

4. ROMANS SERIES: The Jews Also Guilty Before God

Romans 2:1-29

Paul has introduced us to the gospel in Romans 1:16 and 17 and is now explaining the need of the gospel to us. In our previous study we saw very clearly and powerfully just what is the dreadful plight of man (especially of the Gentiles), for he is justly under the wrath of God (1:18-32), having corrupted the true knowledge of God in order to silence conscience and pursue a life of *'ungodliness and unrighteousness (1:18).'*

One can almost hear the hearty approval of the Jews at this stage, but now having shown the Gentile position Paul addresses that of the Jews also (2:1-3:8), showing that they too are justly under the wrath of God. That Paul has the Jews in mind can be seen from Romans 2:9,10,17,28,29; 3:1,9. However the passage certainly applies to all who are nominally Christian also, who are in fact standing outside of Christ.

Please Read Romans 2:1-29

Verse 1: Paul can almost hear the hearty approval of the Jews in the condemnation of the Gentiles, so he quickly moves to address the Jewish position. The *'therefore'* connects the Jews with the position of the Gentiles. Since the Gentiles (1:18-32) are condemned for their *'ungodliness and unrighteousness (1:18)'*, *'therefore'* you too, whoever you are, are without excuse, who do the very same things that you condemn in others (Mt 5:21,22,27,28; 7:1-4; Lk 6:41,42). You also are in the same dreadful position.

QUESTION: By what standard do you judge yourself, that of qualitatively comparing yourself to others or by God's standards revealed in His written law? Why is it wrong to judge by the former method?

Verse 2: Since Paul is now addressing Jews he addresses them as those who know the truth (3:19; 7:14; 8:22,28; 2 Cor 5:1; 1 Tim 1:8). They know that God is just and will judge according to truth and justice and will not allow the sins of the Gentiles to go by unpunished.

Verse 3: Regardless of man's judgments, God's standard of judgment is right and according to truth for all (2 Cor 5:10). No one can escape this true and right judgment of God. Even the Jew or any other self-righteous person who condemns the wickedness of others will be judged according to truth. No amount of self-delusion will prevent the right judgment of God from being carried out.

Verses 4,5: Because God's judgment for their sins did not immediately come on them the Jews thought that this was an indication that God had overlooked their sins and would never punish them. A false sense of security had arisen within them.

God who is patient and long-suffering is holding off his punishment and wrath to give sinners ample time and opportunity to repent and to turn from their sin unto Him. But their stubbornness to repent meant that they were in fact only strengthening God's case against them, accumulating wrath and only prolonging the inevitable judgment of God upon them. This punishment would come at the final judgment (2:16; Mt 16:27; 1 Cor 3:13; 4:3-5; 1 Thess 5:4; 2 Thess 1:7-10; 2 Tim 4:8), when God would deliver a right judgment concerning them. No self-righteous man will escape the righteous judgment of God for it will come upon them in God's time (Acts 17:31).

QUESTION: Does this same despising of God's goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering still happen today? Explain your answer.

Verse 6: God will judge all sinners, whether Jew or Gentile, according to what they have done (Job 34:11; Ps 62:12; Prov 24:12; Jer 17:10; 32:19; Mt 16:27; 1 Cor 3:8; 2 Cor 5:10; Rev 2:23; 20:12; 22:12) and what they really are. This will be according to God's holy standards and therefore man's deeds will prove to be totally insufficient for acceptance with God (Is 64:4; Rev 20:11-15).

Verses 7-10: If anyone obeys all of God's laws perfectly by doing everything that He says in heart and action, then their reward will be eternal life, but to disobey means His wrath. To be acceptable to God means obeying the law perfectly (Acts 10:34ff). There is no salvation by works here for all fall short of that possibility.

To persevere in doing right in God's eyes, aiming for glory, honour and immortality means life everlasting, with glory, honour and peace to both Jew and Gentile; but God's wrath for those who sin, to both Jew and Gentile.

Verse 11: God will show no partiality in His judgment, all will be judged according to truth. It will matter not if one is a Jew by physical birth or a pastor of a church - all will be judged according to truth.

Verses 12,13: There is no partiality with God because all who sin will suffer the just wrath of God. What counts is not whether people have the written law, but whether they have lived in accordance to God's laws, whether that be the written law that they possess

as in the case of the Jew or by the law etched upon the conscience which is known by the Gentile.

Verses 14,15: God has written the law on the heart, so that Gentiles who obey God's law show themselves to know God's right and wrong by nature (1 Cor 5:1; Acts 24:25). The conscience acts as a divinely implanted judge upon all the deeds and thoughts of the sinner, assessing them in the light of the law of God that is etched upon the heart as a result of God's creation. The conscience will either approve of what is done in the light of this law or disapprove of what is done in the light of this law, leaving the sinner with a clear assessment of what has been done in the light of God's law. Conscience leaves man in no doubt as to where he stands before God on all issues.

Verse 16: On judgment day men's thoughts, works, actions and motivations, and God's evaluations will become clear (Heb 4:13). It is then, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ that God will judge the open and secret deeds of men (Ecc 12:14; Mt 16:27; Lk 12:3; Acts 17:31; 1 Cor 4:5).

This is all according to Paul's gospel. His because he had been saved by it, and it meant everything to him, and so he proclaimed it as the Lord's called apostle (1 Cor 9:16).

Verse 17: The Jewish presumption took many forms, including that of their very name, Jew. Because of their birth (Ex 19:6; Deut 10:15; Is 43:20,21), they considered themselves better than everyone else.

They also had possession of the law and were instructed in it. They even made some effort to obey and earn their salvation, believing they had merited their acceptance with God.

Verse 18: The Jews knew God's will as revealed in Scripture and had an intellectual grasp of it, so much so that they were able to rank essentials above non-essentials.

Verses 19,20: The Jews also believed themselves to be guides for the spiritually blind (Is 42:19; 56:10; Jn 9:1,7,39-41; Rom 11:7,8; 2 Cor 4:4), those not so privileged as themselves who did not have a knowledge of the truth. They had so much knowledge and wisdom that they could teach even the foolish stupid ones and those who were recent converts.

Of course they could do this they believed, after all they possessed the embodiment of knowledge and truth in the law.

Verses 21-23: The Jews thought themselves acceptable to God, as those who allegedly relied on God and His law, as those alone capable of teaching others about Him and His law. But if they are so qualified, then why don't they do the law (Mt 23; Mk 7:9-13; Lk 11:37-52)? It is not the possession or teaching of the Laws of God that make someone acceptable before God, but the doing of it that counts.

There was a real contrast between what they said and what they did, between doctrine and life. How could they claim acceptance with God?

NOTE: INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY QUESTION HERE: In what way does Romans 2:24 also reflect upon Christianity? What does this verse actually mean in our generation?

Verse 24: This is a quote of Isaiah 52:5 (LXX version), where God is ridiculed for not being able to deliver Judah (Ezek 36:20). Here the text explains God as being ridiculed because 'his people' act wickedly, therefore God must be wicked and of no account. They scorn God because of the Jew's behaviour, for He must be like those who say they follow Him.

Verse 25: The Jew's false security was also based upon their circumcision. The mere practice of the physical sign of circumcision, which testified to them belonging to national Israel was worthless if it did not correspond to one who was spiritually circumcised, which was the inner spiritual reality. Circumcision without obedience to the law was a pointless ritual (Gal 5:3; Jer 9:25ff). It was of value as a sign of a right relationship with God, but without the inward reality of a right relationship with God it had no meaning.

Verse 26: A person who has not the external sign of circumcision but does obey the law has what really counts before God and therefore will be considered as circumcised, or in a right standing before God.

Verse 27: This uncircumcised law keeper will in fact judge those who only have the ritual and written law, but not the heart of the matter. External religion without the inner reality is pointless.

Verses 28,29: A true Jew is one marked by the inner reality and not merely the externals. A true Jew (Jew - praise, Gen 49:8) has praise from God based on the inner reality of a right relationship and standing with Him (Ps 139:1-6; Rom 2:16; Heb 4:13).

True circumcision in the eyes of God is not mere physical circumcision in a strict keeping of written law (Gen 17:10-13; Lev 12:3), but that of the heart, of heart renewal (Lev 26:41; Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; 9:26; Ezek 44:7; Rom 7:6; 2 Cor 3:6,18; Gal 5:16-23), of which the external rite is only a sign.

INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY

What advantages did the Jews have over the Gentiles as regards the Gospel and acceptance with God? How were these advantages (See Romans 3:1)?

© All Bible Studies by the author may be freely copied, printed and distributed. We ask only that they remain unedited (unless approved by Kevin Matthews) and contain the Aussie Outpost name and website URL: <http://particularbaptist.com>. This Bible Study is by Kevin Matthews. It is asked that this notice be included as is. Thankyou.