

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. | |
| #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. | |
| #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. | |

b) 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 | | |
| Type of Seeking | | |
| Type of Result | | |

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” | |
| seek+ | “Seek glory, honor, and immortality” | |
| do- | “Reject the truth and follow evil” | |
| seek- | “Self-seeking” | |

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 | | |
| Type of Result | | |

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?

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. | |
| 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. | |
| 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.) | |
| 16 | This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares. | |

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. | |

c) Reflection question. Do you think anyone can pass the "law" or standard whether Jewish or the one written in their hearts?

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? | |
| 21 | You who preach against stealing, do you steal? | |
| 22 | You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? | |
| 22 | You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? | |
| 23 | You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? | |

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

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?

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

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

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?

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

i) Kirk's attitude and should it continue

ii) the the migrant outreach issue

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.

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.

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 any more as we are all saved by grace? (Ref to 1 John 1:9; James 5:16 and 2 Corinthians 7:9-11)

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?

ii) Why?

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?