

Homework: Read through Romans 2 each day. Circle any words or phrases that you see frequently repeated. Mark what you think is the most important/key verse in Romans 2. Create a title for the chapter (below). Write down any questions you might have.

Romans 2

(ESV)

Chapter Title

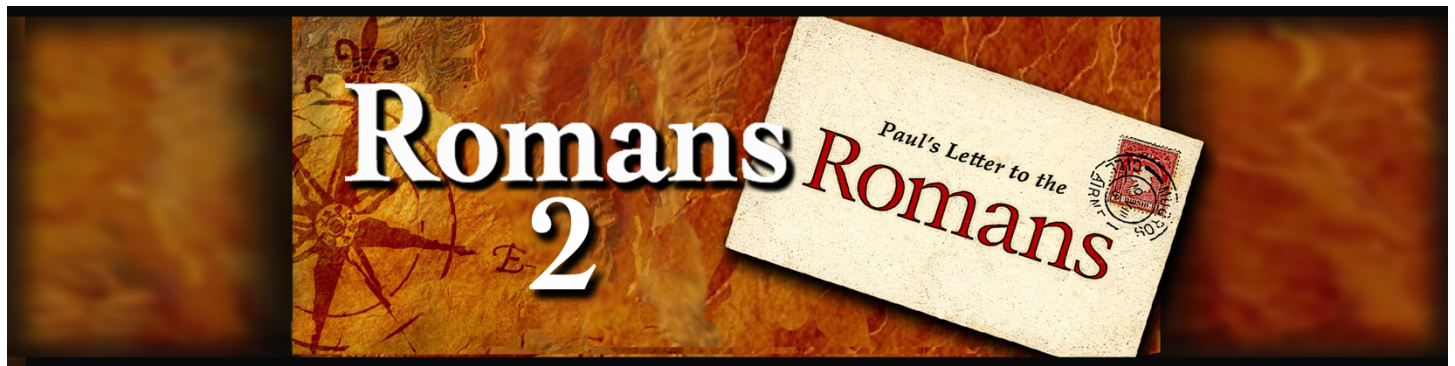
¹ Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. ² We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. ³ Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? 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? 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. ⁶ He will render to each one according to his works: ⁷ to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. ⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹ For God shows no partiality. ¹² For all

Notes

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. ¹³ For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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 ¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

¹⁷ But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God ¹⁸ and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; ¹⁹ and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— ²¹ you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? ²² You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. ²⁴ For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the

Gentiles because of you.” ²⁵ For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. ²⁶ So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷ Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. ²⁸ For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹ But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.



Refer back to the Romans 1 Lesson—Remind yourself who Paul is addressing in 1:6-15, 1:16-17, and 1:18-32 (where he laid out the case for the guilt of the Gentiles). The Jews considered the Gentiles to be pagans. Without a doubt, the Jews were in full agreement as they read of the guilt of the Gentiles in Romans 1.

Read Romans 2:1-4

In chapter 1, having detailed the extensive evidence of “*their*” (the Gentiles) guilt and the fact “*that those who practice such things deserve to die*” (penalty of death), Paul moves on in chapter 2 to outline how God deals with the penalty for sin—**God’s judgment**.

“Paul’s teaching about judging agrees with that of Jesus, who did not condemn judging as such, but **hypocritical judging**. A warning that had special relevance for Jews, who were inclined to look down on Gentiles because of their ignorance of God’s revelation in the OT and because of their immoral lives.” (NIVSB)

1. What information/inferences does the context of verses 1-4 give you about who “*you*” is in 2:1? In chapter 1, “*you*” referred to the mostly Gentile brothers and sisters in Rome. Who do you think Paul is addressing at the beginning of Romans 2? Why?
2. When we see “therefore,” we should always ask ourselves, “What’s the ‘therefore’ there for?” What is the ‘therefore’ there for?



Bible Study Technique

Commentaries/Study Guides—Study Bibles often give explanations, definitions, cross-references and many other types of additional information. There are also literally millions of different commentaries that you may use to help understand something more clearly and deeply. Take care to research whether the author has sound doctrine. Many commentaries are available online or within certain Bible apps.

In Chapter 2 Paul sets forth **7 Principles that Govern God’s judgment**. (JMSB and NIVSB)

3. Based on the “therefore,” why do “you have no excuse?”

1. God judges based on **Knowledge** . (2:1) (JMSB)

4. What is the warning in verse 1?

5. Romans 2:2 reads, “...*the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.*” What does that mean about God’s judgment that it “*rightly falls*?”

2. God judges based on Truth . (2:2-3) (NIVSB and JMSB) ([See Romans 2:2 in NIV](#))

6. What does God, through Paul, warn about in 2:3-4? Why? Who is he warning; who is “you”?

3. God judges based on Guilt . (2:3-5) (JMSB)

“Presume on” in 2:4 means to view with contempt, to think against, despise; disdain, think little or nothing of.

“The Jews thought themselves a holy people, entitled to their privileges by right, while they were unthankful, rebellious, and unrighteous. But all who act thus, of every nation, age, and description, must be reminded that the judgment of God will be according to their *real* character. . . . In every willful sin, there is *contempt* of [presumption on] the goodness of God.” (MHC)

7. The Jews had misconstrued God’s patience to be a lack of intent to judge. What does Paul contend is God’s intent for postponing His judgment? See also [2 Peter 3:9](#).

Read Romans 2:5-11

8. What is the result of “a hard and impenitent [unrepentant] heart?”

Religious presumption comes from a hard heart, since continued resistance to God’s purposes in showing grace is a refusal of God’s will and increases guilt while protesting innocence. . . . Wrath is stored up, pointing forward to proportionate punishment in hell. (RSB)

...the sinner himself is amassing, like hoarded treasure, an ever-accumulating stock of divine wrath, to burst upon him in “the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God!” (JFB)

9. What is “the day of wrath?” What will be revealed in “the day of wrath?”

4. God judges based on Deeds/Works . (6-11) (NIVSB and JMSB)

10. What happens on “the day of wrath?” What judgment will be rendered (repaid) for which types of deeds? (6-10)

The phrase “to the Jew first and also to the Greek” [Gentile] is repeated in Romans 1:16, 2:9, and 2:10. **Salvation** was available to the Jew *first*, not only in time, but also in privilege (1:16). “*Salvation is from the Jews*” ([John 4:22](#)), and the Messiah was a Jew. The “*very words of God*” ([Romans 3:1-2](#)), the covenants, law, temple worship, revelation of the divine glory and Messianic prophecies all came to the Jews first ([Romans 9:4-5](#)). These privileges, however, were not extended to the Jews because of their superior merit or because of God’s partiality toward them ([Deuteronomy 7:7-11](#)). It was necessary that the entrance of the gospel into this world begin at a particular point with a particular people, who in turn were responsible to carry that gospel to the other nations (NIVSB).

Salvation is **available** to Jews and Gentiles alike, but **wrath** is also **promised** to Jews and Gentiles alike, “for God shows no partiality” (favoritism). Final judgment on “the day of wrath” will depend upon character alone, as **evidenced** by their deeds. ([James 2:18](#)) The “day of wrath” (Judgment Day) will not be a day of trial where evidence is presented; it will be the day of sentencing. God judges all people (“the Jew first and also the Greek”) with one set of standards. What is that standard?

5. God judges based on Impartiality . (2:11) (JMSB)

Read Romans 2:12

“The law” refers to the Mosaic Law, summarized in the Ten Commandments ([Exodus 20:1-17](#), [Deuteronomy 5:1-22](#)), which defines the standard for a person’s life. The Mosaic Law reveals God’s condemnation of sin, but the **cause of sin lies in our hearts**, deeply rooted in our human nature, **not in the Law**.

The Jews believed that because they had the Mosaic Law, they were in right standing with God; they relied on the Law. They boasted of being religious, considering themselves God's favorites. They thought they had special privileges because God had chosen them and blessed them as a nation. Paul tells them they, too, are sinners. **Jews are sinners “under the Law;”** because they are held to the higher standard of the **written revelation of God’s Law**; they will be judged and condemned **by the Law**.

Gentiles are sinners “without the Law” (apart from the Law) because they did not have the advantage of God’s revelation of the Law; therefore, they are not held to the standard of **obeying** the Law.

11. What is the fate of all who sin “without the Law?”

12. What is the fate of all who sin “under the Law.”

Read Romans 2:13-16

13. **Justification** means being declared righteous before God (in God’s opinion). Who can be “justified”? (13)

14. How can the Gentiles, who don’t have the Law, be declared righteous by obeying the Law? (14-15)

Paul shows that what pleases God is **not knowledge** of the law but **obedience** to the will of God **revealed** in the law. The requirements of the law (“what the law requires”) are the moral commandments of God, available to every person within their **conscience** (moral awareness, the soul which distinguishes between what is morally good and bad, commending one thing and condemning another). Because mankind was created in the image of God, the knowledge of the moral law resides in the heart/soul. The Gentiles are not accountable for disrespecting, disregarding, or breaking the Mosaic Law, but they ARE responsible for violating the **conscience** which God gave them.

The conscience, however, is far from infallible; it is just as fallen as the rest of a person ([Jeremiah 17:9-10](#)); we must not trust that our conscience is clear. ([1 Timothy 4:1-2](#)) Only God’s Word is infallible; it’s the only thing we can trust. ([1 John 3:20](#))

God judges people in accordance with standards known to them, but that doesn't mean that ignorance of the Law is an excuse for not knowing. Remember the principle from [Romans 1:18-20](#) that people are without excuse in knowing that God exists, and there is a responsibility for that knowledge. **It is not the degree of revelation received, but the response to the revelation received**, that will prove critical on the day when God will judge.

6. God judges based on Light/Revelation Available . (2:12-15) (NIVSB)

Translating one language into another language is not like doing math; there are no hard and fast rules, no right and wrong answers. Words and punctuation do not necessarily “translate” one for one. Where English has one basic word for “love,” Chinese has more, and Hebrew and Greek have even more than that. English uses a huge number of punctuation marks, and has specific rules of usage for each. Chinese has limited punctuation and no spaces between words. Hebrew also has no spaces between words and also has no punctuation. Therefore translators (and Bible students) need to take care when digging for the meaning of a passage of Scripture. It can be helpful to consult dictionaries, commentaries, concordances, and a variety of different translations in order to accurately mine the rich depths of God's Word.



Bible Study Technique

Multiple Bible Translations—Different translations of the Bible will use different words and different phrasing. This can help you understand words or ideas from possibly a different angle than you are thinking on your own. It can also provide more depth of meaning to a passage. Be sure to use translations as opposed to paraphrases. Translations are directly from the Hebrew and Greek languages. Paraphrases are not translations, the writer expresses the meaning of the text using different words, their own words, so the meaning may not be accurate.

Verses 13-15 are parenthetical (explanatory) verses. They offer more in-depth explanation of verse 12. The ESV, NASB, NET, NLT, LSB and Literal Word versions do not include actual parentheses, but the NIV, ASB, KJV, and NKJV do. (NIV and ASB use parentheses around verses 14-15, while KJV and NKJV use them around verses 13-15.) Paul used many parenthetical verses in his writing, so we will need to pay attention to them.

Some translations (ASV, NASB, KJV, NKJV, LSB) make verses 14-16 into one sentence:

¹⁴ For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, ¹⁶ on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. (NASB)

The ESV translation has 14 as one sentence and 15-16 as another sentence; both the NIV and NLT have 14, 15, and 16 each as separate sentences, which seems (to this author) to be more logical within the context of the whole section to connect verse 16 back to verse 12—

¹² All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³ For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. ¹⁴ (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.) ¹⁶ This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares. (NIV)

15. Who are those identified in verse 12? How are they described? Does this include ALL people?
16. What is the meaning of this paragraph, **not including the parenthetical information**? (12, 16 only)

Now let's deal with the parenthetical information, by itself!

17. Verse 13 identifies others who are not included in those first two groups. Who are they? How are they described?
18. What is the meaning of the parenthetical information? (13-15)

Let's put it all together! There is a day of judgment coming for all people (for "*the Jew first and also the Greek*") when God will make all things known ([Ecclesiastes 12:14](#), [Luke 12:2-3](#), [Matthew 10:26](#)) and pass His righteous judgment. Unrighteous Gentiles will not be condemned for not obeying a law they did not possess. Their judgment will be on other grounds, but they will perish. (12) (NIVSB) Unrighteous Jews and Gentiles who had access to God's moral law will be accountable for their greater knowledge. (12) (JMSB)

In verse 13 God makes the standard clear—righteousness comes from obedience, not knowledge. (14) Gentiles did not originally have an outside law, the written Mosaic Law, but they have always had an **internal law** given by our Creator—a **conscience**. Every person naturally does things that are written in God's law, without ever reading God's law. Their conduct (actions, behaviors) **proves** that they know what is right and what is wrong; their conduct demonstrates there is an internal human code of ethics, residing in them, the law of God "*written on their hearts.*"

Without knowing the written law of God, people in pagan societies (15) generally value and attempt to practice its most basic tenets. This does not mean that they fulfilled the requirements of the Mosaic Law but deals with standards of behavior in their cultures that agreed with the Law, such as caring for the sick and elderly, honoring parents and condemning adultery, etc. The moral nature of pagans, informed by conscience, functioned for them as the Mosaic Law did for the Jews. (NIVSB)

19. Does this mean that people in these pagan societies will be declared righteous? Why?

Secret services shall be rewarded, secret sins shall be then punished, and brought to light. (MHC)

The universal presence of moral standards across human societies, and the common sense of obligation to such standards, indicate humanity's universal moral constitution and sense of accountability to God, a legacy of our creation in the image of God. (RSB)

The Word of God makes it clear time and again that righteousness is not based on that which is outwardly visible, but what is in the heart. (2:15, [Mark 7:6-7](#), [Mark 7:20-23](#), [Luke 6:45](#), [Luke 12:1-3](#), [Hebrews 3:12](#)) People may hide secrets in their hearts, but God knows them all.

7. God judges based on **Motive** . (2:15-16) (JMSB)

“According to my gospel” (16)—The gospel that Paul preached; this is not a gospel **different** from that preached by the other gospel writers, but a gospel which Paul received by direct revelation. ([Acts 9](#)) In his gospel, the bad news of the judgment to come precedes the good news of grace.

Read Romans 2:17-24

20. Who is “you” in this section (to the end of the chapter)?

Paul’s letter in this section takes the form of a dialogue—on one hand, speaking “antagonistically” as a self-righteous Jew, and on the other hand, “putting that self-righteous Jew in his place.” Paul knew how a self-righteous Jew thought, for he had been one himself. He cites one advantage after another that the Jews regarded as special privileges as God’s chosen people. But those advantages became obstacles when there was no connection between what they professed and what they practiced.

21. What does the word “if” imply?

22. What were the advantages that Paul listed? (17-20)

23. How did Paul refer to the Law in 2:20?

24. What things did the Jews profess (boast about)? What were their actual practices? (21-24)

25. What would you say is Paul’s point?

They were proud, vain-glorious (excessively proud), boasted in God and in the outward profession of His name. That is the root and sum of all hypocrisy. Spiritual pride is the most dangerous of all kinds of pride. (RSB)

26. Paul addresses the commandments which they were violating. What were they? ([Exodus 20:4-5, 7, 14, 15](#)).

27. What was the result of their practices? (24) ([2 Peter 2:2-3](#))

Read Romans 2:25-29

Paul’s argument in chapter 2 now reaches its high point. Circumcision is the physical sign of the covenant that God made with Israel and a pledge of the covenant blessing. The Jews had come to regard circumcision as a guarantee of God’s favor. (NIVSB)

28. When does circumcision have value? (25)

29. What happens to those who break the law?

In 2:25, **uncircumcision** does not refer to Gentiles. Paul is NOT saying that the lawbreaking Jews would become Gentiles, but that the lawbreaker was essentially reversing his circumcision (not physically, but spiritually). It also means an **unregenerate** state or person (sinful, not spiritually renewed, not saved).

30. What happens to those who are not circumcised yet keep the law's requirements? (26-27)

31. What is a "true Jew" and what is "true circumcision"? (28-29)

Condemnation results from failure to obey revelation of whatever kind. Jews have transgressed the Mosaic law and emptied circumcision of its real significance. Physical circumcision is a sign of **sanctification** (the action or process of being freed from sin or purified) and a renewed life. The reality, not the sign, is the vital thing and may be possessed without regard to one's Jewish ethnicity. (RSB)

32. What is "circumcision of the heart?" ([Jeremiah 9:25-9:26](#), [Deuteronomy 30:6](#), [Deuteronomy 10:16](#))

The true sign of belonging to God is not an outward mark on the physical body but the **regenerating power of the Holy Spirit** within. (NIVSB) ([Titus 3:5-6](#))

33. What did you select as the Key Verse(s) in Romans 2? Why?

34. Write a summary of Romans 2.

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