

“Judge and Jury” (Romans 2:1–16)

On March 26, 2000 at 8:32 a.m., Seattle’s famed Kingdome—home of the Seahawks, the Mariners, and at times, the Sonics—was blown to kingdom come. Working for the Seattle office of Turner Construction Co., the Maryland based Controlled Demolition Incorporated (CDI) was hired to do the job of imploding the 125,000-ton structure that had marked Seattle’s skyline for almost twenty-five years. The remarkable thing about the event was the extreme measures taken to ensure no one was hurt. CDI had experience with over 7,000 demolitions and knew how to protect people. Engineers checked and rechecked the structure. The authorities evacuated several blocks around the Kingdome. Safety measures were in place to allow the countdown to stop at any time if there was concern about safety. All workers were individually accounted for by radio before the explosives were detonated. A large public address system was used to announce the final countdown. In short, CDI took every reasonable measure, and then some, to warn people of the impending danger.¹

The Bible teaches a final judgment and destruction for this sinful world. Like the engineers who blew up the Kingdome, our heavenly Father has spared no expense to make sure everyone can “get out” safely. He especially warns us of judgment in the first three chapters of Romans. In 1:18–32, Paul dealt with humankind’s unrighteousness in fifteen verses. In 2:1–3:8, he deals with our self-righteous in a whopping thirty-seven verses. Paul spills over twice as much ink on the self-righteousness because they are the most difficult people to persuade of their sin.² The apostle’s point is that *all* men need salvation either because of blatant disobedience or counterfeit obedience. In 2:1–16, he confronts those who think their works can justify them before God. He will make it clear that the self-righteous person is as guilty before God as the unrighteous person. He states: *Excuses for sin will not be excused*. In this text Paul answers the question: How does God judge people? He then provides three ways: God judges according to truth, works, and light.

1. God judges according to truth (2:1–5).³ Paul insists that the self-righteous person is guilty before God. Now if you’ve never judged anyone, you’re welcome to stop reading right now. But I suspect you’ve judged at least one person on one occasion, so keep reading.⁴ Paul begins in 2:1 with these penetrating words: **“Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you⁵ who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.”**⁶ After hearing about the blatant idolatry, immorality, and wickedness of the pagan unbeliever (1:18–32), some of Paul’s readers must have become smug with pride.⁷ However, he abruptly cuts them down to size. He uses the word “therefore” (*dio*)⁸ to connect the overt sinner of 1:21–32 with the covert sinner who judges another (2:1–5). Paul also clearly implies that God’s wrath in 1:18–20 will fall upon the moralist.⁹ The word “excuse” (*anapologetos*) is the same word used in 1:20 where Paul writes that the wicked are “without excuse” because of God’s witness in creation.¹⁰ Interestingly, Paul’s focus moves from “them/they” to “you/yourself” (six times in 2:1). He points the finger at the moralist and says, “*You* are guilty!” While the moralist may not indulge in gross manifestations of sin as some do, all people have impure thoughts, motives, and attitudes. So even “nice sinners” who pass judgment stand condemned.

Whenever Lori and I go out to dinner, after we finish eating, we have a cue to smile at one another. Lori usually goes first and then I follow. We do this to determine if we have any food in our teeth. This has saved us much embarrassment over many years of marriage. Less than two weeks ago Lori and I were eating in a Mexican restaurant in the Dallas airport. I noticed something in her teeth so I instinctually reached across the table with the plastic knife I was using and attempted to lovingly remove the food from her teeth. (I actually cut her gums in the process.) In my temporary insanity, I didn’t realize that the woman sitting next to us was paying attention. Jeannie Smith, a lovely Puerto Rican from the Bronx, interrupted my act of violence and offered a handful of tooth picks. Fortunately, she ended up being a believer and forgave me for this embarrassing act.

In my quest to deal with the food in Lori's mouth, I made quite a spectacle of myself. Much to my chagrin, when I walked into the men's restroom after this episode, I noticed what appeared to be half of my burrito decorating my teeth. What a great lesson. We are quick to notice the grain of pepper in someone else's teeth but slow to deal with the burrito in our own. Jesus' words are fitting: "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matt 7:3-5). We need to stop being oblivious to our own sin and deal with our junk before we approach another person. This may be as simple as changing pronouns. Like Paul in 2:1 we need to stop using "them/they" and "he/she." Instead, we must *first* address me, myself, and I.

Tragically, we can all be self-righteous to one degree or another. We judge both ourselves and others poorly. We defend ourselves and find it difficult to believe that God's judgment will touch us. Yet, we judge others severely and assume that they deserve God's judgment. Have you ever noticed how we like to "rename" our sins? We do that by ascribing the worst motives to others, while using other phrases to let ourselves off the hook. Ray Pritchard provides the following examples: If you do it, you're a liar; I merely "stretch the truth." If you do it, you're cheating; I am "bending the rules." You lose your temper; I have righteous anger. You're a jerk; I'm having a bad day. You have a critical spirit; I bluntly tell the truth. You gossip; I share prayer requests. You curse and swear; I let off steam. You're pushy; I'm intensely goal-oriented. You're greedy; I'm simply taking care of business. You're a hypochondriac; but I'm really sick. You stink; I merely have an "earthy aroma."¹¹ Are we a sad bunch or what? We need to be reminded that *excuses for sin will not be excused*.

Paul further convicts us in 2:2: "**And we know¹² that the judgment of God¹³ rightly falls upon those who practice such things.**" Paul is saying that deep down we know within the core of our being that judging others is sinful, and God will judge us for inappropriately judging others. Can I prove this? Yes, I can. What's the most often quoted Bible verse in the world? John 3:16? Nope. It's Matt 7:1a: "Do not judge so that you will not be judged." The reason that this verse is so frequently quoted by believers and unbelievers alike is twofold: (1) We don't want to be reminded of our sinfulness. (2) We are aware of God's judgment. Yet, this verse is taken out of context. This verse doesn't mean that we can't judge sin. On the contrary, we're commanded to judge sin. Jesus teaches us in this verse that we need to deal with our own sin *before* we point out a brother or sister's sin. When it comes right down to it, the only positive thing that we really accomplish by our self-righteous *illegitimate* judgment of others is to demonstrate our awareness of God's holy and righteous standards. If we will leave judgment in God's capable hands we express our faith. He is the sovereign judge who judges "rightly." Let's give God His job back and ask Him to help us be perfectly content to allow Him to judge people instead of trying to do His job for Him.

In 2:3-4, Paul asks a rhetorical question that expects a resounding "NO!" "**But do you suppose¹⁴ this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you think lightly of the riches¹⁵ of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?**"¹⁶ When Paul really wants to get down to business he uses the phrase "O man!" (He uses this same phrase in the Greek text of 2:1.) It is his way of getting into his reader's grill and going eye-to-eye, nose-to-nose. He has to be in our face because there's a perverse tendency in the human heart to imagine that somehow divine punishment will pass us by. We're so permeated with a sense of being "special" that we find it easy to rationalize that judgment can't happen to us. Yet, God's kindness, tolerance, and patience is not an opportunity to sin; it's a call to repent!¹⁷ Repentance is simply a change of mind or attitude that should lead to a change of feet.¹⁸ It means we examine our own mind and heart first before we judge anyone else. Paul concludes 2:4 by emphasizing kindness for the second time. As important as God's wrath is Paul sees God's kindness as the primary impetus to bring about repentance.

In my parenting, I am prone to be a disciplinarian when necessary. I have felt that every offense needs to be punished. This may have worked well with my children up to age ten or so, but now I have a thirteen year old who is almost as big as me! The authoritarian approach is not always as effective anymore. Instead, I have discovered that kindness cultivates obedience. When I heap love and grace upon my children they seem to be more responsive to my discipline. I became persuaded of this reality from my experience as a Dad. More importantly, when I reflected on how God treats me, I realized He overwhelms me with His kindness, tolerance, and patience. If He treated me as I deserve I would be a bloodied corpse. Instead, He pours out grace day after day. Am I suggesting we chuck discipline? Not on your life! But I am saying we need to have a better understanding of how God treats us. Honestly, I am astounded at times by how rebellious and sinful I can be. My prayer has been: “Lord, remind me of how utterly wicked I can be so that I have a great appreciation for you and a deeper empathy for my children and others.” There are times when only God’s kindness (and our kindness) can break through a hard heart. Hence, when I talk to unbelievers, I talk about sin, righteousness, and judgment, but I also woo them with God’s kindness. To always speak of hellfire and judgment is not a balanced treatment of God. It is both kindness and wrath.

Paul concludes this section with a disturbing verse: **“But because of your stubbornness¹⁹ and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God”** (2:5).²⁰ Paul really goes after the moralist in this verse. He indicates that a stubborn and unrepentant heart leads to “storing up” (lit. “treasuring”²¹) wrath. Whether this wrath is God’s present wrath, His Tribulation wrath, or His future wrath is debated. However, it seems evident that there’s a shift from God’s present wrath in chapter 1 to His future wrath in chapter 2 (see esp. 2:16). In either case, the moralist is being challenged to repent ASAP . . . before it’s too late!

You may have noticed in 2:2–5 there is a repeated emphasis upon God’s judgment. Yet many people in our culture balk at the notion of God’s judgment. Such individuals just want to focus on God’s love, mercy, compassion, and grace. While these attributes are certainly important, we must not neglect God’s holiness, wrath, righteousness, and justice. Upon closer examination, it is easy to see why that makes no sense at all. How loving is a God who ignores wrong-doing? How loving would God be if He looked at the Holocaust and said, “Oh, we’ll just ignore what happened there?” How righteous and good would God be if He saw the outright rebellion of men and did nothing? How could we call God just if He never addressed wrong? Do we consider parents who refuse to discipline their children loving? Or do we see them as weak and neglecting their responsibility? Do we see employers who overlook the disrespectful and lazy work of some workers as loving? Or do we feel they are being unfair to the rest of the workers? If our government responded to terrorist activity by saying, “Oh well; these things happen!” would we say our government was showing love or weakness? The answer to these scenarios is obvious. We respect individuals who execute grace and truth (see Jesus in John 1:14).

There are times when God’s love and kindness must be tough. This principle applies to us as well. We all want justice for the world, but we each carry within us a standard of righteousness based on our own perceived goodness. Furthermore, we will tolerate only as much evil in the world as we can accept within ourselves. When we feel resentment towards God for not eradicating evil in the world, we forget that eliminating all evil would mean the end of us too.²² Yet, if we genuinely care to eradicate evil from the world, we must look at our own sin. We must recognize that God doesn’t grade on a one to ten scale as we do.²³ In light of His awesome holiness, it doesn’t matter whether our sin is in the form of an act, a word, or a thought; it’s still exceedingly sinful.²⁴ As believers we must repent of our sin and then challenge moralist unbelievers to recognize their sin and turn to the Savior who has paid for their sin. *Excuses for sin will not be excused.*

[The first way that God judges is according to truth. Now we will see that . . .]

2. God judges according to works (2:6–11).²⁵ Paul argues that God will judge impartially according to a perfect standard. To put it simply: God only accepts perfect tens. Paul writes, “[He] **who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.**²⁶ **There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality²⁷ with God.**” Paul is not talking about salvation in this section.²⁸ He is not showing us how we are saved, because we are not saved by works. He is showing us *why* we are lost. This section is about God giving humankind what we deserve. But with all the emphasis in the Bible on faith, why is humankind judged according to works? Although we can be saved on the basis of faith, if we reject God’s offer, we are condemned on the basis of works (cf. Rev 20:11–15). This is a crucial distinction. When a person rejects the righteousness which God has provided as a free gift in Jesus Christ, in effect, he chooses to establish his own righteousness, and this can only be judged on a performance basis.

Remember that 2:1–16 is a paragraph which must be interpreted in its immediate context as well as its thought unit (1:18–3:20). Paul has been arguing that the moralist is under God’s condemnation because, though he condemns other sinners, he practices the same (types of) sin in his own life (2:1–5). Thus, he argues in 2:6 (quoting Ps 62 and Prov 24:12) that God pays such unbelievers back according to their works. According to 2:7, those who by perseverance continue in doing good and those who seek for glory and honor and immortality will receive eternal life. Paul means exactly what he says: Any person who shows up at the judgment matching the description of 2:7 will receive eternal life. But if someone did, it wouldn’t be salvation. A person who could do that wouldn’t need to be saved; he would just be getting what he deserved. He would be rewarded according to his works. And Paul is careful to say, “To those who by perseverance continue” to do such things . . . day after day after day. If you take a day off, you miss it. And the best of us take a day off. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory God” (3:23). Since the moralist’s deeds are evil he earns wrath and indignation just like the hedonist (1:18–32). The theological point of the whole is that God is no respecter of persons (2:11) and that all have sinned (2:12). If people lived up to the light they had (natural revelation for the Gentiles, special revelation for the Jews, cf. 10:5) then they would be right with God. However, the summary of 3:9–18, 23 shows that none ever have, nor can they! Hence, we are condemned sinners in need of a Savior. This section serves as an indictment. Humanity is being hauled before God’s bar of justice, and the standards of judgment are the issue.²⁹ No one gets eternal life on the basis of their works because no one perfectly obeys. Therefore, the only method of justification is by faith alone (see 3:21–26). In other words, no one fits 2:7. Ultimately, there are only two religions in the world—do good (400 varieties in the world) or have good done to you (Christianity). Today, will you believe in Christ’s perfect person and work? Assurance can only be found in Him.

In 2:8–10, Paul uses the term “Greek” to refer to Gentiles. He then makes it clear that the Jews (the religious) will experience “tribulation and distress” first and foremost. The reason is obvious. Jews are more accountable than Greeks because they knew more and had the privilege of knowing God’s will before anyone else.³⁰ To whom much is given much is required (Luke 12:48). Verse 11 gives the reason, “For there is no partiality with God.” The word “partiality” (*prosopolempsia*) literally means “to receive (a person’s) face.” God does not deal with a person on the basis of his “face” (surface considerations such as nationality, race, color of skin, wealth, etc.). God looks deeper than the surface.³¹ This verse is the point of the whole argument: Since God isn’t partial, His children should be careful not to exercise partiality. Instead, we are called to call sin “SIN” and look to the perfect One who offers salvation.

[Make no mistake, God will judge according to truth and works. Finally. . .]

3. God judges according to light (2:12–16). Paul explains that no one will be judged for the light they did not receive; everyone will be judged for light they did receive.³² However, more knowledge brings more responsibility and greater accountability. In these five verses, the word “law” is used eleven times. Clearly, that is what is on Paul’s mind: the law of God and how God holds humanity accountable to it. He explains: **“For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience³³ bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus” (2:12–16).**³⁴ These five verses are all one long, complex sentence. If you will notice, 2:13 begins with a parenthesis, and the parenthetical section doesn’t end until the end of 2:15.³⁵ (To see this, read 2:12 and then go directly to 2:16). Verse 12 is clear that humankind is guilty before God whether they have the Law or not. All men are judged and condemned. Paul’s point, simply stated is this: Ignorance of the Law will not save the Gentile; possession of the Law will not save the Jew. Both are condemned before God the righteous Judge.³⁶ In 2:13, he states that if one is seeking to justify himself by the Law he must be a doer of the Law.³⁷ In 2:14–15, we learn that Gentiles will be judged according to the moral law.³⁸ Paul says that when Gentiles instinctively follow God’s Law, they’re revealing that they know that Law.³⁹ This explains why, in almost every culture, it’s considered wrong to steal and murder. This also explains why a man with no knowledge of the Bible will know it’s wrong to commit adultery. Let me say something very important. Every human being lives according to a law, a standard of performance. For some, this is a vague standard. These people say, “I have lived a good life. I’ve never killed anyone!” Others will point to the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, or the Golden Rule. Each of these represents very good precepts for life. However, what most people don’t know is that God will hold them to their standard but will require 100% conformity to that law. In fact, God requires nothing short of absolute perfection. For those who have trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior, the free gift of Christ’s perfection is placed in their accounts. However, those who don’t receive Jesus as Savior face eternal condemnation for their sins.

Last month while I was in England, I used Skype for the first time. It was wonderful! With one click of my mouse I was able to contact my family in Olympia and not only talk with them but see them as well! Prior to entering into the technological age, I used long distance phone cards. One particular card required me to dial thirty–three numbers to make a call. Of course, amidst my number punching, if I accidentally punched a wrong number, my call wouldn’t be connected. This was so frustrating! Whenever this happened I would have to start all over again. In similar fashion, this is how God judges us under the Law. If we punch one wrong number, we won’t be able to connect with Christ. Unfortunately, we can’t just start over. If we’ve sinned even one time in word, thought, or deed, we’re eternally disconnected from God. In other words, we must do it all according to the Law, and we can make no mistakes to be justified. We must be perfect to please God.⁴⁰

Paul concludes our passage in 2:16 by stating that God will not only judge people’s actions, but their secrets as well. Are you ready to give an account of your secrets? I know I’m not! It’s scary enough to think about giving an account of my works or lack thereof. But my secrets? OH MY! In that day of accounting, the most “excused” sin will come into the light. *Excuses for sin will not be excused.* If you’re a believer, confess your sin to God right now. If you’re an unbeliever, repent of your self-righteous attitude and believe in Jesus as your Savior. This section begins in 2:1 with man in the seat of judgment and end in 2:16 with God on the throne of judgment. In 2:1 man is condemned by his own judgment; in 2:2–16 he is condemned by God’s judgment. The riveting point is: We ought to let God be God. Jesus is the just Judge who is also the perfect Savior. Let us cling to His cross and evade the present and future judgment that God will bring upon the self-righteous.

I grew up in Bremerton, WA. My parents still live in the house they built almost thirty–five years ago when I was five years old. We’ve always had an absolutely gorgeous view. Every morning I’d look out across Puget Sound and see Mount Rainer, the Space Needle, and the Kingdome. Although I’ve always enjoyed the view, over the years it became familiar. Well, in July 2000 our family traveled to Bremerton to see my parents for the first time in about three years. After having traveled for nearly five hours, I was anticipating the majestic view of Seattle. As we approached my parents’ home and descended down East 30th, I anxiously looked across the water to see Mount Rainer, the Space Needle, and the Kingdome. Yet, as I looked, I realized that something was missing. What was missing? The Kingdome, of course! Its day of judgment had come and leveled it! For the past ten years every time I visit my parents when I drive down East 30th I don’t see the Kingdome anymore. When I drive down our driveway, I don’t see the Kingdome anymore. When I pull open the living room curtains, I don’t see the Kingdome anymore. Judgment day has come!

Did you know that judgment day is not far away? Romans 2 teaches that God’s future judgment will be according to truth, works, and light. Are you ready to face that judgment? Are you ready to stand before a holy and righteous God? God has leveled the Gentile and Jew and condemned every person who has ever lived or will ever live under sin. He has demolished us into dust and sprinkled us at the foot of the cross. It’s there that we must acknowledge our sin and trust in Jesus Christ alone.

Copyright © 2010 Keith R. Krell. All rights reserved. All Scripture quotations, unless indicated, are taken from the New American Standard Bible, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1977, and 1995 by The Lockman Foundation, and are used by permission.

Permissions: Feel free to reproduce and distribute any materials written by Keith Krell, in part or in whole, in any format, provided that you do not alter the wording in any way or charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. It is our desire to spread this information, not protect or restrict it. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: by Keith Krell, Timeless Word Ministries, 2508 State Ave NE Olympia, WA 98506, 360–352–9044.

Scripture References

Romans 2:1–16

Matthew 7:1–5

Psalm 62:12; Proverbs 24:12

Luke 12:47–48

Jeremiah 18:6–11; 2 Peter 3:9

Revelation 20:11–15

Romans 14:10–12; 2 Corinthians 5:10

Study Questions

1. How have I passed judgment on others (Romans 2:1)? What types of things caused me to be most judgmental? How can I judge actions, but not motives? How can I be more accepting of people? What attitude should I have when God refrains from judging someone else's sin?
2. In what way have I "practiced the same things" as those whom I judge (Romans 2:1–2)? How can I strive to hold fellow believers accountable, yet deal with my own personal sin so that I'm not a hypocrite? Why is judging others sometimes both necessary and right? When is it wrong? How can we know the difference? Read Matthew 7:1–5; Luke 17:3–4; and Galatians 6:1. How do these texts answer these questions?
3. What does it mean to "think lightly" of God's riches (Romans 2:4)? How are unbelievers guilty of this? How am I guilty of this mindset? How have I experienced God's "kindness, tolerance and patience?" What do these attributes mean to me? How can I pass them on to others?
4. As a believer, do I understand the difference between salvation by grace and judgment according to works (Romans 2:6–11)? Why do good works have nothing to do with salvation? How can I avoid polluting the gospel by insisting upon good works? What can I do to emphasize the importance of works in the Christian life? Why is the judgment seat of Christ such an important doctrine?
5. When was the last time I intentionally violated the law (Romans 2:12–13)? When was the last time I went against my conscience (2:14–15)? How did I know it was my conscience or the Holy Spirit? How did I feel after violating my conscience? Could I answer the objection: "What about the heathen who have never heard about Jesus" from Romans 2:12–16? How does it make me feel to know that God will judge even my secrets?

Notes

¹ Joe Lucarelli, a former member of our church who also happened to be the Construction Manager for the Kingdome implosion project, further developed this illustration with me.

² Chuck Colson loves doing ministry in the prisons because he never has to convince anyone that he's a sinner—they're definitely aware of it. The well-worn cliché, "Every prisoner thinks he's innocent" isn't true. Each inmate has regrets and knows he's done wrong. Many will do anything to be right with God and man because these inmates recognize they're sinners. Sadly, it's typically the "nice" sinner or the person in the pew who is more difficult to convince. Why? It is because of the sin of self-righteousness.

³ The key word in Rom 2:1–16 is "judge/judgment" (see 2:1, 2, 3, 5, 12, 16).

⁴ In the book *UnChristian*, author David Kinnaman highlights a number of troubling statistics from an extensive study by the Barna Research Group of those born between 1965 and 2002. Included are two statistics that show how those outside the church view those within: Nearly nine out of ten young outsiders—87 percent—said that the term "judgmental" accurately describes present-day Christianity. Of the non-Christians surveyed, 84 percent said they personally know at least one committed Christian. Yet just 15 percent thought the lifestyles of those Christ-followers were significantly different from the norm. See David Kinnaman, *UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 48, 182.

⁵ The NET renders this phrase "whoever you are" allowing for the inclusion of both Jew and Gentile.

⁶ Eugene Peterson paraphrases Rom 2:1 in a memorable fashion: "Those people are on a dark spiral downward. But if you think that leaves you on the high ground where you can point your finger at others, think again. Every time you criticize someone, you condemn yourself. It takes one to know one" (The Message).

⁷ In Rom 1:32 the pagan unbeliever applauds sinful conduct, but in 2:1 the moral unbeliever judges sinful conduct.

⁸ See Rom 1:24; 4:22; 13:5; 15:7, 22.

⁹ René A. Lopez, *Romans Unlocked: Power to Deliver* (Springfield, MO: 21st Century Press, 2005), 51.

¹⁰ Rom 1:20 and 2:1 are the only NT usages.

¹¹ Ray Pritchard, "Mr. I.M. Okay Meets His Maker" (Rom 2:1–16): www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/1992-02-23-Mr-IM-Okay-Meets-His-Maker/. See also Charles R. Swindoll, *Coming to Terms with Sin: A Study of Romans 1–5* (Fullerton, CA: Insight for Living, 1985), 26.

¹² Paul does not use the word *ginosko* ("know"), which often refers to an experiential knowledge. Instead he uses the word *oidamen* ("know"), which is capable of suggesting an almost intuitive recognition of God's judgment. Paul is saying that we know within the core of our being that judging others is sinful and that God will judge us for inappropriately judging others. Morris writes: "Paul not infrequently appeals to his correspondents' knowledge (*we know*; cf. 3:19; 6:6; 7:14; 8:22, 28). He varies his approach by using the participle 'knowing' (5:3; 6:9; 13:11). Or he can say 'you know' (2:18) or ask the question 'Do you not know?' (6:3, 16; 7:1; 11:2; cf. Ro 2:4). All this is an invitation to sweet reasonableness. Where the occasion demands it, Paul can be dogmatic and issue authoritative instructions. But he likes to enlist the intelligent cooperation of his readers and have them see the point for themselves." Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 110.

¹³ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 110: "'The judgment of God' is an expression which occurs again in verse 3 and nowhere else in the New Testament (though cf. 1 Pet. 4:17; Rev. 18:20). But, though the expression is rare, it is everywhere assumed that the judgment is God's and that it is 'according to truth'; no sinner can face it with equanimity (evenness of mind under stress)...God's judgment is 'according to truth'; that is, it is just, and it is exercised toward all those who do the kind of thing Paul has been talking about. In judgment it is not nationality or privilege that matters, but deeds."

¹⁴ Paul uses the verb *logizomai* nineteen times in Romans alone (2:3, 26; 3:28; 4:3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 22, 23, 24; 6:11; 8:18, 36; 9:8; 14:14).

¹⁵ Paul often describes the attributes of God as "the riches of" (cf. Rom 9:23; 11:33; Col 1:27; Eph 1:7, 18; 2:4, 7; 3:8, 16; Phil 4:19).

¹⁶ Moo notes, "Repentance plays a surprisingly small part in Paul's teaching, considering its importance in contemporary [1st c.] Judaism." Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*. New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 133–34.

¹⁷ Boa and Kruidenier write: "While the Jews may have wondered why God was so tolerant with gentiles, the truth is that he is tolerant with them as well." Kenneth Boa and William Kruidenier, *Romans*. Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2000), 77.

¹⁸ Eaton writes, “The word [repentance] means ‘change your mind’. It is admitting that you are wrong. It is the first breath of faith.” Michael Eaton, *Romans*. Preaching Through the Bible (Kent, UK: Sovereign World Trust, 2010), 36.

¹⁹ Lit. “hardness” (*skleroteta*), whence the English word “sclerosis” (see Jer 4:4 and Ezek 3:7).

²⁰ Rom 2:5 should conclude with a period, not just a comma (see ESV, HCSB, NIV, NRSV). The relative pronoun *hos* (“He”) in 2:6 functions as a virtual personal pronoun introducing a new line of thought.

²¹ Gk. *thesaurizo* (a form of this word is used in Matt 6:19–20; Luke 12:21; 1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor 12:14; Jas 5:3; 2 Pet 3:7). We get our word thesaurus from this Greek word.

²² Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 53.

²³ See Andy Stanley, *Since Nobody’s Perfect . . . How Good is Good Enough?* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2003).

²⁴ Think about it. What’s the deadliest sin known to man? The answer is pride. It even led to Satan’s fall (see Isa 14 and Ezek 28). In fact, the sin that Jesus attacked more often, more directly, and more severely than any other wrong is a fruit of pride—the sin of self-righteousness. Yet this sin is usually the most justified and widely practiced sin in the world. In fact, if we were truly honest before God, this horrendous sin would be the one that we would confess most often.

²⁵ Rom 2:6–11 exhibits the following chiasmic structure. See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 135–36; Richard Bell, *No One Seeks for God* (WUNT 106; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1998), 141; Craig S. Keener, *Romans*. A New Covenant Commentary (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), 43.

A. God will judge all human beings as each deserves (2:6)

B. Those who do good receive eternal life (2:7)

C. Those who do evil will be objects of God’s wrath (2:8)

C' Suffering for all who do evil (2:9)

B' Glory, honor and peace for those who do good (2:10)

A' God is no respecter of persons (2:11)

²⁶ Lopez, *Romans Unlocked*, 56 analyzes the options for Rom 2:7–8: “This statement may be understood in various ways: (1) Deeds cannot justify or earn one eternal life before God (3:20; 4:2), but they may be viewed as evidence of a changed life, which is an element that many find to be pervasive in Romans (e.g., see Moo, Cranfield, Witmer, Murray, Harrison). (2) Since the subject of this verse is judgment, not justification, believers may be in view. That is, believers who continue in good works will receive rewards in the future since works are never the basis for receiving eternal life but for judging believers at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor 3:15; 2 Cor 5:10–11). Hence, when eternal life appears as a present possession and is based on faith (John 3:16; 6:47, et al.) it refers to a gift, but when it appears as future possession based on works (Gal 6:8; 1 Tim 6:17–19; Titus 1:2) it refers to rewards. (3) If anyone obeyed perfectly, by patiently persisting in doing good, then eternal life could be earned. Hence, eternal life is a future possession, because as long as the person lives he may not persevere perfectly. Unfortunately, Paul states later no one can accomplish such a feat: “There is none righteous, no, not one. . . none who seeks after God” (3:10–11). This view fits best because the immediate context (2:5–8) addresses the moralists who claim God’s favor on the basis of works, thus God lays the principle on approaching Him by works. One can see grammatically the connection from v 5 to v 8 as each verse modifies the previous. Finally, the overall context 1:18–3:20 refers to unbelievers, *not* to the evidence of a changed life or of rewards for believers.”

²⁷ Impartiality is one of God’s great attributes (see Deut 10:17; 2 Chron 19:7; Jo 34:19; Acts 10:34; Gal 2:6; 1 Pet 1:17).

²⁸ Boa and Kruidenier, *Romans*, 77.

²⁹ The hypothetical view is held by Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 143–44; Boa and Kruidenier, *Romans*, 78–79; Lopez, *Romans Unlocked*, 56; Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids; Zondervan, 2005), 352; Keener, *Romans*, 44. See also Bob Deffinbaugh, “The Coming Wrath of God: Self-Righteousness Is Unrighteousness” (Romans 2:1–29): www.bible.org/seriespage/coming-wrath-god-self-righteousness-unrighteousness-romans-21-29; NET Study notes.

³⁰ The Jew was first in opportunity because they had God’s revelation (cf. Rom 1:16; Matt 10:6; 15:24; John 4:22; Acts 3:26; 13:46), but also first in judgment (cf. Rom 9–11) because they had God’s Revelation (cf. 9:4–5).

³¹ The goddess of Justice in the Greek system had a bandage over her eyes so that she could not see the person who came before her for judgment.

³² Boa and Kruidenier, *Romans*, 79.

³³ Let your conscience be your guide. Conscience is primarily for the unbeliever because when a person becomes a believer he or she has God’s Word and the Holy Spirit. However, the conscience can play a role in gray areas where the Word and the Spirit are not explicit. Boa and Kruidenier, *Romans*, 93–94.

³⁴ Jesus will act as the Father's representative in judgment (cf. John 5:22, 27; Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Tim 4:1).

³⁵ The NIV sees the parenthesis as Rom 2:14–15 (i.e., they exclude 2:13).

³⁶ Middletown Bible Church Notes on Romans 2: www.middletownbiblechurch.org/romans/romans2.htm.

³⁷ Boa and Kruidenier, *Romans*, 79: "Jews tended to believe that judgment was on the basis of possession, or as God says that judgment is on the basis of practice—how faithful we are to what we possess."

³⁸ Boa and Kruidenier, *Romans*, 79.

³⁹ God never gave the law to the other nations (e.g., Egypt, Assyria). The law was given exclusively to the nation Israel (see Exod 19:3–5; 20:2; 34:27; cf. Deut 4:1–8 and Rom 9:4).

⁴⁰ But here is the problem: to try to be perfect, in doing the whole Law, is to fall away from God's grace. Paul says it plainly in Galatians, "You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen away from grace" (Gal 5:4).