

The Christian Manual: Study 3, Romans 2

Romans Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA



Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible ask the questions and let the students answer. Where they cannot, you supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

Introduction: Is there any way, apart from Christ, to escape the judgment of God? Can we get to heaven any other way?

Chapter 2 Everyone's Guilty

Section 1: Romans 2:1-11 How Can Everyone Be Guilty?

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. ²Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. ³So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? ⁴Or do

you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

⁵But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶God "will repay each person according to what they have done." ⁷To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. ⁸But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. ⁹There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; ¹⁰but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹¹For God does not show favoritism.

What if you were the judge of the universe and you were in charge of judging all humanity? You would need a law to judge them by. Fortunately, you know what's right and wrong. Whenever people have wronged you, you have said to yourself, "Hey! You can't do that!" You have said this when people have stolen from you, when

they have disrespected you, when they have bullied you, when they have talked behind your back, when they have lied to you, etc.

But when the judgment comes, the first person to appear before you is you. As judge, you have to judge yourself by your own rules. Have you ever disrespected anyone? Have you ever gossiped? Have you ever mistreated anyone in any way? Have you ever done anything imperfect? Of course you have! By your law, you would have to declare yourself guilty; to send yourself guilty to hell.

If we could not stand up to our own laws, how can we imagine that we could possibly stand up to God's rules, His laws—laws based on His holiness? We just couldn't.

So if we stand guilty, why does God allow us to live? How is it that we are not now in hell? How is it that we are here, in this beautiful world, able to experience goodness every day? It is because God is patient. He gives each of us room to willingly come to Him.

So why don't people repent and run to God for forgiveness? Because they're stubborn. They convince themselves that they are okay just as they are. They lie to themselves. By keeping their heart evil and unrepentant, they store up God's wrath for themselves against the day when He will judge all men.

God's judgment will be simple: To those who are good and holy, heaven's doors will be open. To all who have sinned and broken God's law, there is only one verdict—guilty. They will be sent to hell.

At this point, you might be saying, "Wait a second! You just said that no one even lives up to their own standards, much less to God's. No one is good. When God's judgment comes, no one will be able to stand on their own goodness. All are going to hell." If you are thinking this, you are following Paul's arguments exactly.

Section 2: Romans 2:12-16 Gentiles are Guilty

¹²All 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. ¹³For 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. ¹⁵They 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.) ¹⁶This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

In Paul's day, there were two groups—the Jews, God's people who had received His revelation, and everyone else. This last group was called "gentiles."

The gentiles will not be condemned by God's law found in the Old Testament. They did not have this law. They will be condemned by

their own law, their own sense of right and wrong. They will stand before the law written on their hearts.

This is one of the key elements to understanding humanity. Men and women cannot get away from this law of God written on their hearts. People who declare that there is no such thing of right and wrong, live their lives as if there is. They get just as mad at people who wrong them.

A college professor once told his class that there was no such thing as right and wrong. He declared that all such rules were arbitrary and relative. Some of his students took him seriously. They began vandalizing the teacher's offices, destroying their property—including the office of this teacher. When the teacher saw his property broken, told the kids to stop vandalizing, that it was wrong.

The view that right and wrong does not exist is unlivable.



A pastor once visited a Salvador Dali exhibit. The lithographs and paintings displayed a view of the universe without reality or structure. They declared that all was relative and that truth existed only in the mind of the individual.

A worker at the gallery approached the pastor and said, "Ah, Dali, he was so ahead of his time." To which the pastor replied, "I hope the world never catches up." She was baffled by this and asked the pastor what he meant. He said, "Dali is declaring that there are no categories, that all is subjective." The girl agreed and asked what we wrong with this.

The pastor explained, "So you are saying is that all things are equally good. This means that we can stand here and have a friendly conversation or I could attack you and beat you senseless and that both would be equally proper and right."

The girl thought for a second and realized that she had no answer. She knew that one was better than the other and that her views were empty. She quietly walked away.

Even non-Christians who do not believe in right and wrong live as if it really did exist.

Paul explains that it is not people who talk about goodness who will go to heaven. Talk is cheap. Only those who do goodness perfectly will go to heaven.

So what happens when non-Christians sin against their own law, the law written in their hearts? They bounce between feeling guilty and making excuses for themselves. Both responses are symptoms of the fact that people have sinned against their own rules.

This is a real problem today. We live in a culture that has no cure for guilt. There is a billion dollar drug industry geared to relieving people of guilt. Much of psychiatry is dedicated to helping people not feel guilty. Guilt is debilitating. It crushes our souls like a ten-ton weight. Why do people feel guilty? Because they are! Everyone has violated their own rules. Everyone knows they have fallen short. Everyone knows they have blown it.

Section 3: Romans 2:17-29 Jews are Guilty Too

¹⁷Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God; ¹⁸if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law;¹⁹if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, ²⁰an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—
²¹you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? ²²You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³You who

boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? ²⁴As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

²⁵Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. ²⁶So then, if those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? ²⁷The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.

²⁸A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. ²⁹No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God.

What was true of the Jews?

They relied on the Law

They boasted in God

They knew God's Will.

They approved what was superior because they knew the Law.

They were guides to the blind.

They were a light to those in darkness.

They were instructors to the foolish.

They were teachers of children because they had knowledge and the truth in the Law.

Obviously, having the Law of God, the Old Testament put the Jews far above others who had no revelation at all. The Law was their pride. They were God's favored people.

Paul now drives the point home. You who have the Law and know that stealing is wrong, do you steal? The same is true with adultery and robbing temples. Those who boast in the Law, break it.

Israel's sin is so pronounced that, even as Isaiah had said in his day (Isaiah 52:5), God is spoken against by the Gentiles because of how bad the Jews were.

How could this happen? The Jews were devoted to external religion. They knew the rituals and the words to say. They went through the motions, but did not have changed hearts. We see Jews like this

during Jesus' day. They were the whitewashed sepulchers (Matthew 23:27), they are those who claimed to be children of Abraham (Matthew 3:9), and those concerned with how His disciples harvested grain on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-8). These Jews were content with the trappings of religion, but had not given their hearts to God.

Circumcision is a great metaphor for what happens in Christ. Whereas the rite was given to Abraham as a sign of the covenant between God and His people, signifying that through their seed would come the Messiah, there was another meaning. The cutting away of the flesh was to represent what had to happen to the heart if one was going to be pleasing to God.

Deuteronomy 30:6 says, "Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live."

Jeremiah 4:4 encourages the Jews to . . .

"Circumcise yourselves to the LORD
And remove the foreskins of your heart,
Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,
Or else My wrath will go forth like fire
And burn with none to quench it,
Because of the evil of your deeds."

The majority of the Jews were prideful in their religion and didn't allow God to circumcise their hearts with the Holy Spirit. Their religion was external only and not of the heart.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

J. D. Salinger wrote a short story called, “Teddy.” In the story a small genius child explains his view of life. He declares that he has arrived at the view that all is god, all is one. He believes words “right” and “wrong” are just words. True enlightenment, in his opinion, is moving past such immature trifles. At the end of the story, Teddy attempts to kill his little sister—without emotion, without guilt. He has shown that he is truly enlightened.

The book illustrates how ugly it is to live out the view that there is no right or wrong, without conscience or emotion. Although this is the goal of some religions (e.g. Buddhism), few people really live this way. Those that do must spend years hardening their hearts.

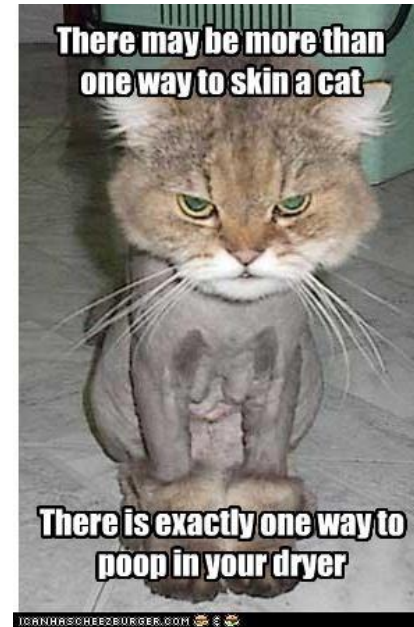
Most people listen to the inner voice that tells them that some things are right or wrong. For all humanity, this is the voice that will condemn them before God. Francis Schaeffer once said the judgment for these people will be like God turning on a tape recorder and playing back all the ethical statements we have made (stealing is wrong, don’t backstab me, etc.) and then we will be judged according to this standard. Even when judged according to our own standards, we will fail.

The Jews have it much worse. They have God’s Law, a much higher standard. And before it, they all fail.

These are not just words. This is the reality that all mankind lives under. Every person we know stands under the wrath of God, condemned for all eternity to be separated from God, never to realize the purpose of their existence.

CONNECT: Icebreaker

“There is more than one way to skin a cat.”



Tonight you will have a contest. You will break up the students into four teams. Each team will be given four minutes to brainstorm as many certain things as they can. These are things that can only be done one way. An example would be, there is only one way to spell my name.

When they are finished, review and discuss their answers. You will see that there are some things that can be done many ways and others that only have one way.



WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Section 1 Romans 2:1-11

Paul establishes the general principle: We must be consistent. If we have a set of standards that we hold people to, we must perfectly live according to these standards ourselves. Any infraction, any lapse, would mean that we are guilty and under God's wrath. Those who perform perfectly are God's and can count on His blessing (glory, honor, and peace), but those who have broken their own moral standards will be eternal condemnation. This goes for everyone, Jew and non-Jew.

Section 2 Romans 2:12-16

Paul addresses the non-Jew. Even they demonstrate that they have a moral code, a view of right and wrong. They declare this often, saying that people **SHOULD** do this or that. Each time they do this, they demonstrate that the Law is written on their hearts. It is put in the heart of every human being by God. Even atheists and agnostics have these moral values. Even those who declare that others should not impose their views on society are advocating a moral value. Paul says that those who do not have God's written Law will still be judged—by their own law. They will be found wanting.

Section 3 Romans 2:17-29

Next Paul turns to the Jew. It is worse for them. Although they have boasted in having the Law of God, they have not lived it. Their religion was an outward show of rituals and words and not the change of heart that God wanted through His Holy Spirit. Thus the Jews will be judged according to the Law of God. They won't stand.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Section 1 Read Romans 2:1-11

1. What is something people do that drives you crazy? Have you ever done this same thing, or something like it? We have all done things we didn't want others to do to us. What does that say about us?
2. Since we're all guilty, why aren't we all just sent to hell right now?
3. Where does repentance happen? Why don't people run to God for forgiveness? What are they holding on to? What do we have to give up before we can become Christians?

Section 2 Read Romans 2:12-16

1. If a person does not have the Bible, and does not know God's Laws, aren't they innocent? If not, what will they be judged by?
2. Guilt is a huge problem in our world. Why do you think this is? What do people do to try to deal with this guilt that they feel?

Section 3 Read Romans 2:17-29

1. What was true of the Jews? Were the Jews a favored people? Explain.
2. The Jews had the Law, but did they live it? What was keeping them from living the Law of God?

Why is circumcision important to the Jews? What is true circumcision? How does this work for Christians?



HOW DOES IT APPLY?

“If we see life as created by a rational God, we are likely to look for and find purpose in it. We assume that the world has been created with plan and purpose in it. We assume that the world has been created with plan and purpose for its rational inhabitants and tend to think of our life as a calling to conformity with the Creator’s design. We also tend to believe that the divine commandments will match the divine design. On that basis, to believe in creation is to believe that the call to be moral is nothing more than the call to be human.¹”

The argument is simple. God made everything according to his nature. Good and evil are real. Man is made to live according to God’s Law. The moral law has been written on his heart, and he can never get away from it. God calls us to be human as He created us to be. Understand this—God is not calling us to be anything else but what we are.

The problem is that we can’t. We can’t even live up to our own standards, much less God’s. Because of this, we all live under a real sense of failure and the pangs of a guilty conscience. We do all sorts of things to escape it. We dive deeply into our schoolwork, or our friendships. We engage in distractions (TV, video games, etc.). Some even escape through addictions—alcohol, drugs, gambling, spending money, etc. We do this all to get away from that voice inside that declares us guilty. We make excuses. But in the quiet moments, when we can hear this inner voice, it tells us that we deserve buy one thing—eternal condemnation.

¹ *Mere Morality*, by Lewis B. Smedes, pg. 245

