

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study through the Epistle to the Romans – Part 7

I. Exposition of Chapter Two. (Continued)

A. Verse 11- God's principle of impartiality. "For there is no partiality with God." - This verse actually goes with the previous verses which speak of the judgment of God. God doesn't show partiality or favoritism when it comes to His judgment. This is in spite of what ancient rabbis often taught about Jews being favored.

"For God shows no partiality [*undue favor or unfairness; with Him one man is not different from another*]."
Romans 2:11 – Amplified Bible

B. Verses 12–16 – The Law of God – Internal and External.

1. Verse 12 - "For as many as have sinned without the law..." – This would be referring to the non-Jew (Gentiles) who are not under the law. When referring to the law in a general way, Scripture is usually referring to the moral law or the ten commandments. This states that those who sinned, which means; "to miss the mark" or "to swerve from the truth", will "...perish without law." The word "perish" means; "to put an end to", "ruin" and "destroy."¹ The way the word is used in the New Testament it never means "to cease to exist."

2. "...and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law." – This is obviously referring to the Jew who being under the law would be judged by the law.

(Note: Verses 13-15 are in parenthesis indicating that verse 16 follows the thought of verse 12)

3. Verse 16 – "In the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."

a. This again refers to the fact that all people will be judged according to their works (2:5-6; Revelation 20:11-15). It's important to note that God knows every man's secrets. Nothing is unseen by God. (cf. Hebrews 4:13).

b. Note also that judgment day was a part of Paul's Gospel!! This means that the mention of judgment is part of the message that we must preach if we're going to preach the Gospel!

4. Verse 13 – "For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified." - God's righteous judgment is not withheld because someone has *heard* the law; it is only held back if someone actually *does* the law. Keep in mind that Paul is addressing those who are self-righteous. The Jews were certainly in this category as a whole. He is attempting to show the religious, self-righteous Jew that just having the law is not enough, they would have to be keepers of the law to be justified in God's sight and later on in **chapter 3** he will make it clear that no one is justified by the law because every single person has sinned!!

5. Verses 14-15 – The Internal Law (Conscience).

a. Verse 14 – "...Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature, do the things in the law..." – This shows that there is a transcendent moral law that is within the heart of every person that enables them to know what is right and wrong.

b. Verse 15 – "...who show the work of the law written in their hearts..." - Notice they don't have the actual wording of the law in their hearts but they have the "works" of the law written in their hearts. In other words, there are certain actions that everyone innately knows are wrong.

1) "...their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them."

"There is an inner—moral voice. But only Scripture, enlightened by the Spirit, can be fully trusted. Fallenness has affected our conscience. However, creation (1:18–20) and this inner, moral law (2:14–15) are all the knowledge of God that some humans possess." – Dr. Bob Utley

2) The Moral Law is Undeniable. We know it by our Reactions. (E.g. I may claim that stealing isn't wrong but what do I do the minute someone steals from me?)

3) The conscience, however is not totally reliable.

¹Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House., 1977)

²Robert James Utley, *The Gospel according to Paul: Romans*, vol. Volume 5, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 1998), Ro 2:15.

“However, the law of conscience is not the final court of appeal in matters of right or wrong. The reason for this is that the conscience may become stifled, scared, and resistant and lose its effect on retraining man from evil. Note these Scriptures on conscience: I Timothy 1:5, 19; 3:9; 4:2; II Timothy 1:3; Titus 1:15; Hebrews 9:8-9.”³

C. 2:17 – 3:20 – Righteousness needed by the Jew.

1. Verses 17-24 – The Jews as Guilty as the Gentiles.

a. Verse 17 – “Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God.”

- 1) The Jew took great pride in what he was. The word “**Jew**” comes from “**Judah**” and means; “**praise.**” The tribe of Judah was the most privileged of the 12 tribes of Israel. It was through this tribe that Jesus, the world’s Redeemer came.
- 2) The Jew Rested In The Law. He read the Old Testament Scriptures and boasted in the observance of its ceremonies and rituals. But this very same law condemned them to death because they could not keep it! Only the Lord Jesus Christ has ever kept the whole law perfectly.

b. Verses 18-20 – Things the Jews thought of themselves and boasted in.

c. Verses 21-24 – Paul points out their hypocrisy.

2. Verses 25-29 – True Circumcision.

a. Next to the Mosaic Law, the Jews boasted almost equally in their circumcision. Most of the Jews in Paul's day believed that God would not permit any observant Jew to enter damnation.

b. In these verses, Paul declares that the true Jew and true circumcision are not of the flesh but is inward. Paul is not stating this by some new revelation because this is the way it was to be understood in the Old Testament as well. The Old Testament spoke of both literal and spiritual circumcision. The problem is that the Jews got caught up in the external form of the ritual and missed what it pointed to – the heart. Note the following – **Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4; Philippians 3:3; Colossians 2:11.**

“There is only one covenant and one people (cf. Rom. 9:6; Gal. 3:7–9, 29; 6:16; 1 Pet. 3:6). The new covenant is a development and fulfillment of the old. The people of God have always been so by faith, not lineage. They are a “heart people” not ritual or racial people. Faith, not the parent, is the key. Covenant mind, not covenant sign, is the mark.”⁴

“The covenant sign of circumcision (cf. Gen. 17:14) was a metaphor in the OT for one’s openness to God. It developed metaphorically in several ways (1) heart circumcision (cf. Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4); (2) ear circumcision (cf. Jer. 6:10); and (3) lip circumcision (cf. Exod. 6:12, 30). The Law was never meant to be an external code, but a life transforming principle...

Paul has been discussing the fact that some Gentiles might act pleasing to God apart from the Law. If this is true then the children of God included more than those who had been only physically circumcised (cf. Galatians). God’s family is wider than racial Jews (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5); Job, Melchizedek, Jethro, Caleb, Rahab, and Ruth were not racially Jewish. Even the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were half Egyptian (cf. Gen. 41:50–52).”⁵

³Kevin J. Conner, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Portland, OR: City Bible Publishing, 1999), 66.

⁴Robert James Utley, *The Gospel according to Paul: Romans*, vol. Volume 5, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 1998), Ro 2:28–29.

⁵Ibid., Ro 2:29.