-righteous indignation over the disgraceful behavior of other people, while the very same behavior seems not nearly so serious when it is ours rather than theirs.*
- 2) God's judgment is based on divine not human standards.
- a) The word for *judgment* is *the judicial verdict of condemnation by God.*
 - 1] God alone is the standard for truth because it is one of His attributes.
 - 2] Revelation 16:7, *And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!"*
 - b) The fact that all have sinned limits mankind's ability to judge one another.
 - 1] Douglas Moo, *What Paul is calling into question is precisely whether anyone can claim that exemption (exclusion from judgment).*
 - 2] Tom Constable, *Rather than acting like judges of the immoral they should view themselves as sinners subject to God's judgment. They should not misinterpret God's failure to judge them already as an indication that they are blameless.*
- 3) Judging others will not enable one to escape the judgment of God.
- a) Paul asks a rhetorical question of those who are quick to judge others.
 - 1] Do they think they will avoid God's judgement? Of course not!
 - 2] Douglas Moo, *Such a question is legitimately put to the Gentile moralist or philosopher who thinks he or she can please God by his or her good life, but it is particularly the Jew who would be likely to make such an assumption.*
 - 3] John Witmer, *One may be moral and he may even judge his contemporaries as totally enmeshed in a depraved lifestyle, but yet he is judged by God because he does the same things.*
 - b) John Stott pictures the people Paul contrasts in 1:32 to those in 2:1-3.
 - 1] *... the first groups do things they know to be wrong and approve of others who do them, which is at least consistent.*
 - 2] *... the second group do what they know to be wrong and condemn others who do them, which is hypocritical.*
 - 3] *The first group disassociate themselves entirely from God's righteous decree, in regard to both themselves and others; whereas the second group deliberately identify themselves with it by setting themselves up as judges, only to find that they are being judged for doing the same things.*
2. God seeks repentance (4), ***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?***
- a. *Or*
 - 1) It looks back to Paul's rhetorical question in verse 3 and reveals the false assumption of those addressed.
 - 2) Douglas Moo, *Paul wants to show the person who thinks he can sin and yet avoid judgment that he is, in fact, showing contempt for God's mercy.*
 - b. Those who think they can escape the judgment of God presume on His gracious attributes.
 - 1) *presume*
 - a) It means *to entertain the wrong idea, to scorn, treat with contempt.*
 - b) It carries the idea of *thinking something has no value or to reckon something as being worthless.*
 - c) Titus 2:15, *Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.*
 - d) John Stott, *We maintain that he is much too kind and longsuffering to punish anybody, and that we can therefore sin with impunity. We even misapply Scripture to our advantage and quote such statements as, 'The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.' But this kind of manipulative theologizing is to show contempt for God, not honour. It is not faith; it is presumption.*

- 2) Paul describes several of God's gracious attributes which He possesses in abundance.
 - a) *Riches*
 - 1] It means *abundance, wealth, spiritual and moral riches possessed by God and exercised towards men.*
 - 2] Ephesians 1:7, *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,*
 - b) *kindness*
 - 1] Kindness means *loving, benevolent, gracious*
 - 2] 1 Peter 2:3, *if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.*
 - 3] It speaks of one who is always kind.
 - c) *forbearance*
 - 1] It means *clemency, delay, holding back, restraint in judgment.*
 - 2] W. E. Vine, *In 2:4 it represents a suspense of wrath which must eventually be exercised unless the sinner accepts God's conditions.*
 - 3] William Barclay, *No one can sin forever without facing the consequences.*
 - d) *patience*
 - 1] It means *calm, not caught off guard as in action not reaction.*
 - 2] Ephesians 4:2, *with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,*
 - 3] John Chrysostom (died 407 A.D.), . . . *the characteristic of someone who has the power to avenge and deliberately does not use it.*
- 3) The purpose for God's mercy is to lead sinners to repentance.
 - a) God's purpose in waiting is so sinners will repent.
 - 1) 2 Peter 3:9, *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) Tom Constable, *They should not misinterpret God's failure to judge them already as an indication that they are blameless. They should realize that God is simply giving them time to repent . . .*
 - 3) John Stott, *For God's kindness leads us towards repentance (4b). That is its goal. It is intended to give us space in which to repent, not to give us an excuse for sinning.*
 - b) The meaning of repentance.
 - 1) It means *a change of mind which results in a change of lifestyle.*
 - 2) Louw-Nida, *the emphasis . . . seems to be more specifically the total change, both in thought and behavior, with respect to how one should both think and act.*
 - 3) Gerhard Kittel, *For Paul, the concept of faith embraces conversion with its implication of death and renewal. This explains his sparing use of the terms.*
3. God will judge righteously (5), ***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.***
 - a. *But because*
 - 1) Paul gives the reason why people treat God's mercy with contempt.
 - 2) People have a heart problem.
 - b. *hard and impenitent heart*
 - 1) *hard*
 - a) It means *stubborn* and is only used here in the New Testament.
 - b) It carries the idea of *refusing to change, set in one's way.*
 - c) Some believe Paul is speaking directly to the condition of self-righteous Jews.
 - 2) *impenitent*
 - a) It means *unrepentant, without change of mind* and is only used here in the New Testament.
 - b) The unrepentant person refuses to turn to God.
 - 3) *heart*
 - a) It is the *seat of physical, spiritual and mental life.*
 - b) In Romans 2:5, the focus is on the *seat of moral decisions, the moral life, or vices and virtues.*

- c. The result is increasing wrath for the unrepentant when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.
- 1) *Wrath*
 - a) It means *God's future judgment on sin.*
 - b) Ephesians 5:6, *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.*
 - c) 1 Thessalonians 5:9, *For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,*
 - 2) *stored up*
 - a) Tom Constable, *God's wrath is increasing against sinners while He waits (v. 5). Each day that the self-righteous person persists in his self-righteousness God adds more guilt to his record.*
 - b) John Witmer, *So God's wrath against people's sins is being stored up like a great reservoir until the day when it will all be poured forth in His righteous judgment.*
 - c) Douglas Moo, . . . *the recalcitrant sinner is storing up for himself not blessing or life but wrath.*
 - 3) *on the day of wrath*
 - a) That day is future and is the time of final judgment.
 - b) Revelation 20:11-15, *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*
 - 4) God's judgment will be righteous.
 - a) It will be just and the right verdict.
 - 1] Psalm 62:12, *and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love. For you will render to a man according to his work.*
 - 2] Proverbs 24:12, *If you say, "Behold, we did not know this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?*
 - b) It is the day when God will righteously judge sinners, in contrast to those who do the evils they condemn.
 - c) Tom Constable, *This judgment is in contrast to the judgment that the self-righteous person passes on himself when he considers himself guiltless (v. 1).*

B. The role of man's works in God's judgment (6-11)

1. God judges according to each person's works (6, 11), ***He will render to each one according to his works: . . . For God shows no partiality.***
 - a. Paul uses a literary structure called *chiasm* to emphasize his points concerning God's judgment.
 - 1) Chiasm is inverted parallelism where two or more points are repeated in reverse order and the point in the middle is the one being emphasized. Here, Paul emphasizes the beginning and ending point, God is impartial.
 - 2) The chiasmic structure of verses 6-11 follows.

A	-	God judges fairly (6)
B	-	Those who do good receive eternal life (7)
C	-	Those who do evil receive wrath (8)
C2	-	Those who do evil will receive tribulation and distress (9)
B2	-	Those who do good gain glory (10)
A2	-	God is impartial (2:11)

- b. *render*
 - 1) It means *to reward, recompense, for good or bad.*
 - 2) 2 Timothy 4:14, *Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will **repay** him according to his deeds.*

- c. *each one*
 - 1) There are several ways to understand who Paul is referring to when he said *each one*.
 - 2) It matters what one does whether that person is an unbeliever or a believer.

 - 3) Everyone is judged based on his works.
 - a) The unbeliever
 - 1] If a person obeys God perfectly, he or she will receive eternal life, not wrath.
 - 2] But, no one can obey God perfectly, so all are under God's wrath, Romans 3:23-24, *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*
 - b) The believer
 - 1] He is judged not concerning eternal life since it is a free gift but for reward for good deeds.
 - 2] 1 Corinthians 3:15, *If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.*
 - 4) The great emphasis in his passage is not on who is being judged but the nature of Who is judging and that He is righteous in His judgments.
 - a) The unbeliever is righteously judged for what he did, A. M. Hunter, *A man's destiny on Judgment Day will depend not on whether he has known God's will but on whether he has done it.*
 - b) The believer is righteously judged for what Jesus did, 2 Corinthians 5:21, *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
 - c) Warren Wiersbe, *In Romans 2:6-11, Paul was not teaching salvation by character or good deeds. He was explaining another basic principle of God's judgment: God judges according to deeds, just as He judges according to truth.*

- d. *works*
 - 1) It means *actions with a moral emphasis, good or bad is based on the context.*
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 11:15, *So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.*
 - 3) William Barclay, *One of the most dangerous of all religious tendencies is to talk as if faith and works were entirely different and separate things. There can be no such thing as faith which does not result in works, nor can there be works which are not the product of faith. Works and faith are inextricably bound up together.*

- e. Biblical confirmation of God's righteous judgment based on man's works.
 - 1) Job 34:11, *For according to the work of a man he will repay him, and according to his ways he will make it befall him.*
 - 2) Psalm 62:12, *and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love. For you will render to a man according to his work.*
 - 3) Jeremiah 17:10, *I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.*

- f. God is impartial.
 - 1) Paul clearly declares the main point at the end of this section (6-11).
 - 2) Tom Constable, *There is equal justice for all in God's court.*
 - 3) Robert Wilkin, *Fear should come upon the self-righteous because they will approach God on the basis of their works, which will not acquit them.*
 - 4) Grant Osborne, *Unlike courtrooms today, the billionaire will have no advantage over the homeless person.*

2. Those who seek good by trusting God receive eternal life (7, 10), *to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; . . . but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.*
 - a. God grants eternal life to those who possess a consistent lifestyle of godliness.
 - 1) Those who pursue righteousness expect to receive glory, honor, and immortality in eternity (verse 7).
 - a) 1 Peter 1:7, *so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*
 - b) 2 Timothy 1:10, *and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,*
 - 2) The blessing of God’s salvation is peace (verse 10).
 - a) The pursuit of righteousness results in peace.
 - b) It is the state of perfect well-being in eternity.
 - 3) One’s consistent conduct reveals the condition of the heart.
 - a) Such people *seek, keep on seeking.*
 - b) Douglas Moo, *It might be noted, however, that Paul goes out of his way to stress that the work that God so rewards is a persistent lifestyle of godliness.*
 - c) Paul emphasizes in Romans that obedience is an indicator of one’s true spiritual condition, Romans 2:25-27, *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.*
 - 4) Eternal life is not rewarded for man’s works.
 - a) Man’s works picture the condition of his heart.
 - b) Salvation is based on God’s grace as Paul emphasizes in Romans.
 - 1] Romans 6:23, *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
 - 2] Romans 10:9-10, *because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.*
 - 3] Romans 11:6, *But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.*
 - 5) What does Paul mean by his statement where salvation is promised to those who persistently do good?
 - a) Douglas Moo, *Paul’s purpose in 2:6–11 is to establish the principle that God will judge every person on the same basis—by works, not by religious heritage or national identity. Paul’s focus is on the standard of judgment. . . Paul sets forth the biblical conditions for attaining eternal life apart from Christ. . . Paul goes out of his way to stress that the work that God so rewards is a persistent lifestyle of godliness.*
 - b) John Stott, *The presence or absence of saving faith in our hearts will be disclosed by the presence or absence of good works of love in our lives. The apostles Paul and James both teach this same truth, that authentic saving faith invariably issues in good works, and that if it does not, it is bogus, even dead.*
 - c) Paul will show later in Romans that no one meets the conditions necessary to receive salvation by personal effort.
 - d) A person can be righteously judged and condemned by his works but no one can be justified by his works.
 - b. *the Jew first and also the Greek*
 - 1) This is Paul’s emphasis on God’s impartiality based on man’s works, not on whether he was a Jew or non-Jew.
 - 2) Tom Constable, *God will deal with the Jew first because his privilege was greater. He received special revelation as well as natural revelation.*
 - 3) John Witmer, . . . *in the light of the divine standard of impartiality (God does not show favoritism), it emphasizes that the entire human race is dealt with by God.*

- c. Helpful points in understanding Romans 2:6-11
- 1) It reveals that God is impartial because everyone is judged on his works, Matthew 16:27, *For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.*
 - 2) None meet God's righteous standard so all are in need of grace, Romans 3:23, *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*
 - 3) The unbeliever will be judged on his own works and condemned, Revelation 20:12, 15, *And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done; And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*
 - 4) The believer will be judged based on the work of Christ and receive eternal life, Romans 5:9-10, *Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*
 - 5) The believe will be judged concerning rewards based on the *works* prepared by God for believers, Ephesians 2:10, *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*
 - 6) William Barclay, *Of all passages in Paul's letters, this one deserves to be studied most carefully in order to arrive at a correct idea of Paul's thinking. It is often argued that his position was that all that matters is faith. A religion which stresses the importance of works is often contemptuously waved aside as being quite out of touch with the New Testament. Nothing could be further from the truth. 'God', said Paul, 'will settle with each one of us according to our deeds.' To Paul, a faith which did not lead to action was a travesty of faith; in fact, it was not faith at all. He would have said that the only way in which you can see people's faith at all is by their actions.*
3. Those who pursue evil receive the wrath of God (8-9), ***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,***
- a. Paul calls those evil who are *self-seeking* and *do not obey the truth*.
 - 1) *Self-seeking*
 - a) It means *selfish ambition, selfishness.*
 - b) James 3:14, *But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.*
 - c) James 3:16, *For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.*
 - 2) *do not obey the truth*
 - a) It means *to keep on disobeying.*
 - b) Truth is contrasted to unrighteousness. Truth refers to truth that people know about God, Romans 1:25, *because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.*
 - c) It is speaking of those who follow the wrong instead of the right. They follow themselves instead of God.
 - b. God's intense anger is upon those who reject the truth.
 - 1) *wrath*
 - a) It means *God's future judgment.*
 - b) Matthew 3:7, *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"*
 - c) 1 Thessalonians 1:10, *and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.*
 - 2) *fury*
 - a) It means *anger, wrath, rage, overwhelming passion.*
 - b) It is placed together with *wrath* in other Greek writings as it is in Romans 2:8.
 - c) Putting the words together amplifies the extreme intensity of God's anger against those who reject Him.
 - c. There are consequences for those who do evil.
 - 1) *tribulation*
 - a) It means *oppression, affliction, persecution.*
 - b) Matthew 24:21, *For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.*

- 2) *distress*
 - a) It means *difficulty, anguish, trouble, narrowness of place.*
 - b) Romans 8:35, *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?*

d. Paul declares *the Jew first and also the Greek.*

- 1) He made this statement in verse 10 concerning those who do good and here concerning those who do evil.
- 2) His emphasis is that God's judgment is impartial with everyone as Grant Osborne notes, *he will dispense both reward and judgment with fairness.*
- 3) The Jew has greater guilt since he received special revelation, William Barclay, *There may be nations which are picked out for a special task and for a special responsibility, but there is none which is picked out for special privilege and special consideration.*
- 4) Douglas Moo, . . . *there are two, and only two, fates in store for "every person" at the time of God's "righteous judgment." Those who do not receive eternal life receive the punishment of God's wrath. Paul describes these latter people from the standpoint of their basic motivating principle—selfishness—and from the standpoint of their allegiance: they give themselves in obedience to unrighteousness rather than to the truth.*

C. The role of the law in God's judgment (12-16)

1. The judgment of God is based on disobedience to the truth one has (12-13), ***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.***

a. *For*

- 1) *For* ties verse 12 to verse 11 by affirming Paul's declaration that God is impartial.
- 2) Douglas Moo, *In these verses Paul defends the equality of all people before God's judgment seat against the charge that the Jews' possession of the law gives to them a decisive advantage.*

b. Paul declares the difference between the basis of God's judgment with regard to Gentiles and Jews.

1) Since Gentiles did not have the Mosaic Law, they would not be judged by it.

- a) Those without the law will perish without the law which will not be their standard of judgment.
- b) *perish*
 - 1] It means *to perish or die an eternal death.*
 - 2] John 3:16, *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*
 - 3] John 10:28, *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.*

2) The Jews had the Mosaic Law and would be judged by it.

- a) The *for* in verse 13 is the basis of judgment for those under the Law, not just hearing it but doing it.
- b) John Stott, *The ground of judgment is their works; the rule of judgment is their knowledge, and whether they have lived up to their knowledge.*
- c) *righteous before God*
 - 1] It means *not violating the sovereignty of God, being in right relation with God.*
 - 2] It is *keeping God's laws.*
 - 3] Matthew 7:24-27, *Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.*

d) *justified*

- 1] It means *to be pronounced and treated as righteous.*
- 2] The only one justified by the Law is the one who has perfect obedience to the Law, Galatians 3:10, *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."*
- 3] The bar for being justified is set by God and it is too high to attain by works, Romans 3:20, *For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*

- 4] Douglas Moo, *It is clear from these verses that Paul argues for universal human sinfulness, and a sinfulness of such a nature that condemnation must be the outcome. . . This verse confirms and explains the reason for the Jews' condemnation in v. 12b; and this suggests that its purpose is not to show how people can be justified but to set forth the standard that must be met if a person is to be justified.*
2. Those who do not have the law but obey do so because of the law stamped on their hearts (14-15), ***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***
- a. *for when Gentiles*
- 1) This is the third time Paul starts a thought with *for* in Romans 2:12-15.
 - 2) Here, Paul identifies Gentiles who do the law without having it.
 - a) Some believe these are Gentiles who do the law and are saved apart from explicit faith in Christ.
 - b) Some believe they are Gentile Christians who fulfill the law by virtue of their faith in Christ Who fulfilled the Law.
 - c) I believe they are Gentiles who do some part of the law but are not saved. According to Romans 3:20, none are saved by obeying the law. Gentile Christians do not obey the law by nature but by grace.
- b. *they are a law to themselves*
- 1) This does not mean that Gentiles do not need anything to guide them but they show that they have knowledge of a divine moral standard, Warren Wiersbe, *Wherever you go, you find people with an inner sense of right and wrong; and this inner judge, the Bible calls "conscience." You find among all cultures a sense of sin, a fear of judgment, and an attempt to atone for sins and appease whatever gods are feared.*
 - 2) As has been mentioned, this section is not showing how one can be saved by works. It is showing that the Jew has no advantage by knowing the law since Gentiles have a moral compass, as well.
 - a) Douglas Moo, *The Jew does not have in the law a decisive advantage when it comes to knowing and doing the will of God, Paul suggests; for Gentiles have some of the same benefits.*
 - b) Grant Osborne, *Even those who do not know God have an internal barometer, a "law unto themselves," that allows them to follow God's basic moral requirements. Paul is saying that the Jews possess no true advantage from the law, for the Gentiles have been given their own form of it.*
 - c) Tom Constable, *He meant that they have a law that is instinctive, namely an intuitive perception of what is right and what is wrong.*
- c. *work of the law written on their hearts*
- 1) Jews looked down on Gentiles in part because they did not have the revelation of God's will in the Mosaic Law.
 - 2) *work of the law*
 - a) Paul speaks of moral Gentiles who do by nature what the Law requires.
 - b) These individuals don't know the Mosaic Law but they have some knowledge of right and wrong that is taught in the Law.
 - 3) *written on their hearts*
 - a) Paul is not addressing salvation but accountability for the truth that is known.
 - 1] Warren Wiersbe, *Wherever you go, you find people with an inner sense of right and wrong; and this inner judge, the Bible calls "conscience." You find among all cultures a sense of sin, a fear of judgment, and an attempt to atone for sins and appease whatever gods are feared.*
 - 2] John Witmer, *Such persons show that the Law is not to be found only on tablets of stone and included in the writings of Moses; it is also inscribed in their hearts and is reflected in their actions, consciences, and thoughts.*
 - b) He is not speaking of Jeremiah's declaration of a new heart.
 - 1] Jeremiah 31:33-34, *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*
 - 2] John Stott, *That God has written his law on our hearts by creation means that we have some knowledge of it; when he writes his law on our hearts in the new creation he also gives us a love for it and the power to obey it.*

- d. *conscience bears witness*
- 1) It means *moral sensitivity, the psychological faculty which can distinguish between right and wrong.*
 - a) In Romans 2:15 it means *bearing witness with God's law.*
 - b) John Witmer defines *conscience as the faculty within human beings that evaluates their actions, along with their thoughts that either accuse or excuse them of sin.*
 - 2) Biblical descriptions of conscience
 - a) One's conscience can be good, 1 Timothy 1:5, *The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*
 - b) One's conscience can be clear, Hebrews 13:18, *Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things.*
 - c) One's conscience can be corrupted.
 - 1] Titus 1:15, *To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.*
 - 2] 1 Timothy 4:2, *through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared,*
 - d) Those in Christ have pure consciences, Hebrews 9:14, *how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*
- e. *their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them*
- 1) Sometimes thoughts are in line with one's conscience and sometimes they are not.
 - 2) The point is that not only does one's conscience accuse but also one's thoughts.
 - 3) On the danger of thoughts
 - a) Matthew 5:27-28, *You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*
 - b) God is impartial even to the point of thoughts which can accuse or excuse but here Paul is speaking of the present not future judgment.
 - 4) John Stott, *It seems that Paul is envisaging a debate in which three parties are involved: our hearts (on which the requirements of the law have been written), our consciences (prodding and reproving us), and our thoughts (usually accusing us, but sometimes even excusing us).*
3. God's final judgment will be in accordance to the Gospel of Christ Jesus (16), ***on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.***
- a. *on that day*
 - 1) Verse 16 is tied to verses 12-13 by completing Paul's statement that God will judge impartially.
 - 2) Verses 14-15 address the differences between Jews who have special revelation and Gentiles who have general revelation.
 - 3) In verse 16, Paul sets the stage of final judgment, including the role of Christ Jesus in the judgment of mankind.
 - b. *according to my gospel*
 - 1) Paul means the gospel he faithfully proclaimed.
 - 2) This good news has always had the component of judgment,
 - a) Acts 17:31, *because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.*
 - b) John Stott, *We cheapen the gospel if we represent it as a deliverance only from unhappiness, fear, guilt and other felt needs, instead of as a rescue from the coming wrath.*
 - c. *God judges the secrets of men*
 - 1) *Secrets* means *hidden things.*
 - 2) God will not only judge actions but also thoughts.
 - a) Ecclesiastes 12:14, *For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.*
 - b) Matthew 10:26, *So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.*

c) 1 Corinthians 4:5, *Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.*

3) Thoughts and actions constitute works, Romans 2:6, *He will render to each one according to his works:*

d. *by Christ Jesus*

1) God's future judgment is by Christ Jesus Who is the standard for judgment and Who has been assigned the responsibility to judge by the Father.

2) Acts 10:42, *And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.*

4. Will God condemn a person who has responded appropriately to the truth he or she had but never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

a. No one fully obeys the truth because everyone is born in sin, Romans 3:23, *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

b. Salvation comes through Jesus Christ alone, John 14:6, *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

c. Some placed faith in the coming Redeemer, Job 19:25, *For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.*

d. Others place faith in the Redeemer Who has come, Acts 4:11-12, *This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

e. Douglas Moo, . . . *Paul agreed with the Jewish belief that justification could, in theory, be secured through works. Where Paul disagreed with Judaism was in his belief that the power of sin prevents any person, even the Jew who depends on his or her covenant status, from actually achieving justification in that manner. While, therefore, one could be justified by doing the law in theory, in practice it is impossible . . .*

CONCLUSION

A. The moralist condemns others for the same things he does.

B. God judges righteously based on His standard not man's.

C. God prefers repentance over judgment.

D. God judges impartially.

E. Those who reject Christ are judged on their works alone.

F. Those who receive Christ are judged on the work of Christ.

G. William Barclay, *Paul saw the world as divided into two classes of people. He saw the Jews with their law given to them direct from God and written down so that all could read it. He saw the other nations, without this written law, but nonetheless with a God-implanted knowledge of right and wrong within their hearts. Neither could claim exemption from the judgment of God. The Jews could not claim exemption on the grounds that they had a special place in God's plan. The Gentiles could not claim exemption on the grounds that they had never received the written law. The Jews would be judged as men and women who had known the law; the Gentiles as people who had a God-given conscience.*