

Romans 2:1-16

Rom 2:1-16 Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practise the same things. (2) But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practise such things. (3) And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practising such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? (4) Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? (5) But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, (6) who “will render to each one according to his deeds”: (7) eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honour, and immortality; (8) but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, (9) tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; (10) but glory, honour, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (11) For there is no partiality with God. (12) For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (13) (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; (14) for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, (15) who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) (16) in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

Questions On The Text

How does Paul describe those who judge?

Verse 1: He says that they are inexcusable (or indefensible). In judging others, they actually condemn themselves because they also do the same things which are described in Rom 1:28-31.

What is the judgment of God against?

Verse 2-3: God’s judgment is against those who practise the things which are described in Rom 1:28-31. Self-appointed judges may make themselves feel superior by judging others, but they will be unable to escape the judgment of God.

What is it that leads to repentance?

Verse 4: The goodness of God leads a person to repentance. This is part of what theologians call prevenient grace. This is the grace of God which is at work in a person’s life prior to their receiving salvation through Christ.

To judge others is to place your confidence in your own righteousness, and to do that is the same as rejecting God’s grace, and thus despising God’s goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering.

What is it that brings about the wrath of God?

Verse 5: Paul goes right to the root of the problem and says that people treasure (literally, store) up God’s wrath for the future because of their hardness of heart and impenitence. The word “hardness” means stubbornness.

This makes it clear that it isn’t just about outward sins, and also that the inner condition of the heart is a deliberate choice people make.

How will judgment be pronounced?

Verses 6-11: People will be judged according to their works. The word “render” means to pay off or recompense.

There are two kinds of rewards. The first is eternal life which is awarded to those who seek for glory, honour, peace, and immortality. They seek for this through patiently continuing (referring to steadfast perseverance) to do good. As Paul will make clear later in his epistle, this is not a salvation by works kind of deal. Instead, this is the kind of life that characterises the person who has put their faith in Christ.

In contrast, indignation, wrath, tribulation and anguish, await those who do not obey the truth but rather do evil.

This judgment is completely impartial. God shows no favouritism, and the same judgment will be meted out to a person regardless of whether they are a Jew or a Gentile.

Is there a different judgment for those who know God’s law?

Verses 12-16: Paul has already outlined in chapter 1 that sin is a path consciously chosen by all humanity. Therefore, their guilt before God has already been established, and those who don’t know the law will perish without it. The guilt of those who don’t know the law is based on their conscience. God has put a conscience in each human which allows them to instinctively know God’s law and the difference between right and wrong. Each time the voice of conscience is rejected, they are rejecting God’s law which is written on their hearts. Their own thoughts will accuse them or excuse them.

However, for the Jew, who had the written law of God, he will be judged, not according to his knowledge of that law, but his obedience to it. Only those who have kept it perfectly will be justified by the Lord.

All secrets will be judged on the Day of Judgment.

Further Questions For Discussion:

Can you give examples of where people judge and criticise others, but have blind-spots relating to their own faults?

Why do you think people criticise others even when they themselves are doing evil? Do you think it’s to make themselves feel better about their own behaviour?

Compare what Paul said about judging others in this passage with what Jesus said in Matthew 7:1-5.

In what way did God’s goodness lead you to repentance?

How important is obeying the truth, and why?

How does your conscience become the voice of God in your life?

How do you expect to be treated on the Day of Judgment, and why?