

**Romans 2:1—16 Condemnation of the self-righteous**

This section is a continuation of the previous section detailing the condition of the heart of man. However, our focus is now on the self-righteous person. The first section addresses those who are ungodly and unrighteous. This section deals with those who think they are righteous but in reality are not any better than someone who is ungodly.

**Verses 1—3**

Paul turns to those who judge others of those things listed at the end of chapter 1. They look to and compare themselves to others and think that they are superior. The self-righteous do not see themselves as others see them. Instead of comparing themselves with other people, they need to compare themselves with the ultimate standard—Jesus Christ.

It is obvious that these self-righteous people look down on those around them but later we will see they feel God's judgment needs to be rained down upon them and don't understand why it isn't happening. To their own condemnation, Paul says not only are those referred to in chapter 1 deserving of judgment but the self-righteous are just as bad doing the same things done by the ungodly and deserving of the same judgment they wish upon those whom they condemn.

This judgment of God is a righteous judgment and will be meted out in all fairness and justice. The ungodly and unrighteous deserve this judgment as much as the self-righteous do. When the self-righteous do the works of the unrighteous they are condemning themselves, making them worthy of the same condemnation God will visit upon the unrighteous. The problem is that the self-righteous do not see themselves how God sees them.

**Verses 4—6**

Those complaining that God is slack in condemning the ungodly and unrighteous are ignorant of why God has delayed His judgment. Even though we all deserve God's wrath and judgment, He has withheld our condemnation because of His kindness, tolerance and patience.

**God's kindness:** God giving to man what is useful and beneficial. Thinking lightly of the kindness of God is an insult to Him. It is by realizing the greatness of God's kindness that we should come to repentance. We should instead wonder deeply at why God would even concern Himself with us. What God said concerning Israel also applies to us. The Jews who accepted Jesus as Messiah felt the kindness of God. He was their salvation. To those rejecting Jesus as Messiah would fall under the severity of God.

**Romans 11:22** Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.

**God's tolerance:** God is not only directing His kindness toward us but is tolerant in His dealings with us. Literally in spite of how we treat Him, He continues to hold us up and sustain mankind, even those who despise God. This same tolerance is found in Romans 3:25 where He overlooked man's accumulating sins and continued to hold man up (tolerate).

**Romans 3:25** whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;

**God's patience:** This word could also be translated longsuffering. God is not only tolerant but has allowed his mercy and kindness to be displayed for an extended time. God's patience has been demonstrated many times. We see it in how He dealt with Paul and we can see it working in the days of Noah.

**1 Timothy 1:16** Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.

**1 Peter 3:20** who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.

The reason for this display of kindness is to get mankind's attention and cause them to realize that God cares for them and thus attract the ungodly and unrighteous to come to Him. This age of Grace clearly shows God's mercy and kindness in place of His wrath. Even though God has been tolerant and patient of mankind, there will be a judgment and an accounting of all humans. No one will escape God's wrath who is not in Jesus Christ.

There are many today who place their hope in the world getting better and better. They put aside any thought of judgment and hope that by preparing the world for Jesus Christ that He will then appear and rule this earth. They are working to create a utopian society. Many who think this way also embrace the idea of universalism—that all mankind will be saved because God is a loving God. To help bring in this utopian society, a social gospel is preached and many look to the government to help make all social injustice disappear. Many of these liberal ideas are embraced by religious leaders because of their misunderstanding (or twisting) of Scripture. These people ignore verses that convey any form of God's wrath and judgment upon mankind. Verse 5 makes it abundantly clear that God will Judge and condemn those who go their own way and there are many other verses to back this up.

### **Verses 6—10**

Each person will be given according to what they have done. It is their works by which they will be judged. If they are patient in doing good works and seeking glory and honor from God, they would inherit eternal life.

Taking literally what Paul says in this verse, in the light of the entire context, if those Paul is speaking about here had perfected the good work of patience and endurance, and if they had sought and obtained glory, honor, and incorruption fully pleasing to God, they would have been rewarded with eternal life.

Ernest R. Campbell *A Commentary of Romans*

On the other hand, those who are self-serving, working only for themselves and put away all Godly truth and follow unrighteousness, they will be rewarded with God's anger and wrath.

Paul reiterates these ideas in verses 9 and 10. God will be judging man according to his works. Those doing good will be honored, those doing bad, tribulation.

Of course, this brings up a big question: Can a person be saved through good works? A cursory reading of this passage would suggest it is possible. However, it is a dangerous thing to obtain your doctrine from a single verse or section of the Bible. Many errors are made by doing so. The good news is a person can be saved by good works. The bad news is that no one is ever qualified. The good works cannot be man-defined. God defines what is a good work. If man can reach God through good works then God isn't needed in the process of salvation. We know God is the Author of our salvation. It was necessary for God to do this because there was no man qualified to save mankind since all men have sinned. All of our efforts to please God fall short. We are dead spiritually and in our natural state it is impossible to please God in any way.

**Ephesians 2:1** And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

**Romans 3:10—12** <sup>10</sup>as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;<sup>11</sup>THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;<sup>12</sup>ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

**Romans 8:6—8** <sup>6</sup>For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,<sup>7</sup>because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,<sup>8</sup>and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

**Ephesians 2:3** Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

By looking at other passages of Scripture it is abundantly clear that we were in no condition to do anything that could even remotely please God. We were completely incapable to do anything that would even come close to being a good work. So we theoretically could earn our salvation by doing good works but unfortunately we are not able to even do a work that would be considered good by God. The only good works we can do are works empowered by God after he has changed our heart.

### Verses 11—13

God does not see any distinction between Jew or Gentile when it comes to salvation. Those who sin will die. The Gentile is referred to the one not under the Law. Even though they were not under the Mosaic Law, they were under a law of conscience. God has built into man a sense of what is right and wrong. Even in the most remote part of the world man has come up with laws that mimic the 10 commandments. Why is it that throughout the world it is considered wrong to murder or steal? God has built in to our being an innate knowledge of what is wrong. The person who violates their own conscience, violates God's built-in law and therefore will come under condemnation.

The Jew, on the other hand, has received God's written Law to follow. This is a specific, formalized and external version of the built-in law given to all people. According to verse 13 it is the doers of the Law who will be justified. This statement refers to the Jew not the Gentile because it was the Jew who was under the Mosaic Law. This agrees with what James wrote:

**James 1:22** But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

This idea is also found in the Gospels:

**Matthew 19:17** And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments."

**John 13:17**"If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

Although this sounds like salvation by works, the catch is that there are absolutely no perfect doers of the Law and if there are no doers, there are none who will be justified because of their works. The Law was weak. Its only power was to point out our own condition but didn't do anything to get us out of the place we were at—at enmity with God and condemned to eternal death. This is why Jesus Christ was given; to die, be buried and resurrect so that we who believe will have that same hope of being raised unto eternal life.

**Romans 8:3** For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

**Galatians 3:21—24** <sup>21</sup>Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.<sup>22</sup>But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.<sup>23</sup>But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. <sup>24</sup>Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.<sup>25</sup>But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

### Verses 14—15

Back to the Gentiles. By instinct, Gentiles do the things contained in the Law and thus their conscience becomes their law and condemns them just as much as the Mosaic Law condemns the Jew. Note that the

Law is not written on their hearts, as it will upon the Jews after the Second Coming (Jeremiah 31:31), but the WORKS of the Law. As the Law denounces murder, the Gentile knows in his heart it is wrong to murder. As the Law says not to steal, the Gentile knows in his heart not to steal. The Gentile is not under the Mosaic Law and never has been. The only Gentile under Law are the proselytes who have made themselves to become an Israelite and therefore put themselves under the yoke of the Law.

Even now there are many who say we are under the Mosaic Law even though Scripture clearly puts Israel under the Law but never the Gentile. If you incorrectly claim the believer today is privy to all of Israel's blessings then you would also tend to plunge deeper into error by claiming we are also under the Law. They have no understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives Who has taken the place of the Law and given us the power to live godly lives.

**Romans 8:2** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

**Galatians 5:18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

**Galatians 6:2** Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

## Verse 16

Weather you are ungodly, unrighteous, self-righteous, Jew or Gentile one sure thing is the coming judgment and subsequent condemnation of unbelievers. This judgment is coming on a future date unknown to anyone and it will be done through Jesus Christ.

**2 Timothy 4:1** I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:

**John 5:22** "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son,

**Acts 17:31** because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

In this case the judgment concerns only unbelievers for in this age believers are secure in their eternal destiny because of Jesus Christ and will be judged only for their works (1 Corinthians 3:10—15). The unbeliever will also be judged according to their works but will be found lacking and condemned. In this verse the secrets of men will be judged. These are those things that men do in secret that they don't want anyone to know about. The judgment is a tearing away of the veil of secrecy exposing their very nature. To refresh your memory as to what man's inner being is like reread Romans 1:28—32.

We know man will be judged and he will be judged by Jesus Christ, now we need to know what God's criteria are. This verse clearly shows that God will judge according to Paul's gospel. Paul refers to the Gospel he preaches as "my gospel" three times (Romans 2:16; 16:25; 2 Timothy 2:8); "our gospel" three times (2 Corinthians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 2 Thessalonians 2:14); "the gospel preached by me" three times (1 Corinthians 15:1; Galatians 1:11; 2:2). He is careful to make a distinction between the gospel he was preaching and the Gospel of the Kingdom that was cycling down as Israel was being cast aside. God will not judge men according to the Gospel of the Kingdom in this age. It is Paul's gospel that declares we are saved by faith alone apart from any works. In reality, all generations are saved by faith and this is how all will be judged. So when mankind will be judged according to Paul's gospel, it is condemning those who try to come to him in works alone.

Originally taught at Bethesda Sunday School October 18, 2009

For previous notes and additional mid-Acts materials please visit [www.MidActsTruths.com](http://www.MidActsTruths.com)