

ROMANS

From Wretchedness to Righteousness

Study 3

The Moralists and Religious need the gospel (Romans 2:1-16)

God's Impartial Judgement (Romans 2:1)

Verse 1

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.

1) a) Objective question, choose the most appropriate answer. Who does 'you' and in the passage refer to?

A. Christians in Rome

B. Moral/Religious people

C. Immoral people

Background information

In chapter 1, Paul shows how the pagan Gentile world has rejected God and plunged into immorality. Paul's critique of the pagan world and lifestyle would have been roundly supported by any Jewish person listening to him. But they would have thought Paul's condemnation of them was true simply because they were Gentiles. (And consequently, that they were exempt from his condemnation simply because they were Jews.) Now this is exactly how any religious person would listen to Romans 1 today. They would say, "Yes, of course God's wrath lies on the immoral, the pagan, the one who lives a life of debauchery. But we have the Word of God and live by that. We are not condemned." But it is because of the subtlety of sin and of idolatry that religious people can seem to be agreeing with Paul about Romans 1:18-32 and yet be completely deluded!

Thus in chapter 2, Paul shows the Jews (and thus religious people) that they were missing the whole point of the gospel! The heart of the gospel is that "the righteousness of God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last" (1:17). Paul shows us that everyone runs from it and tries to avoid it. We run from it whenever we rely on anything or anyone else but Jesus and his perfect, finished work. The pagans rely on their appetites, which become chains around their neck (1:18-32), but the religious people rely on religion and moral observance, which stores up God's wrath just as much (2:5). The pagans worship self through appetite, but the religious worship self through morality and religion. There are many ways to rely on (i.e. worship and serve — 1:25) the creature rather than the Creator.

b) Objective question, choose the answer(s), can be more than one. They are “condemning yourself” when they pass judgement on someone else, because:

A. no one lives up to his or her own standards

B. standards we use on others will be the standards by which we are judged

C. no one including professional judges and lawyers should pass any sort of judgement on others whatsoever

D. they had double standards, it was okay for them to sin but not others

Background information

Since Paul himself often criticizes certain behavior and attitudes as sinful, what do you think “passing judgment” or “condemning” really means?

In 1 Cor 2:15 we are told, “The spiritual man judges all things, but himself is judged of no one.” Here the word means to evaluate and understand. We are told that we should evaluate people and behavior and that we should correct people (Gal.6:1-2). Therefore, Paul means something more drastic. It probably means evaluation/criticism with:

#1. A particular attitude toward others. It is a “writing off,” a happy pronouncement of doom — “you are lost and I’m glad.”

#2. A particular attitude toward yourself. It is a belief that you are superior, you are worthier. In short, to “pass judgment” is to believe that others are worthy of judgment but you are not.

Verse 2-5

Rom 2:2-5

Now we know that God’s judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So 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? Or 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?

But 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.

2) a) Objective question, choose the most appropriate answer. According to verse 4, God’s kindness, patience and silence towards your sins is because:

A. Your sins are not counted anymore.

B. It means you didn’t do anything wrong.

C. You can have time to repent.

b) Reflection question. Fill in your reflection in the box below on God's kindness.

	What does God's patience and kindness look like?	How does it lead us to repentance	Reflection
#1	it probably means that simply the fact that <u>judgment is delayed</u> (and the world goes on) is a mercy	It is kind of him to simply give us more time.	More time alive means more time to repent.
#2	it may mean that sometimes the <u>irritations and disappointments and even tragedies</u> of our lives may be actual kindnesses,	because they lead us to see the truth about our need and condition and lead us to repentance.	Bad things that happen remind you to repent.
#3	it means that the <u>great and good things we receive in life</u> ought to lead us to repentance	If when we get a raise, etc. we see it as what we deserve, then it will harden us, but if we see it as kindness, an undeserved mercy, then it will soften us and move us toward God and a grateful spirit.	Good things that happen remind you to repent.

c) Objective question, choose the most appropriate answer. According to verse 5, wrath is being stored up for the day of judgement when the individual:

A. Is stubborn and unrepentant.

B. Recognizes sins of other people

Verse 6-12

Rom 2:6-12

God "will repay each person according to what they have done." To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism.

3) a) Fill in the blanks. Based on verses 7-8, there is a contrast of 2 types of people, fill in the blanks to compare the 2 types of people.

V. 7-8	Positive (+)	Negative (-)
Type of People	those persistent in doing good	Those who reject the truth and follow evil
Type of Seeking	seek glory, honor and immortality	self-seeking
Type of Result	eternal life	wrath and anger

b) Fill in the blanks. Reflect on the 2 types of persons mentioned in verses 7-8 and fill in the box below of what it means in your own words.

	Types of action	Description or explanation of what it means
do+	“Persistence in doing good”	“Persistence in doing good” means that doing good and living good has become a persistent pattern.
seek+	“Seek glory, honor, and immortality”	“Seek glory, honor, and immortality” means that these are qualities that come from life with God. The person who is right with God does not do good deeds for their own sake. He or she wants to become a particular kind of person — one like God.
do-	“Reject the truth and follow evil”	“Reject the truth and follow evil” means that there is an unwillingness to be instructed and to learn from God’s truth. A lack of teachability, a refusal to submit to truth outside of one’s own convictions and heart.
seek-	“Self-seeking”	“Self-seeking” is the tell-tale sign. It means to have a spirit of self-will, or self- glorification. This is something that can be pursued either through being irreligious and licentious, or through being moral and religious and upright.

Quick Verse Reference

God “will repay each person according to what they have done.” is quoted from the Old Testament: Psalm 62:12, Proverbs 24:12.

c) Fill in the blanks. Based on verses 9-10, there is a contrast of 2 types of people, fill in the blanks to compare the 2 types of people.

V. 9-10	Positive (+)	Negative (-)
Type of People	everyone who does good	human being who does evil
Type of Result	glory, honor and peace	There will be trouble and distress

d) Discussion question. “First for the Jew, then for the Gentile” is mentioned in 2:9,10 as well as back in Romans 1:16. How do you think this shows fairness?

It is fair because both judgement and salvation is available to both, everyone will get their turn. As for sequence, the precedence of Jews, a recurring theme in the letter (e.g., v. 10; 1:16), involves their privilege in receiving the “words of God” (3:2)-whether the outcome is judgment or salvation. There are definite dangers in having this priority. “From everyone who has been given much, much will be required” (Luke 12:48). Can read an article on this [here](#).

Judgement and the Law (Romans 2:5-16)

Verse 12-16

Rom 2:12-16
 All 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. For 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. (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. They 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.) This will take place on the day when God judges people’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

4) a) Discussion question. The meaning of verse 12 is explained by apostle Paul in verse 13-16. in your own words, paraphrase what it means:

Verse	NIV	Rephrase

13	For 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.	Obedience is key, not access or just the knowledge of the "law" of how you should behave
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.	Gentiles didn't know the Jewish laws, but they have certain laws or standards that they by design have, which they follow, and these principles became their "law".
15	They 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.)	These principles are already in their heart, they even criticize or defend themselves when they don't follow these principles in their hearts.
16	This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.	The judgment will happen during the judgement day

b) Reflection question. Based on your answers from the previous question, explain what verse 12 means.

Verse	NIV	Meaning
12	All 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.	Jews are judged under the standard of the Jewish laws God gave them, Gentiles will not be judged by the Jewish laws, but the standard written in their heart. (They will all fail anyway)

c) Reflection question. Do you think anyone can pass the "law" or standard whether Jewish or Gentiles (i.e those with standards written in their heart)?

No, both will fail because everyone will fail even their own standards.

Jews Fail to keep the Law (Romans 2:17-29)

Verse 17-24

Rom 2:17-24

Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God; if you know his

will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

4) a) Objective question, choose the most appropriate answer. Who does ‘you’ in the passage refer to?

- A. Christians in Rome
- B. Moral Gentiles/Pagans
- C. Immoral Gentiles/Pagans
- D. Religious Jews**
- E. Jewish Christians

b) Reflection question, in your own words, give example or rephrase or translate it into Malaysian way of saying it:

Verse	NIV	Rephrase or Translation
21	you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself?	Pandai ajar others, why you didn't ajar yourself. Didn't practice what you preach.
21	You who preach against stealing, do you steal?	This includes stealing big or small things, eg. piracy
22	You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?	Committing adultery includes looking at others lustfully.
22	You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?	Do you deny God his due of tithes and offerings?
23	You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law?	You show off the moral values that God gave, but you don't follow all also, and by doing that you have ,disonored God.

c) Reflection question. Why do people have double standards?

- **Cognitive dissonance**

- Easier to see other people's fault and blame others
- No self-reflection, think you are always the victim or always right
- Pointing out fault of others make you feel better about yourself

Verse 25-29

Rom 2:25-29

Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. So then, if those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? The 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.

A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, 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.

5) a) Objective question, choose the answer(s), can be more than one. According to verse 25-29, which of the following statements are true?

- A. Outward physical acts of worship have value even if you don't obey other laws.
- B. The obedience of God's value and laws internally is more important than any single act of outward demonstration.
- C. Circumcision of the heart by the Spirit is more important than physical circumcision under the knife.
- D. Outward obedience needs to be accompanied by inward obedience for it to have any value.
- E. You shouldn't get physical circumcision.

b) Objective question, choose the answer(s), can be more than one. According to the video lecture, what are the common problems with "religion":

- A. Emphasizes secondary matters while ignoring matters of primary importance
- B. Emphasizes the physical over the spiritual
- C. Emphasizes the spiritual over the physical
- D. Promotes self-interest above all else

Case Studies

Case 1

Kirk Low belonged to the 3rd Baptist Church and was a deacon. His Missions director and some friends discussed increasing the number of migrant workers attending their church.

Kirk was quite dismissive of the idea because he said many of these migrant workers were quite uncivilized and would spit on the floor indiscriminately, talk loudly, even fight amongst themselves. There have been incidents when even handphones or shoes had gone missing in church ever since they had started coming to church. Many of them would not even eat the food the church provided and had to have their special diet catered for. He added that they were not at all interested in the gospel as they were all pagans and idol worshippers and were just coming for the food that was all. Why bother with them as they have no spiritual openness? We should just concentrate on building up the members who were already in the church.

6) a) Discussion question. Is Kirk's attitude similar to the types of people the apostle Paul is criticizing in Romans 2?

Yes. He is judging them in their behavior and this is similar to the religious people or Jews he is criticizing in Romans 2.

b) Discussion question. Why is Kirk having this attitude?

There are two features of his attitude which are:

#1. Particular attitude toward others. It is a "writing off," a happy pronouncement of doom — "you are lost and I'm glad." He showed no compassion for them and just determined their value based on their behavior.

#2. A particular attitude toward himself. It is a belief that he was superior, he was worthier. In short, to "pass judgment" is to believe that others are worthy of judgment but you are not.

His attitude determined his behavior hence he was not keen to continue outreach to the migrant group because they were judged as lost cases unworthy for their church's effort.

c) How does the story of the prodigal son give you insight into how Kirk thinks? (Luke 15:11–32)

In the story of the prodigal son the older brother has this attitude because he judged the external behaviour of his brother as sinful and judged him as hopelessly lost. He forgets that despite his impeccable behavior on the outside, internally he was just as lost. He has no love for

his father and behaves himself in order to merit the inheritance. He obeys the letter of the law but not the spirit of the law.

Jesus in sermon of mount points this out:

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire (Matthew 5:21-22 ESV).

What Jesus was saying was that the Pharisees who wanted to use the law as a means to salvation were merely obeying the letter of the law to make it easier for them to obey. They ignored the spirit of the law which digs deeper into the motives of the person. The older brother obeyed externally but internally had no love for the father.

The rich young ruler came to Jesus and asked how he was to gain eternal life and Jesus tested him by asking if he had obeyed the 10 commandments and he replied that he did or so he thought he did because when Jesus told him to sell all he had and follow Jesus, he failed to do so. This failure was merely Jesus' way of showing he had obeyed the letter of the law but not its spirit or intent as the first commandment is to love God with all your heart and mind, placing him way before any material wealth. Hence he could not even obey the first command let alone the rest of the 10.

d) Reflection question. Can you share some examples in your life when you used to have particular attitudes towards other people or races in your country?

e) Discussion question. Does that mean that Kirk is condemned to hell because of this?

Kirk will be judged with the same degree of intolerance and standards which he have set out for others.

However he will not be judged solely on his works. Works are evidence of our faith and for Kirk his judgmental attitude is worrying because it may be the fruit of his lack of true faith or he could have a genuine faith and yet in his area of his life, he struggles with his own sin and reliance on his own merits. As an isolated incident or facet of his life per se no, it may not necessarily mean he has no genuine faith and hence he will not lose his salvation over this but this passage in Romans 2 which is a warning passage to Christians who should not take their salvation for granted and that true faith is accompanied by a transformation.

f) Discussion question. How should the church react to:

i) Kirk's attitude and should it continue

The church committee should be more mature than to be swayed by Kirk's attitude and it

should continue to persevere in its ministry.

ii) the migrant outreach issue

The Lord displays patience in the way he deals with our sin and hence the church should display patience in its dealings with migrant workers who have had a whole pagan culture which is at odds with the Christian faith.

Case 2

Ophelia came from a difficult childhood where she was not loved and struggled with low self esteem as she could never seem to please her parents. She came to faith in the Country Harvest church which she really loved. The Pastor John Ramos taught them about the grace of how Jesus' death on the cross paid for all her sins past, present and future and she only needs to depend on God's grace. She is fully justified and made righteous by Christ.

He taught there is no need for confession of sin because we are fully made right by Jesus. There is no need to follow the 10 commandments because we are under grace and not the law any more

Ophelia was glad for the message and began to live her life confidently. She loved the Lord Jesus more because of the cross. The message gave her freedom from guilt. She laughed at her friends who went to BSF and the 3rd Baptist church who were always studying the bible, life groups or going to do ministry, praying or fasting. She told them being under grace means never having to work for salvation. Just live naturally. Ophelia continued to live with her boyfriend in a sexual relationship. She worked for the Genting Group and her job was to get more and more customers to gamble in Genting Highlands. Her friends at the 3rd Baptist church however pointed out that in Romans 2: 6-8 God judges by works and so Ophelia better be careful to do good works and look for another job. If not she will be judged.

7) a) Discussion question. Who is right, Ophelia or her friends at the 3rd Baptist Church? Refer to Romans 2: 6-8 to help you answer.

Simple answer: Neither Ophelia nor her friends are correct.

Advanced answer:

Ophelia is right that she is justified and made righteous by the blood of Jesus and she can have confident access to the Father through the Son. However she has forgotten that salvation is also a process of being made holy or sanctified. In that process, constant repentance is important.

She has made a grave mistake by believing that the Law or 10 commandments moral law is no longer important because it is fully fulfilled by Jesus. The law is the reflection of who God is and what He is like. It is so important that Jesus had to die on the cross to uphold the very Law which Ophelia now despises.

Romans describe the ones who have eternal life as those who do good works and seek for glory and immortality. They will be judged on these. Notice the verse says they “seek for “. They are transformed people who in their new natures seek to do good works, dream of living a life that brings true glory to God and is based on eternal values. These things are only found in the Law. Only people transformed by the love of Christ will have their hearts of stone turned into flesh and have the Spirit and will truly seek to do these things. They have a godly orientation in life and live for eternal values and things of the kingdom. The cross transforms them and sets them on a new course in life. Yes, they will sin and are not perfect but they will constantly confess and repent and rely again on Jesus as their advocate in heaven. Good works and seeking for glory are the evidence of their faith.

The friends in the 3rd Baptist church are also wrong; they seem to think that their good works will earn them a good position and avoid judgement.

Quick Verse Reference

Romans 2:6-8

God “will repay each person according to what they have done.” To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.

b) Discussion question. Compare and comment on their behaviours with the final judgement passages James 2:17-18 and Matt 25.

Both passages look at judgment from the point of view of the fruit of a life of faith in Jesus. You can approach salvation by saying you have faith in Jesus and his death on the cross or you can approach the question by saying you have good works as the result of that faith. You know an apple tree is alive because you see the apples or you can look at its roots and see how water and nutrients are being drawn up if you cut it open and see inside. God can look into our hearts and see real faith or see our good works which are proof of our faith.

Quick Verse Reference

James 2:17-18

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."

Matt 25 is on The Parable of the Ten Virgins.

c) Discussion question. Is it true that there is no need to confess sin anymore as we are all saved by grace? (Ref to 1 John 1:9; James 5:16 and 2 Corinthians 7:9-11)

Simple answer: No, it is not true that the Christian does not need to confess or repent any more. Sin happens to us every day despite our conversion to Christ. If we do not daily repent and confess or make any effort to conform to God's law we are then saying that we are okay with pursuing a course of life that is in direct opposition to who and what He is.

Advanced answer:

Sin still remains a daily occurrence notwithstanding what Jesus did for us at the cross. Sin at its heart is a rejection of God's beauty, holiness and majesty for tawdry desires of our own. When we confess, we constantly reorient ourselves towards God and say: "Hey Lord, I did a horrible thing and did not please you..please forgive me." We turn again away from sin and towards God each time when we repent and confess and God forgives again and again because the debt has already been paid on the cross. We don't repent of our sins in order to follow a road map to get to heaven. When we repent, we re-express our love for His glory and His majesty and reject our own ideas and plans. This pleases God and reflects our inner desire to seek for glory and immortality in Romans 2:6-8.

If we do not daily repent and confess or make any effort to conform to God's law, we are then saying that we are okay with pursuing a course of life that is in direct opposition to who and what He is. We are saying that thanks God for forgiveness as we are clear of the penalty of sin but we are also saying that we are not bothered that our current lifestyle is displeasing to God. Our current lifestyle pleases us and we continue to seek the course of life pleasing ourselves. How can that be evidence of true conversion? How can we say we really love God and seek glory and immortality when we continue in our sin and show that we love something that is in direct opposition to His nature?

A repentant lifestyle and confession with godly sorrow is the result of our transformed inner values. How can a true child of God be happy living in a sexually immoral relationship or

enticing people to lose their livelihoods? Confession and continual repentance is evidence of a robust relationship with God.

Quick Verse Reference

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

James 5:16

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

2 Corinthians 7:9-11

yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

d) Discussion question.

i) Which verse describes Ophelia better, Romans 2:7 or Romans 2:8?

Verse 8.

ii) Why?

She seeks for her own pleasure rather than following God's standards.

Quick Verse Reference

Romans 2:7

To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.

Romans 2:8

But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.

e) Discussion question. Ophelia's pastor John Ramos disagrees with you and states that "Jesus' death on the cross cleanses Ophelia from all her sins past, present and future. How can she then be condemned?" How do you respond?

Ophelia has made a confession of faith in Jesus and joined the church. The genuineness of her faith confession will need to be verified by her lifestyle and works and right now it would seem that she has no intention of obeying the truth (Law) and is still seeking her own good. Hence there is not much evidence that she had made a true conversion to Christ.

We need to be aware of our position in Christ. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus in order that we can continue walking in love with Him. Our relationship will be based on us being constantly in awe of Him, rejecting and repenting of the sin that still plagues our hearts. As we grow in Him, we learn to hate more and more of our sin as we discover more and more how evil we are and learn, therefore, to repent more and depend less and less on ourselves. As we grow more and more in Him, we discover more and more how majestic and loving He is and what great glory He has intended for us. We transfer all our self esteem and worth on to Him and look forward to being glorified with Him. We work hard each day to be more and more like Him because we are enamoured by His beauty, not compelled by fear of eternal damnation. Ophelia exhibits none of these.