

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

ROM. 2:1 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 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?

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

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;

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

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

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;

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;

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:

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;)

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

NOTES

God's Righteous Judgment

Lesson Text: Romans 2:1-16

Related Scriptures: Matthew 7:1-5; 2 Peter 3:8-10;
Acts 10:34-35; James 1:22-25; 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

TIME: A.D. 57

PLACE: from Corinth

GOLDEN TEXT—"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?" (Romans 2:3).

Lesson Exposition

One aim of Romans 2 is to demonstrate that Jewish people are not exempt from God's judgment. Many Jews thought they would avoid God's judgment through their relationship to Abraham. Paul corrected this.

In chapter 2, Paul was not talking to the church directly. Instead, he had a hypothetical conversation with an opponent. This is evident from the change in tone and use of pronouns. He opened with "O man," and in verse 17 he made explicit that his conversation partner was a Jewish person relying on the law. This hypothetical debate continues into chapter 3. This debate instructed the church in the gospel preached by Paul. As he sought to garner support for his mission to Spain, it was essential that the church understood Paul's teaching. If questions had been raised about whether Paul's teaching was orthodox, it was necessary to address these issues.

THE UNREPENTANT AND HYPOCRITICAL WILL BE CONDEMNED—Rom. 2:1-5

The hypothetical Jewish person was without excuse for judging. "Judge not" is perhaps the most popular bib-

lical quote today, without any attention to the original context (Matt. 7:1; cf. chaps. 5—7). Paul, however, defined what he meant in Romans 2:1. Paul referred to hypocritical judgment.

Paul's point was not that the opponent should not condemn evil. Evil should be condemned. The opponent was wrong because he committed the same acts. Hypocrisy incurs the judgment of God (vs. 3). While his opponent's judgments were correct, he indicted himself. Paul's hypothetical opponent was guilty of treating God's forbearance with contempt. Paul's opponent had wrongly interpreted God's silence as approval. Paul asserted in verse 4 that the kindness of God was intended to bring repentance.

THE IMPARTIAL GOD WILL JUSTLY JUDGE—Rom. 2:6-11

In verses 6-11, Paul also used a chiasm (i.e., a literary device that organizes ideas in a sequence and then repeats them in reverse order).

Chiasm was common in ancient Greek writing. In chiasm, the first point corresponds to the last point. The other points align in parallel.

Paul used the following chiastic

structure in these verses:

A1: God judging impartially (vs. 6)

B1: eternal life for those who do good (vs. 7)

C1: wrath for those who do evil (vs. 8)

C2: wrath for those who do evil (vs. 9)

B2: glory for those who do good (vs. 10)

A2: God judging impartially (vs. 11)

Paul emphasized the point found in the outermost ring, the impartiality of God. Paul said in verse 6 that God will judge each person according to his works. This is parallel with verse 11, which asserts that there is no partiality with God. Like verses 6 and 11, verses 7 and 10 are also parallel. Each asserts that glory, honor, and eternal life belong to those who persevere in doing good. Good works are evidence that God already has saved you. Looking at the middle of the chiasm, verses 8 and 9 overlap. Every soul who pursues evil without repentance and faith in Christ—whether Jew or Gentile—will face the wrath of God.

Paul's overall point is that God shows no partiality. All will be judged based on their works. Abrahamic DNA is no assurance of salvation.

THE GENTILES ARE GUILTY OF BREAKING THE LAW—Rom. 2:12-16

If God impartially judges all according to their deeds, then how does this apply to those who have never heard the Bible? How can the works Gentiles do be a fair standard if they never had the law? Paul explained that Gentiles have the law written on their hearts, and their response to that law is the standard by which God will judge them.

What does it mean that Gentiles have the law written on their hearts (vs. 15)? God has embedded within every conscience a standard that reflects the law. Even pagans know that murder, steal-

ing, adultery is wrong. Gentiles instinctively do the things of the law (vs. 14).

Crucially, all people violate their consciences sometimes, and thus all people will be condemned apart from the grace of God. The condemnation of the Gentiles comes from violating their consciences. Sometimes people do not violate their consciences and receive a commendation. Hypothetically, individuals could justify themselves if they were to live perfectly. God would not punish hypothetically sinless people for sins they did not commit. Paul emphasizes, however, that no one does this, and all will be guilty before God (cf. 3:9).

While Jews know the law written in the Mosaic text, Gentiles know the law as it is written on their hearts. Each will be judged accordingly. Apart from God's grace, all people would be judged and condemned, regardless of their background. God's future judgment should stir us to proclaim the gospel to lost people.

—Jerod Gilcher

QUESTIONS

1. Who did Paul address in Romans 2?
2. What was one key reason Paul wrote to the church in Rome?
3. What type of judging did Paul refer to here?
4. Why did Paul condemn judging in this passage?
5. What is Paul's point in verse 4?
6. What is a chiasm?
7. What is the point of Paul's chiasm?
8. What difficult problem did Paul address in verses 12-16?
9. Why are those without the law condemned?
10. How are Jews and Gentiles similar?

—Tom Greene

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. If we are judgmental toward others, we condemn ourselves (Rom. 2:1).
2. We can be confident that God's judgment will be just (vss. 2-3).
3. If we despise God's patience and do not repent, we store up wrath for ourselves (vss. 4-5).
4. God will judge all people according to what they have done (vss. 6-11).
5. All people will be judged and will perish apart from Christ (vs. 12).
6. All people are accountable for violating their consciences (vss. 13-15).
7. We should not delude ourselves into thinking we can keep something hidden from God (vs. 16).

—Tom Greene

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. How can we be discerning without being judgmental?
2. How can we fight the urge to be judgmental?
3. What are some areas where it is especially easy to be hypocritical?
4. Are there any areas in your life where you knowingly tolerate sin?
5. How do Paul's comments on those without the law make you feel (Rom. 2:11-16)?
6. Does God hold different people to different standards (cf. Luke 12:47-48)?
7. Different people's consciences sometimes disagree. Does this mean something could be right for one person and wrong for another?

—Tom Greene

Golden Text Illuminated

“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?” (Romans 2:3).

Our golden text challenges us to examine our hearts and recognize that no one is exempt from the judgment of God. Paul addressed those who pass judgment on others while overlooking their own sins. Such individuals store up wrath for themselves. Whether Jew or Gentile, all will stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10-12). God will judge not merely external conformity but the inner motives of the heart. God's judgment penetrates beyond appearances and actions.

God's patience should not be mistaken for indifference to sin. God is holy and will judge sin. God's judgment is not arbitrary but is rooted in His unchanging character. At the same time, God's judgment is a source of hope for those who have placed their faith in Christ. God's grace and mercy are available to all who call on Him in sincerity, regardless of their past failures. God's coming judgment, while sobering, is not meant to drive us to despair but to point us to the source of salvation: Jesus Christ, who bore the judgment we deserved on the cross.

As we reflect on the golden text, let us examine our hearts and repent of any hypocrisy or self-righteousness. May we humbly acknowledge our need for God's mercy and extend that same grace to others. Let us strive to walk in integrity, knowing our hope lies in Christ's finished work on the cross.

—Gene Kissinger