

Book of Romans



Chapter 2

Theme: God will judge self-righteous and religious people

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Romans Chapter 2

The Righteousness of God Revealed

What is the greatest thought that ever entered the mind of Man?

Daniel Webster responded, “My responsibility to my Maker!”

God created man “in His own image.” Since we are persons, so is God. Since we have personal feelings, so has God. If God be God, He must be the judge of all. You must meet God, and that as He is, not as you might wish Him to be. Let’s really understand how He sees things...

We now enter the greatest passage in all Scripture as to the Great Principles according to which God’s Judgment of Human Action must proceed.

God has made known in advance how He will decide and act, otherwise men would “imagine vain things” about the True God, and hug their delusions to their own damnation.

Condemnation of “Pagan Man” (1:1-32) is now followed with “Moral Man.” In any generalization such as the preceding blanket indictment of pagan humanity (1:18-32) exceptions to the rule always exist. Obviously some pagans had high ethical standards and moral lifestyles and condemned the widespread moral corruption of their contemporaries. In addition the Jews morally stood in sharp contrast with the pagan world around them and freely condemned the Gentiles. Both groups of moralists might conclude that God’s condemnation did not apply to them because of their higher planes of living. But Paul insisted that they also stood condemned because they were doing the same things for which they judged others.

[It is significant that in this chapter the general plural changes to the specific singular. The indefinite “they” now become “thou!”]¹

THEME: God will judge self-righteous and religious people

In this chapter Paul is showing that God will judge self-righteous and religious people. There are many people like the man on the top of the hill who looks down at the man at the bottom of the hill and says, "Something should be done for that poor fellow. We ought to start a mission down there. We should start giving him soup and clothes and a shower bath. I am living on the top of the hill, and I do not need anything." The hurdle to meet the demands of God is just as high on top of the hill as it is at the bottom of the hill. The only difference is that the man at the bottom of the hill will probably see his need sooner than the man at the top of the hill. Religious people, self-righteous people, and so-called good people need a Savior. In chapter 2 Paul sets down certain principles by which God is going to judge "good" people. Chapter 1 reveals the unrighteousness of man, and chapter 2 reveals the self-righteousness of man.²

¹ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

² Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

In Bible study, context is everything. So before we open Chapter 2 of Romans, let me say something that I should have said (a few times, probably) about Chapter 1. Chapter 1 was primarily (but not exclusively) speaking to gentiles. It was speaking mostly to people who were not familiar with Hebrew culture and thus things like sexual perversion, which was generally accepted as normal in the gentile world (even though it was traditionally rejected by the Jewish world), were being addressed by Paul. Remember that this letter was meant for the Believing congregations of Rome; this wasn't an open letter to the citizens of Rome. These Believing congregations of Rome were a mix of Jews and gentiles. So the serious sins that Paul was so strenuously and sternly teaching against were not hypothetical, he saw them as a threat to the Believing community of Rome. Apparently he had received word that some Believers living in Rome were directly involved to some degree or another in these sinful behaviors and he responded with what we know today as the Book of Romans.

How could Believers engage in such sins and think it alright? It is a fact of life that we all view the world through the lens of our culture. Customs and habits that are accepted as long-held norms are rarely re-examined to see if they are right or good in God's eyes. For example: in France it is customary for women to go topless at the beach. Of course this is utterly shocking and unacceptable to most of the rest of the world, and in most places it could lead to arrest for public nudity. In Islamic nations it would bring the death penalty. But the vast majority of these same French women who go topless at the beach would never think to do so anywhere else. And, if they are church goers, they would dress modestly for a Sunday service and the congregation would find nothing incongruent or hypocritical with their faith if the day before at the beach they were spotted wearing nothing more than a tiny bikini bottom. In Rome in Paul's day sexual immorality (and homosexuality in specific) was so rampant that the average gentile Roman thought nothing of it. And so average gentile Believers didn't factor that into their faith because it was embedded in their culture. Thus in Chapter 1 Paul was addressing primarily the gentile Believers of the city of Rome as it applied to sexual perversion, although not everything he said applied only to gentile cultural norms.

Chapter 2 switches gears on us, and it primarily addresses the Believing Jews of the city of Rome. I'll repeat that the Book of Romans is addressed NOT to Roman citizens of the Roman Empire in general; but rather it is to the Believers of the City of Rome. Certainly its principles can be applied as universal. But as was Paul's custom, all of his letters dealt with specific issues that he perceived as needing to be addressed by the specific congregation he was writing to. The unusually long length of the letter to the Romans tells us that Paul had a lot to say to the Roman congregation probably because he thought there were many issues that needed to be addressed. However this also had at least as much to do with the fact that he had never been to Rome, and the Believing congregations there had been founded by others and so he wasn't the one that had selected their leadership or instilled what he felt was proper doctrine. Thus he was trying to do so from far away with this letter.

In Chapter 2 Paul uses a well recognized literary style prevalent in his era called diatribe (the author of the Book of James also uses diatribe). In diatribe a straw man is created; that is, an imaginary dialogue with an opponent, or perhaps a student, is set forth. A line of argument is presented and then emphatic rejections of possible disagreements with that line of argument are incorporated and forcefully responded to. Diatribes are usually frank and passionate, with no room for tolerance or compromise. In other words Paul is not talking to, or debating with, any particular individual because he doesn't seem to know any of the Believers in Rome (Paul doesn't

refer to any congregation member by name). Rather he is sort of creating some conversation partners and then rebuking them for their beliefs or behavior.

The bottom line to Romans chapter 2 is that Paul says that Jews sin, too, and simply being Jews doesn't give them a "pass" in God's eyes. Therefore they are going to face judgment just as do gentiles. Let me repeat something critical for our understanding so that we understand exactly who his conversation partners are: Paul assumes he is speaking to Jewish and gentile Believers in his letter to the Romans.

The things that often get glossed over in Romans we're going to attack with gusto! In Romans chapter 2 the role of the Law (or as the CJB prefers to say, the Torah) for both gentile and Jewish Believers takes a prominent place in the narrative. We'll take this slow and easy because the issue has immense implications for Judeo-Christianity. We're also going to spend some time examining common terms that we find within Christianity, but those terms are often not defined. This is where your study and knowledge of the Torah, and hopefully your study of the Book of Acts with us, will pay off handsomely.

The issue is made all the more complex because of the terminology that Paul employs; and unfortunately we have the added problem of Paul necessarily using Greek to transmit his Hebrew thoughts. And for 21st century English speakers yet another challenge is that we go through yet another layer of translation from Greek to English; Hebrew thought converted to Greek, and then the Greek converted to English. Step number one for Bible students is recognizing that there are challenges due to translation issues and they matter when we attempt to understand Holy Scripture. It is when we deny these issues that poor doctrine is created. Step number two is realizing that it doesn't take a PhD to understand the issues that we will explore and find an understandable solution. The Bible wasn't created by or for academics and theologians. It was created for average people to hear, read and understand. It is just that the distance of language, culture, and a couple thousand years of history puts us at a disadvantage, so we have to work a little harder to get to where God intends for us to go.

So while Jews of the first century could better understand by the context what Paul is getting at (even if they didn't necessarily agree with his conclusions or his theology), gentiles who don't understand Judaism are hopelessly lost in space unless they have been carefully familiarized with Jewish culture of the Biblical era and the role of Halakhah (Jewish law) versus the Bible. If we don't get this right, when we get there some weeks from now, it'll make the Romans chapter 7 discussion on the matter of the Law seem somewhere between maddening contradiction and a sort of first century religious/psycho-babble. Most denominations solve this problem by picking a few phrases of Paul's out of context, and then relying on them while ignoring his other phrases that seem to say exactly the opposite. We'll begin to tackle some of this today and I hope it is as interesting and eyeopening to you as it is to me. But you will need to focus.

One of the things to look for today is how Paul defines what "doing the Law" and "the work of the Law" actually is. Since Yeshua says in Matthew 5:17 that He didn't abolish the Law; and He says in Matthew 5:19 that to the measure one obeys the Law one's status in the Kingdom of God will be determined, then what "doing the Law" amounts to especially in modern times ought to be of supreme importance to every Believer.

Matthew 5:19 CJB 19 So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

So once you become a member of the Kingdom of Heaven you will be fitted somewhere within a

hierarchy (as determined by God) from least to greatest fully dependent upon how zealously (or not) you obeyed the Law of Moses. However becoming a member of the Kingdom of the Heaven is, ironically, NOT dependent on obeying the Law, it is entirely a matter of trusting God and having faith in Yeshua as our Messiah and Lord. And no doubt Paul's definition of "doing the Law" comes as something of a surprise especially to his Jewish hearers of his day. So open your Bibles to the Book of Romans as we continue with this important letter that has become the fulcrum upon which modern Christianity balances. Whether it ought to or not is a matter of opinion.³

Most interpreters argue that Paul focuses on the sin of the Jews throughout this chapter. Another view is that the sin of the moralist, whether Jewish or Gentile, is condemned in vv. 1–16, with the Jews coming into special prominence in vv. 17–29.⁴

¹Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

The Greek verb for “judging” does not mean to estimate a man’s value but to condemn his person. Every man is naturally blind to his own state and sins. We will encounter seven great principles of God’s Judgment.⁵

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

Verse 1 accuses the Believing Jews of Rome of "passing judgment" on the behavior of the Believing gentiles of Rome. And he says when they do this they are essentially passing judgment on themselves because they commit the same sins. The argument is really about why God's wrath should fall on all people without exception. In Chapter 1 Paul explained that gentiles have no excuse for their sin because natural law (what can be seen from Creation itself and what is known innately within all mankind) sets down the basic commandments of God for all people, and especially for the vast majority of people who have no knowledge of the Torah. But as concerns Jews (the primary subjects of Chapter 2) Paul explains that they also have no excuse for their sin because not only do they have the natural law they also have God's Torah but they violate it. Paul backs up this line of thought in verse 2 by saying that God's judgment lands impartially on all humans who do wrong things.⁶

McGee: This puts before us the very important issue of this chapter. It's well to keep in mind here that Paul is not talking about salvation. He is talking about sin and the basis on which God will judge men. These principles of judgment are not the basis of salvation; they are the basis of judgment. I don't know about you, but I wouldn't want to be judged by them. I thank God for a Savior today, and Scripture presents the gospel as the only means of attaining eternal life. To reject the Son of God immediately brings upon a person the judgment of God, and the only verdict here is guilty. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1John 5:12). And He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word,

³ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

⁴ ESV Study Bible Notes

⁵ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

⁶ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). And then listen to the Lord Jesus after that marvelous, wonderful John 3:16 -- we generally stop there -- but He continues: "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:17-18). Also, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). So today these folk who do not have Christ are lost. You may be a religious person, you might be a good person, but without Christ, my friend, you're lost.

"Thou art inexcusable, O man" -- "man" is the Greek anthrope, a generic term meaning both men and women. It includes both Jews and Gentiles and refers to mankind in general.

"Whosoever thou art that judgest." He passes now from the general to that which is specific, from the masses to the individual person. And he addresses any person of the human race, but he limits it to those who judge others. Now, the word here for "judge" carries the thought of judging with an adverse verdict. It can be translated, "Whosoever thou art that condemnest another." Therefore this raises the question: What should be the attitude of a believer today toward this awful, horrible group who are mentioned in Romans 1? It should be this: We should want them to get saved; we should try to get the gospel to them; they are poor, lost creatures. It should be as the hymn writer, Fanny Crosby, expressed it:

Rescue the perishing, Care for the dying, Snatch them in pity from sin and
the grave; Weep o'er the erring ones, Lift up the fallen, Tell them of Jesus,
the mighty to save.

This should be our attitude, while making it clear that they need to be saved and delivered from perversion and immorality.

"For thou that judgest doest the same things" may give a wrong impression. "Same" is the Greek *auta*, and the meaning is not identical things, but things that are as bad in God's sight as the awful, depraved acts of the heathen which are offensive to the cultured and refined sinner. Let me illustrate this. I heard a man who is not saved say that he didn't believe that hell could be heated hot enough for Hitler. My friend, he is sitting in judgment. He is taking the place of God. And you and I are sitting in judgment on those who are not on our plane. We use society's standards today, and it varies. If someone does not measure up to the standard of your little group, you condemn him. I know some churches where members can get by with lying, with being gossipers, and with being dishonest, but they couldn't get by with smoking a cigarette! They would be condemned for that. My friend, when you judge other people, you are assuming the position of judge. God is saying that by the same token that you have the right to judge other people by your standards, He has the right to judge you by His standards. If we could see ourselves as God sees us, we could see that we are obnoxious; we are repugnant! What contribution can you and I make to heaven? Would we adorn the place? I get the impression from some people that heaven is going to be a better place when they get there -- yet the earth has not been a better place since they have been here! My friend, you try to deny God the same privilege you have of sitting in judgment on others. Well, God is going to judge you, and He won't judge you by your standards, but by His standards. Does that begin to move you? It ought to, because I have found that we don't come up to God's standards. Now Paul puts down the principles by which God will judge the refined and cultured sinner.⁷

⁷ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

Guzik: Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge: In Romans 1, Paul pointed out the sin of the most notoriously guilty. He now speaks to those who are generally moral in their conduct. Paul assumes they are congratulating themselves that they are not like the people described in Romans 1.

A good example of this mind set is Jesus' illustration of the Pharisee and the Publican. If we take those figures from Jesus' parable, Paul spoke to the Publican in Romans 1 and now he addresses the Pharisee (Luke 18:10-14).

Many among the Jewish people of Paul's day typified the moralist; but his words in Romans 2:1-16 seem to have a wider application. For example, there was Seneca, the Roman politician, moral teacher and the tutor of Nero. He would agree wholeheartedly with Paul regarding the morals of most pagans, but a man like Seneca would think, "I'm different from those immoral people."

Many Christians admired Seneca and his strong stand for "morals" and "family values." "But too often he tolerated in himself vices not so different from those which he condemned in others – the most flagrant instance being his connivance at Nero's murder of his mother Agrippina." (Bruce)

For in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself: After gaining the agreement of the moralist in condemning the obvious sinner, now Paul turns the same argument upon the moralist himself. This is because at the end of it all, you who judge practice the same things.

As we judge another person, we point to a standard outside of our self – and that standard condemns everyone, not only the obvious sinner. "Since you know the justice of God, as evidenced by the fact that you are judging others, you are without an excuse, because in the very act of judging you have condemned yourself." (Murray)

Practice the same things: Notice that the moralist is not condemned for judging others but for being guilty of the same things that he judges others for. This is something the moral man would object to ("I'm not like them at all!"), but Paul will demonstrate this is true.

Wuest, quoting Denney on for you who judge practice the same things: "Not, you do the identical actions, but your conduct is the same, i.e., you sin against light. The sin of the Jews was the same, but their sins were not."⁸

God does not condemn them merely because they judged others but because they practiced the same sins they condemned in others (the very same things, esp. those mentioned in 1:29–31). All people are without excuse because all, without exception, have sinned against God.⁹

1–5 Therefore you have no excuse. Sha'ul reminds readers that all must turn from their sins (cf. Matt. 3:2). In Shabbat 153a, Rabbi Eli'ezer instructs, "Repent one day before you die." Concerning this, Rabbi Eli'ezer's talmidim inquired, 'Rabbi, how can we do that? Who knows on what day he will die?' and to this he replied 'All the more reason to repent today, because you might be dead tomorrow!'"¹⁰

⁸ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

⁹ ESV Study Bible Notes

¹⁰ Complete Jewish Study Bible Notes

²But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

McGee: In other words, he says, "We know that the judgment of God is according to reality." There are so many folk today, including church members, who live in a world of unreality. They do not want to hear the truth of the gospel. Now, I hear a great many pious folk who say, "Oh, I do want to study the Bible." And then when they get into the Word of God, they find what John found in the Book of Revelation when he began to see the judgments of God. When he first started out, it was thrilling, it was "sweet in his mouth." But when he ate that little book, it gave him indigestion, it was "bitter in his belly" (see Rev. 10:9-10). And there are a great many Christians today who say they want Bible study, but they don't want reality. They do not want to hear the truth. "We know that the judgment of God is according to reality [the factual condition of man] against them which commit such things."

Now keep in mind that these are principles of judgment, not principles of salvation. Man has an inherent knowledge that he must be judged by a higher power. The coming judgment of God is something every man out of Christ either dreads or denies. The Scripture is very clear on judgment. Paul said to the Athenians, "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). And Paul reasoned, you remember, with Felix about righteousness and self-control and judgment to come. And it frightened this fellow, Felix. In fact, he didn't want to hear another sermon. The judgment of God is in contrast with man's judgment. Man does not have all the facts and his judgment is partial and prejudiced. God's judgment takes in all the facts. God knows the actual state of man -- just what he is. And on that basis He will judge him.

As a boy, I used to pick cotton -- and I wasn't very good at it. I'd bring in a sack of cotton to be weighed, and they only weighed what I brought in. The man weighing the cotton didn't ask me where I picked it or how I picked it or to whom it belonged; he just weighed it. "...Thou art weighed in the balances..." (Dan. 5:27), is God's word to every man that boasts of his morality. I think the great delusion of the cultured person is that the depraved person must be judged, but he's confident that he will escape because he's different. Most people believe Hitler and Stalin ought to be judged, but they think they should escape. God will judge man for what he is in His sight. Do you want to stand before God on that basis? I don't.¹¹

Guzik: According to truth: This has the idea of "according to the facts of the case." God will judge (and condemn) the moralist on the basis of the facts.¹²

³And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

"Did you think that you would escape--You?"

The death-chamber of self-righteousness is open to each of us...

We need to drive out our false notions and blindness of self-love and self-flattery.¹³

¹¹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

¹² https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

¹³ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

Let me caution you right now; those of you who have been taught (and perhaps continue to insist) that works have nothing to do with your redeemed life are in for a shock because we are going to do what we always do and let Holy Scripture speak for itself and not try to twist it or find a way around it. This entire chapter is much about works and deeds and their pivotal role in how God will judge you, me, and everyone. I'll say this again and again during this lesson: Paul is speaking ONLY to Believers (his letter is not addressed to the general public of Rome, nor is his diatribe against pagans or non-Believers). Nowhere is he warning non-Believers. Rather he is speaking to both gentile and Jewish Believers and making clear exactly what the Apostle John plainly speaks in 1John 3:

1John 3:4 CJB 4 Everyone who keeps sinning is violating Torah—indeed, sin is violation of Torah.

Paul is telling us that sin is sin in the sense that it doesn't vary individual to individual, and it doesn't vary based on whether one is a Jew or gentile. Further there is only one divine Law even if God has given it to humanity in a couple of different forms. The natural law is one form, and the Law of Moses is the other form; even so the requirements of the natural law are no different from the requirements of the Law of Moses; they express the same ideals and principles of God. The difference between them is that the natural law is more general and it is not written down, while the Law of Moses is much more nuanced and specific and it is written down. Think of it like this: a Kindergartener or 1st grader is taught to read in only the most basic fashion. They learn a few words using the simplest words to form into extremely limited sentences about things that a 5 or 6 year old can relate to in their children's world. But in the adult world reading consists of a large vocabulary, using many difficult words, and sentences are complex and full of nuances and variations. Yet the words and the meaning of those individual words and sentences that the Kindergartner learns to read do not amount to meaning something different from what an adult reads. The adult words don't change or overturn the meaning of the same words that the 5 year old reads. It is the same sort of relationship between the natural law and the Torah. The former is but the Reader's Digest version of the latter and Paul is going to flesh this reality out for us over the next several verses.

So at the end of verse 3 Paul asks his Jewish straw man a question that is actually an indictment; do you think because you throw the spotlight onto the sins of gentiles that somehow the very same sins you commit are excused by God? Or; that if a gentile commits a sin and a Jew commits the same sin, that God will punish the gentile but not punish the Jew? Let's not overlook a very basic principle that Paul and Judaism believed; one that I think modern day Believers often forget: God rewards our good deeds and punishes our evil deeds. Or, God blesses our good works and judges our wrong works or our lack of works. That doesn't end when we become saved. But let's not miss the precise point that is being made here by Paul: God is judge, and we're not. Ironically, for us to judge someone who commits the same sins we commit brings God's judgment upon us. And it doesn't matter if it is a Jew judging a gentile, a gentile judging a Jew, a Jew judging a Jew or a gentile judging another gentile. What Paul is standing on is the fundamental Jewish understanding of the Biblical principle of "measure for measure"; proportional justice. No one is special enough to hold themselves outside of humanity, expecting preferential treatment from the Lord.¹⁴

¹⁴ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

McGee: Robert Govett has called attention to the four ways of escape which are open to the man who breaks human laws:

1. His offence will not be discovered.
2. He may escape beyond the jurisdiction of the court.
3. After arrest, there may be some legal technicality which will cause a breakdown of the legal procedure.
4. After conviction, he may escape from prison and stay under cover.

None of these avenues of escape are open to man in regard to divine judgment. Your offenses will be discovered. You cannot go beyond God's jurisdiction. There will be no legal technicality. You will never be able to escape from prison. The writer of Hebrews asked, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation... ?" (Heb. 2:3).¹⁵

Guzik: The point is made clear: if the moralist is just as guilty as the obvious sinner how will they escape the judgment of God?

You are emphatic in the question, "[do you think] you will escape the judgment of God?" Paul bears down here, letting his reader know that he is no exception to this principle. Paul knew how to get to the heart of his readers. "Our exhortations should be as forked arrows to stick in men's hearts; and not wound only, as other arrows." (Trapp)

Lenski on the moralist: "Paul's object is far greater than merely to convict also them of unrighteousness. He robs them, absolutely must rob them, of their moralism and their moralizing because they regard this as the way of escape from God's wrath."¹⁶

⁴Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

[Note God's progressive degrees: goodness, forbearance, longsuffering—in responding to our ingratitude...]¹⁷

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

Verse 4 essentially repeats to Jews the same warning Paul gave to gentiles in chapter 1 verse 21.

It is that to sin and then believe one can find a way to avoid judgment is to show contempt for God's mercy. When Paul speaks of forbearance, kindness and patience he is saying that God, in His loving-kindness, often withholds immediate judgment in hopes that the sinner will repent. The thought Paul is getting at is that perhaps a Believer who does something wrong, but nothing bad happens to him in the days following, says to him or her self: "I knew it! I'm OK. God loves me so much that even when I do wrong He won't do anything to me. So I can relax and know that doing a wrong thing here and there isn't going to cause me any problems." This kind of attitude is not only an affront to God's character of loving-kindness, but it misses the point of why it is that God typically doesn't immediately punish: His purpose is NOT to overlook sin but rather that perhaps the sinner will come to realize his or her sin and change their mind. His hope is that the sinner will notice the great mercy God has shown him, and take this opportunity to

¹⁵ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

¹⁶ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

¹⁷ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

turn from sin if nothing else as an expression of gratitude to God for not being so quick to punish. The wrong kind of attitude assumes that either God is weak or that He is a kindly Grandfather who just can't bring Himself to punish his grandchildren; He just winks at sin. This is a truly dangerous sense of false security. And while this principle applies equally to both gentiles and Jews, Paul is currently aiming this mostly at Jews for a good reason: it was commonly held within Second Temple Judaism that merely being a Jew granted you a get-out-of-jail-free card. It reflected a belief that while gentiles were inherently evil in God's eyes, Jews were inherently good. It exposed a mindset among Jews that they were privileged and operated by a different set of rules than gentiles. Being a Jew meant (generally speaking) immunization against God's wrath. Paul is trying to dispel this mistaken belief among Jews (and apparently the Believing Jews of Rome felt exactly the same as their non-Believing brethren otherwise Paul had no reason to discuss this matter at such length).¹⁸

McGee: We ought to recognize today that the goodness of God is something that ought to bring us to our knees before Him. But instead of that, it drives men from God. David was disturbed by the way the wicked could prosper. God didn't seem to do anything to them. In Psalm 73, David says, "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.... They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth.... Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end" (Ps. 73:3-5, 9, 17). They will face God's judgment, my friend.

And, by the way, if you're a lost man, don't think I am the sort of preacher that tries to take everything away from you. If you haven't trusted Christ and your only hope is in this life, brother, you had better suck this earth like it is an orange and get all you can out of it. Drink all you can, sin all you can, because you won't have anything in the next life. You had better get it while you are here if that's the way you want to live. Eat, drink, and be merry. Tomorrow you die. My friend, you need a Savior. And the goodness of God ought to lead you to Him.¹⁹

Guzik: Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering: Paul points out that the moralist himself presumes upon the goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering of God, which all should bring the moralist into a humble repentance instead of an attitude of superiority.

Goodness may be considered God's kindness to us in regard to our past sin. He has been good to us because He has not judged us yet though we deserve it.

Forbearance may be considered God's kindness to us in regard to our present sin. This very day – indeed, this very hour – we have fallen short of His glory, yet He holds back His judgment against us.

Longsuffering may be considered God's kindness to us in regard to our future sin. He knows that we will sin tomorrow and the next day, yet He holds back His judgment against us.

Considering all this, it is no surprise that Paul describes these three aspects of God's kindness to us as riches. The riches of God's mercy may be measured by four considerations:

- His greatness – to wrong a great man is a great wrong and God is greatest of all – Yet He shows mercy
- His omniscience – if someone knew all our sin, would they show mercy?

¹⁸ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

¹⁹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

Yet God shows mercy

- His power – sometimes wrongs are not settled because they are out of our power, Yet God is able to settle every wrong against Him – yet He is rich in mercy
- The object of His mercy: mere man – would we show mercy to an ant?

Yet God is rich in mercy

Knowing how great God's kindness is, it is a great sin to presume upon the graciousness of God, and we easily come to believe that we deserve it.

Forbearance and longsuffering: Men often think of this as weakness in God. They say things like "If there is a God in heaven, let Him strike me dead!" When it doesn't happen, they will say, "See, I told you there was no God." Men misinterpret God's forbearance and longsuffering as His approval, and they refuse to repent.

"It seems to me that every morning when a man wakes up still impenitent, and finds himself out of hell, the sunlight seems to say, 'I shine on thee yet another day, as that in this day thou mayest repent.' When your bed receives you at night I think it seems to say, 'I will give you another night's rest, that you may live to turn from your sins and trust in Jesus.' Every mouthful of bread that comes to the table says, 'I have to support your body that still you may have space for repentance.' Every time you open the Bible the pages say, 'We speak with you that you may repent.' Every time you hear a sermon, if it be such a sermon as God would have us preach, it pleads with you to turn unto the Lord and live." (Spurgeon)

Not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance: Many people misunderstand the goodness of God towards the wicked. They don't understand the entire reason for it is to lead them to repentance.

Men should see the goodness of God and understand:

- God has been better to them than they deserve
- God has shown them kindness when they have ignored Him
- God has shown them kindness when they have mocked Him
- God is not a cruel master and they may safely surrender to Him
- God is perfectly willing to forgive them
- God should be served out of simple gratitude

Are you waiting for God to drive you to repentance? He doesn't work like that; God leads you to repentance. "Notice, dear friends, that the Lord does not drive you to repentance. Cain was driven away, as a fugitive and a vagabond, when he had killed his righteous brother Abel; Judas went and hanged himself, being driven by an anguish of remorse because of what he had done in betraying his Lord; but the sweetest and best repentance is that which comes, not by driving, but by drawing: 'The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.'" (Spurgeon)

"In the New Testament, repentance is not simply negative. It means turning to a new life in Christ, a life of active service to God. It should not be confused with remorse, which is a deep sorrow for sin but lacks the positive note in repentance." (Morris)²⁰

Do you presume is probably directed against Jews who thought that their covenant relationship with God would shield them from final judgment. After all, they had often experienced his kindness and forbearance and patience. They thought such blessings showed that they were right with God and had no need to trust in Christ, but Paul says the opposite is true: God's blessings should have led them to repent of their sins.²¹

²⁰ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

²¹ ESV Study Bible Notes

⁵But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

[“Hardness” - *sklerotes*, whence, sclerosis, hardening of arteries, etc.] “Treasure up” ironically correlates with “riches of goodness” in v.4.

Not until the last evil result of a life of sin has been recorded can the final reward of the sinner be known.

[“Behold, this was the iniquity of Sodom...” Cf. Eze 16:49, 50. Luke 17:28-30. Billy Graham’s classic quote, “If God doesn’t judge America, He will have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah.” We, too, are “treasuring up unto ourselves wrath” for that fearful day...]

The phrase “the day of God’s . . . judgment” (Rom. 2:5) taken by itself may seem to lend support to the idea of a single general judgment of all humanity. However, the Scriptures do not support such a concept. This phrase must be interpreted in conjunction with passages which clearly indicate that several judgments of different groups occur at different times:

The judgment of Israel at Christ’s Second Advent, Ezek 20:32-38;

The judgment of Gentiles at Christ’s Second Advent, Mt 25:31-46;

The Great White Throne judgment, Rev 20:11-15.

The focus of this passage is on the fact that God will judge all peoples, not on the details of who will be judged when.

...unless, you flee to that Cross at Calvary and you will “not come into judgment” (John 5:24) for it has been already “finished.” Cf. Rom 8:1.²²

McGee: If you are not saved, let me say this to you: you know God has been good to you. God has blessed you. Think of the multitudes of folk on this earth who have nothing, who are literally starving to death. And here you are, a wicked man, living on top of the world. Do you think God is not going to judge you? Do you think that you are going to escape? My friend, the very goodness of God ought to lead you to repentance.²³

Guzik: You are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God: Because of this presumption on God’s graciousness, Paul can rightly say that the moralist is treasuring up... wrath in the day of wrath.

The moralist thinks he treasures up merit with God as he condemns the “sinners” around him. Actually, he only treasures up the wrath of God. “Just as men add to their treasure of wealth, so dost thou add to the treasures of punishment.” (Poole)

As men treasure up the wrath of God against them, what holds back the flood of wrath? God Himself! He holds it back out of His forbearance and longsuffering! “The figure is that of a load that God bears, which men heap up more and more, making heavier and heavier. The wonder of it all is that God holds any of it up even for a day; yet he holds up all its weight and does not let it crash down on the sinner’s head.” (Lanski)

In the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God: In the first coming of Jesus the loving character of God was revealed with greatest emphasis. At the second coming of Jesus the righteous judgment of God will be revealed most clearly.²⁴

²² Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

²³ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

²⁴ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

A soft and repentant heart is needed to avert God's wrath on the day of wrath, the final judgment. Such repentance would express itself in trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Paul disagrees with much of the Jewish teaching of his day, according to which the Jews were not storing up wrath but were in good standing with God through their covenant relationship, not needing to meet God's standard of perfect obedience but needing only an intention to obey God.²⁵

Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

[Quotation of Ps 62:12 and Prov 24:12. Cf. Rev 20:11-15.]

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

In verse 6 we see that Paul has **Psalm 62** in mind such that he quotes the last few words of **62:13**: " He (God) will pay back each one according to his deeds".

Let's look at the words of Psalm 62 that precedes this:

Psalm 62:11-13 CJB 11 Don't put your trust in extortion, don't put false hopes in robbery; even if wealth increases, don't set your heart on it. 12 God has spoken once, I have heard it twice: strength belongs to God. 13 Also to you, Adonai, belongs grace; for you reward all as their deeds deserve.

A day is coming, says Paul, when God's pent up anger against you for your sins will manifest. Those with an unrepentant heart are in for a big surprise: it turns out that whatever they counted on to keep them safe from God's wrath was a false hope. There is no safety from God for your sins when you refuse to repent. Once again: Paul is addressing Believers, not pagans. Your salvation is a mirage, says Paul, if you do not have a repentant heart. Your salvation is a millstone around your neck if you think that you can go right on sinning, contemptuously, as before your supposed redemption because it will NOT deliver you from God's wrath.

Hebrews 10:26-27 CJB 26 For if we deliberately continue to sin after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but only the terrifying prospect of Judgment,

Rather, says Paul echoing Psalm 62, each person will be paid back according to their deeds. Uh oh. How can this be? It is standard Christian doctrine that once we've prayed the sinner's prayer henceforth our deeds count for nothing. In fact, even good deeds can be a bad thing because works are for Jews, not for Christians. Certainly that can't be!

McGee: As we come to verse 6, we see the second great principle.

He shall reward every man according to his works. Absolute justice is the criterion of the judgment or rewards. Man's deeds stand before God in His holy light. No man in his right mind wants to be judged on this basis. Remember Cornelius -- he was a good man, but he was lost.²⁶

Guzik: Will render to each one according to his deeds: This is an awesome and fearful thought, and it condemns the moralist as well as the obvious sinner.²⁷

²⁵ ESV Study Bible Notes

²⁶ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

²⁷ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

6–11 Paul establishes the principle that judgment is according to . . . works. The structure of the passage is clear. Verse 6 enunciates the principle. Verses 7–10 work it out more specifically with an ABBA pattern (a chiasm). Verse 11 then explains why God judges according to works (because he is impartial). When Paul speaks of those who are rewarded for doing good works (vv. 7, 10), is he speaking hypothetically or of real obedience? The hypothetical view fits with the theme of the section as a whole (1:18-3:20), where all are condemned for sin, and righteousness does not come by works of law. It seems more likely, however, that Paul is speaking here of real obedience that is rewarded on the last day—such obedience being the result of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, as Paul explains at the conclusion of the chapter (2:26–29). Impartiality in judgment (v. 11) is a regular requirement in the OT (see Deut. 1:17; 16:18–20), reflecting the righteousness of God's judgment (Deut. 10:17).²⁸

7To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

[vv.7-10 are not a revelation of the way of salvation, but a general description of the character of those who are saved.]

In every age there have been those—like Abel, Noah, Abraham, Job, Joseph—separated from their brethren and choosers of God.²⁹

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

Then comes Romans 2 verse 7: "7 To those who seek glory, honor and immortality by perseverance in doing good, he will pay back eternal life."

What? To Believers who seek eternal life BY doing good, God will pay back with eternal life? Let's put that in proper context for the passage we're in: for those who seek eternal life by doing good deeds, God will reward with the eternal life that they seek. "Doing" is not the belief in an ideal, and it is not merely possessing a good intent. Neither are "doing" and "faith" synonymous terms. And "doing" is especially not about any warm fuzzy feeling in our hearts. Doing is a verb that involves tangible action; it is usually about our behavior. Doing can only be about a deed or a work (which is exactly what Paul is literally saying). Needless to say these passages about doing, works and deeds have caused great heartburn especially among the Evangelical denominations because it sounds as though it is a direct repudiation of Paul's other statements that salvation is by grace and grace alone.

Ephesians 2:8-9 CJB 8 For you have been delivered by grace through trusting, and even this is not your accomplishment but God's gift. 9 You were not delivered by your own actions; therefore no one should boast.³⁰

McGee: Let's keep in mind that under this second principle, a way of life is not the subject. Rather, a way of life is the basis of judgment. The "do-gooder" will be judged according to his works. John said, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of

²⁸ ESV Study Bible Notes

²⁹ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

³⁰ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev. 20:12). The man who wants to work for eternal life may do so. He will be judged according to his deeds, but he is warned that they will avail nothing. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into that lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15). Trusting Christ as Savior puts your name in the "book of life." Eternal life is not a reward for effort; it is a gift to those who trust Christ.³¹

Guzik: Eternal life to those: If someone genuinely did good at all times, he could merit eternal life of his own accord – but there is none, because all, in some way or another are, have been, or will be self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness.³²

⁸But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

Cain, Esau, Pharaoh, Saul, Jehoiakim, et al.

⁹Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

Unrighteousness, indignation, wrath, tribulation, and anguish: the sweep of the fruits of ingratitude...³³

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

So what are we to think? How are we to deal with this conundrum? In Romans 2 Paul is clearly focused on our works and deeds as playing a big role in our salvation; yet in Ephesians he seems to contradict himself. We'll talk about that more in just a bit. But one thing is clear: there are only two possible outcomes for every human being as they stand before God to be judged. We will either receive eternal life or we will receive God's wrath. There is no middle ground, there is no third option. And as Paul is making it abundantly clear, this reality applies to all humans, gentile or Jew. Verse 9 gives us a clue as to where Paul is going with this line of thought because there he highlights disobedience to the truth as what it is that brings on God's righteous wrath. Then he goes further and says as regards God's wrath because of our disobedience, it is "to the Jew first then to the gentile". What this means is "to the Jew especially", and there is a reason for this: as God's chosen people they bear a greater responsibility to God to obey Him. Jews get a priority when it comes to blessings; therefore in "measure for measure" they get a different kind of priority for wrath. But gentiles are still liable as well.

This brings up another issue; since it is disobedience that brings about God's wrath, and disobedience brings the same negative consequences to either Jew or gentile, then what is this disobedience in reference to? That is, disobedience to what? Are we to think that the Jews are to be obedient to one thing while gentiles are to be obedient to something else? Because if that's the

³¹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

³² https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

³³ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

case then sin for a Jew is fundamentally different than sin for a gentile. Folks, a goodly portion of Christianity says "yes" to that; sin is different for a Jew than for a gentile. A Jew is to obey the Law of Moses but a gentile is to obey the Law of Love. In fact, it is thought by much of Christianity that for a gentile Christian to obey the Law of Moses is itself sin. Even more, a common refrain among Christians is "what is sin for me isn't necessarily sin for you". Or, "Whatever the Holy Spirit tells me is sin is only sin for me, and whatever the Holy Spirit tells you is sin is only sin for you". So the idea is that there is no standard for sin any longer; since Christ has come, sin has been fully customized, individual by individual. If that is the case then God has set a double standard; one standard for Jews, another for gentiles. One law for Jews, another law for gentiles; maybe even a different and unique standard of sin for every single gentile Believer.

Numbers 15:15-16 CJB 15 For in this community there will be the same law for you as for the foreigner living with you; this is a permanent regulation through all your generations; the foreigner is to be treated the same way before ADONAI as yourselves. 16 The same Torah and standard of judgment will apply to both you and the foreigner living with you."

A foreigner means a gentile. And this passage is emphatic that there is but one law and regulation for all, Jew and gentile.

James 4:12 CJB 12 There is but one Giver of Torah; he is also the Judge, with the power to deliver and to destroy. Who do you think you are, judging your fellow human being?

So we learn from Holy Scripture that there is but one law, one judge, and one law giver; therefore disobedience can only mean disobedience to the same law since there's only one. And gentiles and Jews are beholden to the same judge who judges us under the same standard because there's only one judge and one standard.

What then do we do with Paul's declaration that good deeds lead to eternal life and bad deeds to God's wrath? Paul is not claiming that salvation happens by good deeds; rather it is that good deeds are the obvious and expected outward fruit of salvation. If good deeds are not present, then it defies a person's claim to salvation. But even more, judgment is part of the future for all people, saved and not. We are all going to be judged by our deeds in the end. Listen yet again to Matthew 5:17 -19.

Matthew 5:17-19 CJB 17 "Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. 18 Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah- not until everything that must happen has happened. 19 So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

So here we see that when woven together, what Paul says and what Christ says gives us a better picture of the place of obedience, works, and deeds in the lives of Believers. I'll say it again: Paul is ONLY talking to Believers. Everything he has to say about the importance of works and deeds as it applies to our coming judgment before God, he is saying ONLY to Believers. So indeed salvation by grace makes us a member of the Kingdom of Heaven. But thereafter our obedience to God's Torah commandments (the Law of Moses) has substantial

determination at judgment on God's determination of our level of status in the Kingdom of Heaven (apparently a status that shall remain unchanged for an eternity). In a sense, the salvation granted by God for the person who trusts in His Son Yeshua is taken into account at the time of judgment when our deeds are weighed. Our salvation grants us membership in the Kingdom of Heaven. However it is our works and deeds that happened during our lifetimes that confirm our actual level of faith and trust in God, and measure for measure that level of faith and trust will determine our level of status in the Kingdom of Heaven.

2Corinthians 5:9-10 CJB 9 Therefore, whether at home or away from home, we try our utmost to please him; 10 for we must all appear before the Messiah's court of judgment, where everyone will receive the good or bad consequences of what he did while he was in the body

Paul makes it clear in his 2nd letter to the Corinthians that everyone, including Believers, will appear for judgment in front of Messiah our Lord. And what is it that will we be judged upon? Says Paul, it will be upon what we did while we were in the body (that is, while we were still alive).

And yet, there is another aspect of good deeds versus bad deeds; of obedience versus disobedience. It is as Paul explained in Romans chapter 1 that when we don't know God (and that is ALWAYS because we don't WANT to know God), and God has therefore abandoned us to our sins and lusts, when we adopt lifestyles of sexual perversion, greed, dishonestly, and a laundry list of other vices, these wrong behaviors are the outward proof of our inward condition regardless of what we may claim or think of ourselves (that is, claiming that we are Believers while at the same time being disobedient and knowingly doing evil things). The fruits of our wickedness reveal who we really are.

So while we can't merit our deliverance and redemption by our good deeds, nor necessarily be refused for our past bad deeds IF we have repented and changed, if we are accepted into the Kingdom by means of our faith and trust in Yeshua then our status before God after our death will be judged solely by our deeds while we were still alive. Folks: these lives matter. What we do matters. In fact our deeds and works matter infinitely more AFTER we are saved than before. So if you are allergic to the Biblical fact that your works and deeds are critically important in your relationship with God, and will be to your dying breath and thereafter into eternity, then you need to get over it in a hurry. Sadly most of the time worshippers of God think this way is because of some pretty bad doctrine that has been taught in a number of our evangelical denominations; doctrines that simply defy Holy Scripture.³⁴

Guzik: Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil: Because all fall short of this standard of God's constant goodness, God's wrath will come to all who do evil – without respect to whether they are Jew or Gentile.

This judgment comes to the Jew first. If they are first in line for the gospel (Romans 1:16) and first in line for reward (Romans 2:10), then they are also first in line for judgment.

The word indignation comes from the idea of "boiling up," thus having the sense of a passionate outburst. The word wrath comes from the idea of a swelling which eventually bursts, and applies more to an anger that proceeds from one's settled nature.³⁵

³⁴ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

³⁵ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

¹⁰But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

¹¹For there is no respect of persons with God.

This just recompense by God is without regard to ethnic background or any other consideration except what each person has done.³⁶

McGee: Now notice the third principle of judgment.

This was also a great principle of the Old Testament. "For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward" (Deut. 10:17). Simon Peter, discovered this when he went into the home of Cornelius. "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34). God plays no favorites. He has no pets. All men are alike before Him. Justice is blindfolded, not because she is blind, but that she may not see men in either silk or rags; all must appear alike. Church membership, a good family, being an outstanding citizen, or having a fundamental creed give no advantage before God at all. Do you have a Savior, or don't you? That is the all-important issue.³⁷

Guzik: For there is no partiality with God: The word translated partiality comes from two ancient Greek words put together – to receive and face. It means to judge things on the basis of externals or preconceived notions.

Some ancient rabbis taught that God showed partiality towards the Jews. They said: "God will judge the Gentiles with one measure and the Jews with another."³⁸

¹²For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;

"The Law was given through Moses" (John 1:17), which marks the beginning of the dispensation of Law.

"Sinned" = aorist tense [once and for all]. This cannot refer to simply that they committed sin, "for all have sinned;" refers to the general choice of sin as against righteousness and holiness; therefore, a life-choice of sin.³⁹

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

When Paul speaks of those operating without the Torah, he is speaking of gentiles in the sense that they didn't receive the Torah from God. Therefore when he refers to those operating within the Torah, he is referring to the Hebrews (Jews) because God gave the Torah to them, through Moses, at Mt. Sinai. So Paul is not thinking of the gentiles in terms of being lawless; they are not

³⁶ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

³⁷ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

³⁸ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

³⁹ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

outlaws, thugs. Rather it is that it is the Law of Moses, the Torah, which makes the Jews who they are; it is what defines their identity as God's set apart people. So the distinction between gentiles and Jews, to Paul, is that the Jews live within the sphere of the Law, and gentiles live outside of it. He is saying this: those who sin outside the sphere of the Law (gentiles) will perish, just as those who sin inside the sphere of the Law, Jews, will be judged by the Law. Remember: Paul has already explained that the natural law that gentiles follow is essentially the same as the Law of Moses that the Jews follow. So the sin of gentiles will be judged according to the natural law, and the sin of Jews will be judged according to the Law of Moses. The standard of judgment and the outcomes for both people groups is the same. So back to verse 13: it is because of this logic that Paul can say that even those who live according to the Law of Moses (the Jews) will nevertheless be condemned by the Law when they sin. And since we have carefully studied the Law (the Torah) here at Seed of Abraham Torah Class, then we know what this means. The Law of Moses not only defines behavior in a nuanced and extensive way, it also lays out the penalties for violation of these defined behaviors. These penalties are called the curses of the Law. They vary from restitution for stealing, to loss of life for kidnap and murder.⁴⁰

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

The CBJ chooses to use the word Torah where the KJV and virtually all other English versions use the term law. Whether your Bible reads "without law" or "outside the framework of the Torah" both of these phrases are actually attempted translations of the Greek word anomos. Nomos means law, or a custom that is regularly obeyed; anomos means "not law" or "without law" or "in ignorance of the law". Nomos and anomos are common words in Greek that apply to any law in most any context in general. Therefore for Roman gentiles it was up to the context of the conversation to flesh out how the term was meant. To the Jews, however, the term law had a smaller range of meanings but in every case it pointed towards their religious laws that are seen as having come (one way or another) from the God of Israel. Even more, how we moderns take the term "law" in English has a number of variables. In the Bible, however, we should take nearly every instance of the word "law" as being a religious term. In non-religious usage, in the gentile world, the term law is used differently. For instance: quite often the police or the sheriff is called "the law". Or we say that someone is "breaking the law", and we mean that there is some societal statute, civil or criminal, that a perpetrator is violating and so we think of it in a legal sense. Or we can speak of "the law" as an entire system of rules enforced through various governmental institutions. Thus it is important that we remember that in the Book of Romans the Hebrew Paul is thinking in Hebrew cultural and religious terms, and not in Roman gentile cultural terms. So especially when he speaks of someone sinning without the Law, clearly this helps us understand that Paul means "Law" in the Hebrew religious sense of it. Therefore "without law" should be better translated "without THE Law" because Paul is speaking of the system of rules that govern all Jewish behavior within Jewish culture; and in his letters Paul usually calls this "The Law".

However as Paul uses the term "the Law", and often within Hebrew culture as well, "the Law" is not a precise or technical term; it is general. In much earlier OT times "the Law" strictly meant the Law of Moses (the Torah) as received at Mt. Sinai. But in Paul's day, when the synagogue and not the Temple was the most influential and prevalent religious institution of the Jews, the term "the Law" had taken on a more broad meaning and in general it more meant Jewish Law, Halakhah, which was a blend of manmade traditions, plus interpretations of the Law of Moses,

⁴⁰ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

plus what is often called oral law. Oral law is a little different from Tradition in that it is said among academic Jews that what is written down in the Law of Moses is NOT all that Moses received on Mt. Sinai. There were other laws (called Oral Laws) that God also gave Moses but for various reasons Moses chose NOT to write them down; rather they were handed down word of mouth (orally). Yet they remained valuable and valid and (for Jews) equal in inspiration and authority as the written Torah. So for a Jew the term "the Law" pointed towards a large body of rulings that they lived by that theoretically had its common foundation based upon what God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai. And this is because Halakhah purports to be the proper interpretation of what God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai, no matter how fanciful the interpretation might be.

While that might have your head spinning, in effect it is almost exactly how Christianity works today, and has for centuries. For instance; Christians often speak of the Trinity and when asked about it say that it is in the Bible. I have news for you; it is not. The word Trinity never appears in the Bible, OT or NT. Rather the word Trinity is actually the name given to a manmade Roman Church doctrine that seems to have come about in the 3rd century A.D. This Church doctrine of the Trinity arose mainly from an interpretation by some early Church authorities concerning this passage in Matthew 28:19: CJB Matthew 28:19 Therefore, go and make people from all nations into talmidim, immersing them into the reality of the Father, the Son and the Ruach HaKodesh,

As you might imagine there is NO single, universally accepted Doctrine of the Trinity within Christianity since indeed it is a manmade doctrine and is not a direct passage from Holy Scripture. Nearly every denomination has its own version of it and some denominations don't believe in the three-Gods-in-one theology at all. But the point is that those who do say that it is valid also say that it's in the Bible. In reality, however, the Doctrine of the Trinity is only an interpretation of a Biblical passage made by certain Church authorities; but in common Christian speech and thinking, Holy Scripture and the Doctrine of the Trinity are essentially the same things, carrying the same weight of authority. That's how it worked in Judaism when the term "the Law" was used. Some of what was said to comprise "the Law" was indeed taken word for word directly from Holy Scripture (the Law of Moses, the Torah), but most of the time by Paul's day what was ordained and followed by Jewish society was what manmade Tradition (Halakhah) said that the Law of Moses meant or led to.

In any case the point is that often in the NT era, like here in Romans 2:12, the term "the Law" had a rather broad, general sense to it that didn't intend to make any scholarly or technical differentiation between the Law of Moses and the various manmade Jewish traditions that had developed especially since the Babylonian exile; it was all considered as equally valid and of the same substance and, most importantly, of the same level of divine authority. Again; it works very similarly in the Christian Church as regards doctrines and Scripture.

As used here in Romans chapter 2 what we must try to grasp is that "the Law" was more than a set of religious rulings for Jews to follow; it described and instilled an entire way of life. The Law is what defined Jewish identity. Following "the Law" was what separated Jews from gentiles. So to a Jew a person who lived "without the law" indicated a non-Jew....a gentile. There was no such thing as a Jew who lived "without the law", or that person wouldn't still be considered as a Jew.

And interestingly Paul says that a person who was raised without the Law (a gentile) was as liable to offend God and perish as the Jewish person who was raised in a society that revolved around the Law (the Law in its broad sense, more than only the Law of Moses) but nonetheless

this Jew could offend God by not obeying the Law. So what Paul is plainly saying is that simply being a Jew doesn't immunize you from God's wrath. In Christian-ese: simply being a Jew doesn't save you. And especially so if you break the Law that is the main thing that you cling to as what separates you, even elevates you, from gentiles.

All will be judged according to the standard they had. The Gentiles will perish (i.e., face final judgment) because of their sin (cf. vv. 14–15) even though they are without the law (they don't have the written laws of the OT). The Jews are not spared judgment simply because they possess the law (of the OT), for those who transgress the law will be judged for their transgressions.⁴¹

12–13 All who have sinned outside the framework of Torah. Despite the assertion of Sanhedrin 11:1, which teaches that “all of Isra’el has a share in the world to come,” Sha’ul explains that being Jewish or having a knowledge of Torah will not automatically save one from God’s judgment, or guarantee eternal life (cf. Matt. 3:9–10; Acts 10:28; Gal. 2:15).⁴²

13(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

There is no form of the “deceitfulness of sin” more insidious or more prevalent (because of its subtle power over the selfrighteous hear) than that of the false comfort or false peace because of merely knowing God’s truth. We shall find that the Gospel speaks of the “obedience of faith,” whereas disobedience and unbelief are interchangeable words.

A person’s habitual conduct, whether good or evil, reveals the condition of his heart. Eternal life is not rewarded for good living; that would contradict many other Scriptures which clearly state that salvation is not by works, but is all of God’s grace to those who believe (e.g., Rom. 6:23; 10:9-10; 11:6; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

A person’s doing good shows that his heart is regenerate. Such a person, redeemed by God, has eternal life. Conversely a person who continually does evil and rejects the truth shows that he is unregenerate, and therefore will be an object of God’s wrath.⁴³

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

Verse 13 continues with the theme of "doing". 13 For it is not merely the hearers of Torah whom God considers righteous; rather, it is the doers of what Torah says who will be made righteous in God's sight.

Paul is primarily talking to Jews (Believing Jews). So Paul continues to demonstrate that he thinks the Torah must continue to be observed. At the same time, Paul is also making it clear to Jews that just because they listen to the Torah doesn't mean that they will do the Torah. God isn't impressed with career students; God wants career doers.

In verse 13 Paul says something that would have really bothered Jews of his day. He says that being one who hears the Law doesn't make the hearer (a Jewish hearer) righteous before God. Rather it is those Jews who DO the Law who are righteous. Here are a couple of things to

⁴¹ ESV Study Bible Notes

⁴² Complete Jewish Study Bible Notes

⁴³ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

notice. Notice how it is not that those who "read" the Law, but rather those who "hear". Where did one "hear" the Law in Paul's day? In the synagogue. Traditions were taught orally, as they had not yet been written down. And Holy Scripture, since it had long ago been translated into Greek, was more accessible to the average Diaspora Jew than it ever had been. But still most Jews did not possess a Bible. So indeed, nearly universally Jews were "hearers" of the Law (Traditions and Scripture), but they heard it in the synagogue from the mouths of Pharisees and not at the Temple. The other thing is that in Paul's day the Jewish societal belief was that being Jewish automatically made you righteous before God. Any kind of salvation experience for a Jew had to do with being physically saved from a bad circumstance (for instance, from being occupied and oppressed by Rome). The kind of salvation that Christianity envisions, and that Paul preaches, is meant in the spiritual sense (that is, we are saved in the sense of our souls being given eternal life by the Lord). This is the reason that Paul is explaining to these Jews of the city of Rome that merely being Jewish doesn't keep them safe from God's wrath. And this thought would have severely agitated most of the Jewish community including some of the Jewish Believers.⁴⁴

McGee: I hear it said that the heathen are lost because they haven't heard of Christ and haven't accepted Him. My friend, they are lost because they are sinners. That's the condition of all mankind. Men are not saved by the light they have; they are judged by the light they have. "For not the hearers of the law are just before God" -- many folk seem to think that if they just approve the Sermon on the Mount, they are saved.⁴⁵

Guzik: 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.

The Jewish person – or the religious person – may think that he is saved because he has the law; but has he kept it? The Gentile may think that he is saved because he does not have the law, but has he kept the dictates of his own conscience?

“People will be condemned, not because they have the law or do not have the law, but because they have sinned.” (Morris)⁴⁶

Paul reaffirms the principle enunciated in vv. 6–11, that the doers of the law are the ones who are righteous before God, and that their justification will be pronounced on the last day.⁴⁷

¹⁴For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

Gentiles = e;qnoj ethnos, interchangeable with the Hebrew goyim, nations foreign to Israel.
[This refutes the claim that God gave the Law to all nations...]

The Jews looked down on the Gentiles partly because they did not have the revelation of God's will in the Mosaic Law. But, as Paul pointed out, there are moral Gentiles who do by nature

⁴⁴ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

⁴⁵ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁴⁶ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

⁴⁷ ESV Study Bible Notes

things required by the Law. Such persons show that the Law is not to be found only on tablets of stone and included in the writings of Moses; it is also inscribed in their hearts and is reflected in their actions, consciences, and thoughts.⁴⁸

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

Paul expands on his line of thought in verse 14 as it applies to gentiles. He says that when gentiles who don't have the Law of Moses nonetheless follow the spirit and principles of the Law, then they themselves are the Law. Again: this means that they follow the natural law, which is but a general version of the Law of Moses. "Being themselves a law" means that the Law is "within them"; it is made part of them. The law (meaning the natural law) is contained in their innate sense of right and wrong (something that all humans have in common). Then we get a familiar promise from a distant past in verse 15. Paul says that the lives of these gentile Believers demonstrate outwardly the behaviors that the Law of Moses demands; and this is because the desire to do what is right before God (that is the desire, and the knowledge, to follow God's laws) is written on their hearts. Where have we heard this phrase "written on their hearts" as regards the Law, before?

Jeremiah 31:30-32 CJB 30 "Here, the days are coming," says ADONAI, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Isra'el and with the house of Y'hudah. 31 It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers on the day I took them by their hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt; because they, for their part, violated my covenant, even though I, for my part, was a husband to them," says ADONAI. 32 "For this is the covenant I will make with the house of Isra'el after those days," says ADONAI: "I will put my Torah within them and write it on their hearts; I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Jews also have the natural law written on their hearts since even though they are set apart from gentiles, yet they obviously remain part of humanity in general. So since the natural law is written on every human being's heart since the days of Adam and Eve, then why in Jeremiah do we find that the "Law" will be written on the hearts of the houses of Israel and Judah as a sign of a new covenant with God? Because the Law of Moses, which was given to Israel on stone tablets, something external to them, will eventually be given to all Israel in their hearts. Will it be an entirely different law than the Mosaic Law or the natural law, which itself is nothing but a more or less condensed version of the Law of Moses? No; it is as David Sterns, the author of the CJB says: God will put the Torah (the Law of Moses) into Israel's heart because it is fully compatible with the natural law that is already in Israel's heart. In fact, it is the completed Torah that will be written on their hearts just as Yeshua said that He came to complete the Torah, not to abolish it.

So, says Paul, it is the doers of the Law who are judged righteous by God. And, surprisingly, this applies to the group that does NOT have the Law (gentiles) as well as the group that DOES have the Law (Jews). KJV Romans 2:14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

Needless to say verses 13 and 14 seem very difficult to understand and would have upset the Jewish community to no end. But now here is something that causes great consternation within the Christian community. It is best seen in the KJV. In verse 13 we read: KJV Romans 2:13 For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

⁴⁸ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

Did you hear that? Doers of the Law shall be justified. Let's pause to define a term. In Christian parlance, the word "justified" means to be made righteous before God through faith in Christ. Modern Christianity, dating back to Luther, emphasizes that since justification is through faith alone, then it is impossible that works (physically doing something) can be involved. So how does that operate here when clearly Paul says that it is the "doers of the Law (who) shall be justified"? Folks, this is one big sticky wicket because if we stop right here and go no further, understand that Paul just literally said that if one does the Law then that will be their justification before God. So does Paul mean that one can either be justified by doing the Law, or justified by faith in Christ? That indeed there is an option A and option B for salvation? Or, as some have decided, Jews are justified by doing the Law but gentiles are justified by faith in Christ? So indeed Christ is NOT for the Jews but only for gentiles?

Part of the problem with this verse comes with the translation from the Greek to the English and a determination by Christian commentators to insert the word "justification" where I don't think it necessarily belongs. Essentially they try to make two English words "righteous" and "justification" that both come from the SAME Greek word mean two different things in order to wind up with a theological result that they have predetermined. Let me help you through this very real dilemma. The reality is that the Greek words used in verse 13 for when this verse says that merely hearers of the Law will NOT be just before God, but only the doers of the law shall be justified, are the exact same root word in slightly different forms and both times they are used in our passage they actually mean righteous (not justified). Recall from an earlier lesson in Romans that the standard root word for righteous in Greek is *dikaioo* and when it is used here in verse 13 *dikaioo* is applied to both to the hearer of the Law NOT being deemed by God as just and to those who are justified by DOING the Law. That is, English translators customarily choose to use the words just and justified instead of using the more standard and correct word righteous. This is the result of lots of literary gymnastics by Bible commentators to try and figure out how to wiggle out of the problem that on the one hand Christians proclaim that we can only be justified by faith in Jesus, but on the other hand we have Paul saying bluntly and clearly that the doers of the Law shall be justified. And we find this is in all English versions so it is not an error.

EP Sanders dealt with this conundrum in a wonderfully creative way. He says that we first need to replace the word "justified" (a uniquely Christian term when used within the Church that means to be made righteous on account of Christ), with the word *righteoused*. I know that sounds strange; Sanders is adding an e-d to the end of the noun righteous to make it into the verb *righteoused* (a word that doesn't actually exist in the English vocabulary). But since the Greek words used in verse 13 are but variations of *dikaioo*, which clearly means righteous, then it is much more helpful and appropriate to our understanding to use our newly minted English word *righteoused* than sticking the word justified in here just because we want to give it a distinctively Christian connotation. The beauty of using the word *righteoused* is that it doesn't carry a particularly Christian or a particularly Jewish context with it. By using *righteoused* then we understand the true meaning of what Paul is communicating, which is to say that a person is made truly righteous ONLY by God Himself taking a divine action upon that person to bring it about. God reached down from Heaven and *righteoused* that person. That is, God, through His own unique power and sovereign decision, changed a person who was not righteous into a person who now is righteous in His sight. He *righteoused* him.

But now we have the other dilemma to deal with. Is it true, then, that one can either do the Law in order to be made righteous OR one can have faith in the Jewish Messiah to be made

righteous? The means to untangle this is to understand what the phrase "doing the Law" means according to Paul.

Paul said in verses 9 and 10: Romans 2:9-11 CJB 9 Yes, he will pay back misery and anguish to every human being who does evil, to the Jew first, then to the Gentile; 10 but glory and honor and shalom to everyone who keeps doing what is good, to the Jew first, then to the Gentile. 11 For God does not show favoritism.

So the reward for those who do evil is misery, and the reward for doing good is glory, honor, and shalom. Thus we find that the results for those who "do what is good" are the same as for "the doers of the Law". And this is why Paul is able to say that gentiles who do what is good, but don't have the Law, are the same as Jews who have the Law and they do the Law. Both gentiles and Jews are essentially doing the Law because to Paul "doing the Law" is a faith-oriented obedience to God.

What does this mean for us? Please focus all your attention on this, because if you can apprehend this it will answer many questions for you. It means that Paul is saying that it is the Law (the Law of Moses, the Torah) that in its entirety embodies the standard that MUST be met if a person hopes to be made righteous by God (or in Christian terminology, if a person hopes to be justified by God). But by this I do NOT mean that the Law itself is what makes us righteous. Rather I mean that Paul's purpose is NOT to show how a person can be justified by God (be righteous) but rather what the standard for justification is. And the standard is set forth in the Law by showing us what is good and right in God's eyes, and what is not.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. It's the Olympic trials and you are a star pole vaulter. But the rules say that it isn't simply an issue of whoever vaults the highest at the trials gets a trip to the Olympics. Rather it is that a particular height has been set by the Olympic Committee as a standard and it must be met or exceeded if a pole vaulter is going to qualify for the Olympics. If the height standard is 17 feet, and best pole vaulter present at the trials only vaults 16'11", then nobody gets to go because nobody met the standard. But even more, the Olympic committee doesn't tell you HOW to get yourself to that standard. All they've done is to set the standard height that must be met, along with certain rules as boundaries for however you intend to get there. And Paul says that the Law lays out the standard for being right with God. How are you able to meet that standard? That's a different issue. But, whether Jew or gentile, whether you have the Law of Moses as your moral guide or you have the natural law that all human beings have as your only moral guide, the standard for being righteous is the same.⁴⁹

Guzik: Although not having the law, are a law to themselves: Paul explains why the Gentile can be condemned without the law. Their conscience (which is the work of the law written in their hearts) is enough to condemn them – or, theoretically this law on the heart is enough to justify them.

Written in their hearts: Many pagan authors of Paul's day referred to the "unwritten law" within man. They thought of it as something that pointed man to the right way. Though it is not embodied in written laws, it is in some ways more important than the written law.

A law to themselves does not mean that these "obedient Gentiles" made up their own law (as we use the expression "a law unto himself"), but that they were obedient to conscience, the work of the law residing in themselves.

⁴⁹ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

“He indeed shows that ignorance is in vain pretended as an excuse by the Gentiles, since they prove by their own deeds that they have some rule of righteousness.” (Calvin)⁵⁰

ESV:14–16 Some have suggested that these verses speak of Gentile obedience that leads to salvation (cf. vv. 7, 10). It is clear, however, that Paul explains here why Gentiles who do not have the law will face judgment apart from the law (see v. 12). The reason it is fair for God to judge them for their evil is that God's law is written on their hearts, so that their consciences attest to what is right and what is wrong in their behavior. Paul does not imply that the testimony of human conscience is always a perfect moral guide (for people have conflicting thoughts about their moral behavior, sometimes excusing themselves from wrongdoing), but the very existence of this testimony is sufficient to render people accountable to God. (Elsewhere Paul indicates that people's consciences can be distorted by sin; see 1 Cor. 8:7, 10; 10:29; 1 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:15.)⁵¹

14–16 For whenever Gentiles, who have no Torah, do naturally what the Torah requires. Gentiles were not given the Torah at Mount Sinai, but when doing naturally what the Torah requires, this passage reveals that the conduct, which the Torah dictates, is for them, written upon their hearts (Jer. 31:32; Heb. 8:8–12).⁵²

15 Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

Moral Gentiles by their actions show that the requirements (lit., “the work”) of the Law are written on their hearts. This is confirmed by their consciences, the faculty within human beings that evaluates their actions, along with their thoughts that either accuse or excuse them of sin. This is why Paul called such Gentiles a law for themselves.

Conscience is an important part of human nature, but it is not an absolutely trustworthy indicator of what is right. One's conscience can be

“good” (Acts 23:1; 1 Tim 1:5, 19) and

“clear” (Acts 24:16; 1 Tim 3:9; 2 Tim 1:3; Heb 13:18), but it can also be

“guilty” (Heb 10:22),

“corrupted” (Titus 1:15),

“weak” (1 Cor 8:7, 10, 12), and

“seared” (1 Tim 4:2).

All people need to trust the Lord Jesus Christ so that “the blood of Christ” might “cleanse [their] consciences” (Heb. 9:14).

[vv.14 & 15 are a parenthesis explanatory of vv.12 &13.]⁵³

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

But if the Law is the standard, how can people who don't have the Law (gentiles) even know what the standard is? Paul answers that question in verse 15 (we'll go back to the CJB).

⁵⁰ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

⁵¹ ESV Study Bible Notes

⁵² Complete Jewish Study Bible Notes

⁵³ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

Romans 2:15 CJB For their lives show that the conduct the Torah dictates is written in their hearts. Their consciences also bear witness to this, for their conflicting thoughts sometimes accuse them and sometimes defend them

While the CJB captures the overall meaning of this verse very well, I also want you to hear this same verse in a different English version, the ESV, because it is a little more literal to the Greek.

ESV Romans 2:15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them

A couple of things to see here. First, Paul says that the lives of those gentiles who naturally don't have the Law of Moses as their guide, nonetheless demonstrate that the WORK of the Law is written on their hearts. Since to a Christian a work is a physical action, how can a physical action be written on our heart? Note that Paul is not speaking of the natural law in this case; rather he is still speaking about the Law of Moses. And the point he is making is that there are gentile Believers who have no knowledge of the Law of Moses and yet, ironically, they naturally do the requirements of the Law. They have deep within them a natural moral sensitivity that reflects God's will and standards that one would sooner expect to find in Jews who have the Law of Moses as their guide.

But second, to put a finer point on it, this verse doesn't say that "the law is written on their hearts"; it says that the "work" of the law is written on their hearts. Here is another verse that gives Christian Bible commentators fits because of this allergic reaction to anything that a Believer might do that even closely resembles "a work". And this is especially so when Paul says plainly, "the work of the Law is written on their hearts". Here's the thing; once again it is the English translation from the Greek, and not understanding Hebrew thought, that gets in our way and can give us a mistaken understanding.

In this verse the English word "work" (work of the Law) is what is usually used to translate the Greek word ergon. And while "work" isn't necessarily incorrect, without fail we take the word "work" to mean something like "labors" or "deeds". It has to do with our exertion or effort. But ergon has a little different sense to it in this context. It more leans towards meaning the business of something; what a certain thing is supposed to accomplish. We might say that the work of the United States Constitution is to bring equal justice for all. Or, for instance, there is an old management saying that the business of business is business. In other words, a business shouldn't get bogged down in other things or get distracted by other matters that in the end don't contribute to what the purpose of their business actually is. So in the 21st century way that English is spoken, rather than use the word "work" that makes us think that this is talking about deeds, a better translation would be: "They show that the business of the Law is written on their hearts..." In other words, Paul says that what the Law was created to accomplish.....the business of the Law....what the Law is truly all about....is written on these gentile's hearts even though they don't have the physical, written Law of Moses to guide them. The purpose and the standard of the Law is what is revealed to the hearts of these gentiles, even though the details of the Law are not.

I've used the term heart many times now but I want to remind you that I'm only using it the way the Bible literally uses it. But while in modern times we speak of the heart metaphorically as the seat of our emotions that is not what the Bible means. The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery says this about the use of the word heart in the Bible: "We associate thought and memory with

the brain today; but in the idiom of the Bible, thinking is a function of the heart". So heart in the Bible refers to our thoughts, not how we feel. The better word for our modern vocabulary instead of heart is mind. Every time we see the word heart in the Bible, we need to insert the word mind, according to what the words heart and mind means in English today versus what the word heart meant in ancient times. Biblically the heart is not about acting emotionally; it is not about feelings. Biblically, heart is about thinking, remembering, calculating and making decisions and moral judgments. So what is NOT being talked about is some kind of ethereal activity or unexplained emotional impulse that a gentile can't trace as to why he makes the moral choices that he does. Rather it is that Paul says that the standard of the Law has been written into the thinking and rational part of a human being, his mind, and that is why he is making the good moral choices that he is. And it is God who put it there.

Let me pause to make this point: Paul is saying all this in order to lead up to something. Paul is simply laying out the foundation of his case in an orderly way. And what he is doing is putting Jews and gentiles on equal footing, and explaining that Jews are not so privileged that their Jewish heritage somehow exempts them from God's wrath on judgment day. But neither are gentiles automatically evil (simply because they aren't Jews), and that because they don't know anything about the Law of Moses doesn't mean they are automatically condemned to God's wrath at judgment day. And finally, after making all these points, he declares that what he is saying is in accordance with the Gospel of Christ.

For the final time in this lesson, I'll remind you that this entire letter he is writing (the Book of Romans) is addressed to Believers and not all Romans or all humans in general! He is talking to Believers about Believing gentiles and Jews, but addresses each group within their own social context (the natural law and doing good for gentiles, the Law of Moses and obeying the Law for Jews). But then he ends up by saying that both amount to the same thing. And it is that "doing the Law" is in reality obedience to God, based on faith and trust. And that "doing the Law" in that sense is thus a necessity for both gentiles and Jews to avoid God's wrath at the judgment.

Beginning in verse 17 he continues his diatribe and takes aim at the thing that Jews value so greatly. In fact the word itself that Paul takes aim at, circumcision, is a term that Jews in his era actually called themselves: the circumcised. Thus Jews would call themselves the circumcised, and so called gentiles the un-circumcised. So as confounding as the next few verses might sound to gentiles and English speakers, Paul was doing no more than using the common Jewish vernacular of his day.⁵⁴

McGee: Now here is the fifth principle.

God can and will judge the heathen by his own conscience. Some folk think because the heathen do not have the revelation of God that they will escape God's judgment. But the fact is that they are not living up to the light they have. God will judge them on that basis.⁵⁵

Guzik: Their thoughts accusing or else excusing them: In theory, a man might be justified ("excused") by obeying his conscience. Unfortunately, every man has violated his conscience (God's internal revelation to man), just as every man has violated God's written revelation.

While Paul says in Romans 2:14 that a Gentile, may by nature do the things contained in the law he is careful to not say that a Gentile could fulfill the requirements of the law by nature.

⁵⁴ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

⁵⁵ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

Though God has His work within every man (resulting in conscience), man can corrupt that work, so that conscience varies from person to person. We also know that our conscience can become damaged through sin and rebellion, but then can be restored in Jesus.

If our conscience is condemning us wrongly, we can take comfort in the idea that God is greater than our heart (1 John 3:20).

Their conscience also bearing witness: People who have never heard God's word directly still have a moral compass they are accountable to – the conscience.

“God is describing how He has constituted all men: there is a ‘work’ within them, making them morally conscious.” (Newell)

“He is not saying that the law is written on their hearts, as people often say, but that the work of the law, what the law requires of people, is written there.” (Morris)⁵⁶

¹⁶In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

Continues the theme of vv.5-13, God's righteous judgment. The Agent of divine judgment is Jesus Christ (cf. John 5:22, 27; Acts 17:31). This judgment will deal with men's secrets (lit., “the hidden things of men”) and will reveal those things and prove God's judgment right (cf. 1 Cor. 4:5).

In this section (2:1-16) God is seen as the Creator-Sovereign of the universe conducting the moral government of His human creatures. God's absolute standards are known. God punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous impartially according to their works, which reveal their hearts. Since no human being—Jesus Christ excepted—can be declared righteous (justified) by God on the basis of his own merit, every human is condemned by God.

At this point in Paul's argument the way a person can secure a righteous standing before God has not yet been presented. Here the emphasis is on the justice of God's judgment, leading to the conclusion that nobody on his own can be declared righteous by God.

Paul's gospel is not the standard of God's judgment. The idea is that the righteous judgment of God is an essential ingredient of the gospel Paul preached and a reason for trusting Jesus' finished redemption.⁵⁷

McGee: We have a false idea today that because we happen to be good folk, that is, we think we are, that we'll be saved. God is going to judge the do-gooders. And He will judge them by Jesus Christ who said that if a man looks upon a woman to lust after her, he is guilty of adultery (see Matt. 5:27-28). This is only one example of the secrets of the human heart. Do you want the secrets of your heart brought out -- not the lovely things you have said, but the dirty little thoughts that come to you? This should cause all of us to flee to Jesus to save us!

God is going to judge religious people, the Jews in particular, because theirs was a God-given religion.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

⁵⁷ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

⁵⁸ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

Guzik: The day when God will judge: On this day no man will escape God's judgment by claiming ignorance of His written revelation. Violating God's internal revelation is enough to condemn us all.

"God therefore will judge all nations according to the use and abuse they have made of this word, whether it was written in the heart, or written on tables of stone." (Clarke)

According to my gospel: Notice that the day of judgment was a part of Paul's gospel. He did not shrink from declaring man's absolute accountability to God.

" 'My gospel.' Does not this show his courage? As much as to say, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God onto salvation to every one that believeth.' He says, 'my gospel,' as a soldier speaks of 'my colors,' or of 'my king.' He resolves to bear this banner to victory, and to serve this royal truth even to the death." (Spurgeon)

God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ: This concept is distinctively Christian. The Jews taught that God the Father alone would judge the world, committing judgment to no one – not even the Messiah.⁵⁹

17Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,

Not religious Profession. [vv.17-29 specifically addresses the Jew. Proud of the law, but not keeping it.]⁶⁰

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

In verse 17 as Paul continues his diatribe against the Believers of Rome; people he had never met. While in chapter one he took aim mostly at gentiles, here in chapter 2 he is taking aim mostly at Jews. But always these gentiles and Jews are assumed to be Believers in Yeshua. However Paul seems to be greatly concerned about what it is that they actually believe and practice, what doctrines their leaders and elders have taught them, and he clearly has a suspicion that while they claim trust in Yeshua they also continue, on some level, to participate in the anything-goes Roman Hellenistic society that is permeated with sexual deviance and perversion.

I want to make a point that I haven't since the Introduction to the Book of Romans. While in the field of literature the style that Paul is writing in is legitimately called "diatribe", yet from a Hebrew viewpoint he is merely making his case as any good studied Rabbi would. We find his style of making an argument used throughout the Jewish Talmud. The Talmud is a compilation of Jewish religious rulings that we would correctly call Halakhah, Jewish Law. It is true that the first part of the two works that together make up the Talmud (the Mishnah and then the Gemara) wouldn't exist for a couple of hundred years after Paul's day. But that doesn't change the fact that the Talmud merely records and uses the traditional way that Rabbis had long been debating and forming their religious interpretations and the resulting religious regulations that control Judaism. Regulations that we call Jewish Law or Halakhah. This reality will come more visibly into play as we get into Romans chapter 3, but it also plays a role in Romans chapter 2.

Since Christian Bible commentators have historically been uninterested in factoring in the realities of the Jewish society of 2nd Temple Judaism (Christ's and Paul's era) in their commentaries, because their view is that the New Testament belongs to gentile Christ followers and Jewishness plays no real role; and because of the additional understanding that the

⁵⁹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

⁶⁰ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

deciphering of the Dead Sea Scrolls has recently brought us, only in the last decade is it finally being acknowledged that much of what Paul says in his letters he says in the Jewish idiom of his day and thus it has a definite effect upon the meaning. However change is a slow process, and how these new findings will effect ancient and cherished Church doctrines (most of which have been derived from the Book of Romans) is unclear. What is clear is that there will be an effect, much of it not welcome by the more established and well known Christian denominations that have little interest in challenging some of their own faith principles that have made them who they are. So don't expect to take what you will learn to other Believers and have them instantly embrace it. Change takes time.⁶¹

McGee: Religion was no longer a crutch for this man. It caused him to be proud and self-sufficient. Light created an added responsibility, which brought a greater condemnation. The Jew had ten advantages over the Gentiles, which are listed in these verses. The first five are what he was: (1) bears the name Jew; (2) rests upon the law; (3) boasts in God; (4) knows the will of God; (5) proves the things which are more excellent, being instructed out of the Law.⁶²

Guzik: Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law: Every “boast” of the Jewish man in this passage concerns the possession of law. The Jewish people of Paul’s day were extremely proud and confident in the fact that God gave His holy law to them as a nation. They believed this confirmed their status as a specially chosen people, and thus insured their salvation.⁶³

17–20 Paul details the privileges of the Jews as the elect people of God. Their advantages are genuine, for God has given them his law and hence they are able to instruct the Gentiles with the truths God revealed to them.⁶⁴

If you call yourself a Jew. Paul was employing a rhetorical technique called “diatribe,” which means literally “to rub against.” Paul’s diatribe was not addressed to Jews but to Gentiles; its purpose was to teach the Gentiles about avoiding hypocrisy. Paul was not arguing that Jews should abandon the law but rather that they should adhere to the law as believers in Jesus. Faith and right action must accompany one another.⁶⁵

18 **And knowest *his* will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;**

Here (vv17 & 18) include the five bases of Jewish religious pride:

- 1) Being called a Jew;
- 2) Relied on the Law;
- 3) Boasting of God;
- 4) Knowing God’s will;
- 5) Instructed (in the minutia) of the Law⁶⁶

⁶¹ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

⁶² Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁶³ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

⁶⁴ ESV Study Bible Notes

⁶⁵ NIV First-Century Study Bible Notes

⁶⁶ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

19 And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,

McGee: The last five personal privileges of the Jew are what he did: (1) Art persuaded that thou thyself art a guide of the blind; (2) a light of them that are in darkness; (3) a corrector of the thoughtless or immature; (4) a teacher of babes or proselytes; and (5) having in the Law the outward form of knowledge and truth.⁶⁷

20 An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

Guzik: Having the form of knowledge: Although the Jew should gratefully receive the law as a gift from God, Paul will show how mere possession of the law justifies no one.⁶⁸

21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

McGee: Paul mentions three common sins: (1) immorality -- sin against others; (2) sensuality -- sin against self; and (3) idolatry -- sin against God.

"Teachest thou not thyself?" In other words, "Do you practice what you preach?" For many of us our preaching is better than our living.

"Dost thou commit sacrilege?" -- or "Do you rob temples?" When the Jew was in Babylonian captivity, he took "the gold cure," and, as far as I can tell, he was never given to idolatry after that. However, he didn't mind handling merchandise that came from heathen temples and selling it in his business. Today there are certain Christians who handle merchandise in their business (in order to make money) that they would condemn in their church.

Now the three sins that Paul mentions -- immorality, sensuality, and idolatry -- he had dealt with in inverse order in chapter 1. Idolatry was the terrible climax for the Jew; he could go no lower than that. I wonder if you and I make a mockery of the person of Christ. Someone has put the question in poetic language:

The gospel is written a chapter a day
By deeds that you do and words that you say.
Men read what you say, whether faithless or true,
Say, what is the gospel according to you?⁶⁹

Guzik: You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? It comes down to this principle: "You have the law, do you keep it? You can see how others break the law, do you see how you break it also?"

⁶⁷ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁶⁸ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

⁶⁹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

Much of the rabbinic Judaism of Paul's day interpreted the law so that they thought they were completely justified by the law. Jesus exposed the error of such interpretations (Matthew 5:19-48).

God applies His law to both our actions and our attitudes. Sometimes we only want our attitudes evaluated, and sometimes only our actions. God will hold us accountable for both motives and actions.

“Hypocrites can talk of religion, as if their tongues did run upon patterns, they are fair professors, but foul sinners; as was that carnal cardinal Cremensis, the pope's legate, sent hither, a.d. 1114, to interdict priests' marriages, and being taken in the act with a common strumpet, he excused it by saying he was no priest himself, but a corrector of them.” (Trapp)⁷⁰

21–24 Paul zeros in on the main problem with the Jews. They fail to practice the law they proclaim, and hence they will face judgment. Their boast in God is nullified by their failure to obey him. Obviously, Paul is not accusing all Jews of stealing, committing adultery, and robbing temples. It is possible that Paul's critique of the Jews is similar to what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:21–48), so that the Jews are criticized for not observing the true intent of the law. But it is more likely that Paul is speaking literally of Jewish disobedience, citing glaring examples to illustrate the principle that the Jews transgress the very law they treasure and teach.⁷¹

22 **Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?**

“Commit sacrilege” =to traffic in idols.”

Guzik: You who abhor idols, do you rob temples: Morris speaks to the idea of robbing temples. “Clearly some people held that a Jew might well make profits from dishonest practices connected with idolatry, and Paul may well have had this in mind.”⁷²

23 **Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?**

24 **For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.**

Quoting Isaiah 52:5 (LXX). Even today: cf. Ezek 36:16-24ff.

Guzik: The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you: Paul reminds the Jew that God said in the Old Testament that the failure of the Jew to obey the law causes Gentiles to blaspheme God.⁷³

⁷⁰ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

⁷¹ ESV Study Bible Notes

⁷² https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

⁷³ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

²⁵For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.

Circumcision, here used, is the mark of the nation's separation to God, valid only if one were thus really separated to God.⁷⁴

Torah Class, Seed of Abraham; Tom Bradford:

The word circumcision is repeated numerous times in these verses, as is the word "uncircumcision", which isn't really a proper English word. And the reason that uncircumcision isn't a real word is that it is an oxymoron; it is not something that can rationally exist at least on the physical level. That is, a male cannot be circumcised and then have it reversed (uncircumcised). Although I am told that there actually have been surgical attempts to hide a former circumcision in modern times, even so, especially in Paul's day, uncircumcision was a physical impossibility and no one would ever think in terms of having his foreskin somehow reattached!

Therefore a person who Paul identifies as being uncircumcised merely means a male who has not yet had a circumcision. Since Jewish males are given no choice in the matter (they are circumcised as infants on the 8th day after their birth), then "the uncircumcised" can only mean gentiles. So there is a distinct difference between what Paul is meaning when he says "uncircumcised" as opposed to "uncircumcision". Uncircumcised means a gentile; uncircumcision means a Jew who had a circumcision but now it has been reversed. But since that is physically impossible, then obviously Paul means uncircumcision in different sense. But what sense?

The reason that Paul uses the word circumcision is precisely because in this portion of his letter he is talking primarily to Jews. And for a Jewish male there existed then, and exists now, no more emphatic indication of his Jewishness than having been circumcised. Circumcision was, in many ways, a point of great pride because it was felt that God so exalted His Jewish people that to be Jewish was part and parcel of being accepted by God as righteous. So gentiles (the uncircumcised) were generally seen as evil and not righteous and could expect only God's curses and His wrath; but Jews (the circumcised) generally thought of themselves as good and righteous and could expect only God's blessings and His mercy. Trying to puncture this wrong attitude of his fellow Jews is largely what the Book of Romans has thus far been about, as step-by-step Paul builds a case for accepting the Gospel of Christ that he teaches; a Gospel that applies equally to Jews and gentiles. And it begins by the Jews he is currently addressing understanding that this sense of security that they have been relying on....that is, that merely being Jewish....merely being circumcised....was sufficient to be seen as righteousness by Yehoveh, is really a false security because it isn't true.

So if you are a Jew reading what Paul says in the first part of these final verses of chapter 2, then it appears that Paul is saying that circumcision does not and never had any real value. I suspect that many Jews were offended and never read any farther. And I assure you from having taught Romans many years ago in a very different setting, most Christians take this as meaning that Jews no longer having any special status before God, and so satisfied, they don't read any farther either. So Paul begins by making it crystal clear who it is that he is challenging: he says "if you call yourself a Jew".

Now would be a good time to demonstrate something that might not have occurred to you. The terms Hebrew and Israelite were no longer in fashion in the New Testament era. Rather the

⁷⁴ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

term was Y'hudi; we translate that into English as Jew. But there is another very important dynamic that is not to be missed; tribalism has given way to nationalism. That is, the Old Testament dealt with Israel at a time when they were organized as 12 distinct tribes, and the tribes each continually vied to be the most dominant of their brother tribes. This was not a plot or an aberration within Israel; it was (and remains) the very essence of the tribal way of life and social structure, and we see it still being played out today in the Middle East and in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other backwards places where Islam dominates.

But when the 10 Israelite tribes of the north (typically called Ephraim in the Bible) were exiled by the Assyrians from their tribal territories in the early 700's B.C., then the rivalries among the tribes of Israel all but ceased. All that remained of Israel were two tribes: the tribe of Judah, a huge dominant tribe, and the much smaller and weaker tribe of Benjamin. Without doubt there were also miniscule remnants of the other 10 tribes who declared loyalty to Judah, or through family ties due to marriage, were allowed to remain within the tribal territories of Judah and Benjamin. But especially upon the return from the Babylonian exile around 500 B.C, the Hebrews who came back to the land saw themselves as more unified, belonging to one nation, Judah, and not divided up as members of particular tribes. Certainly they remembered, and no doubt were usually proud of, their ancient family heritage that would have tied them to one or another of the 12 tribes. But just as Americans can look back a few generations and be aware of our heritage as having come from German, or English, or French, or Asian stock, we don't identify ourselves or feel any special loyalty to Germany, England, France, or perhaps China. We think only in national terms: we are Americans. So by Paul's day, Jew was a national term (like American) that indicated an attachment to the nation of Judah. The Diaspora Jews personally felt, and were seen by gentiles, as maintaining a hereditary tie to the nation of Judah, and therefore they maintained a certain measure of loyalty to Judah, often above loyalty to the country and culture they now lived among. And this was always a source of problems for the Jews and it regularly led to persecutions. That is, the Jews tended not to fully assimilate into whatever nation they wandered but rather they set up their own separate Jewish communities. And at the bottom of this mindset to disperse but also to be separate was the matter of circumcision, which was the foundation of their desired identity as Jews. So circumcision played a big role in Judaism.

Thus when Paul goes through this rather frank, harsh, and a bit tedious and repetitive diatribe in verses 17 – 29, it is because of the cultural reality for the Jews at that time that I have just described. In many ways this is all about what Paul sees as a bad attitude and he was intent on adjusting it. Paul saw the issue of circumcision (in the sense that Jews typically thought of it) not only as an unnecessary wall of division between Believing Jews and Believing gentiles that God had never authorized, but also as a possible barrier to Jews accepting the true message of the Gospel and their own Jewish Messiah. Because after all: if in their Jewish pride they truly believed that their Jewishness (expressed most fundamentally by their circumcision) automatically brought them righteousness before God, then why would they need to be "saved" by the Gospel of Christ?

Paul explains that as Jews they have convinced themselves that since they HEAR the Law spoken then they must know what is right and wrong. So how is it then that since they see themselves as especially qualified guides to the blind and instructors for the spiritually unaware (the spiritually unaware meaning gentiles), that the very things gleaned from the Law that they instruct others to obey, they themselves violate? They claim to have all the advantages of being God's chosen people, of being the privileged receivers and keepers of God's Word to humankind,

but in the end they don't do what God's Word demands. Let's remember who the teachers of the Law were in Paul's day: the Pharisees. And what did the Pharisees live by and teach? Halakhah; Tradition. Even though Jews said among themselves that they obeyed the Law, for them the Law wasn't actually the original Law of Moses and it hadn't been for several centuries; they lived according to religious rulings (Halakhah) that various groups of Pharisees taught in the synagogues, and we hear Yeshua rail against this in the Gospel of Luke.

Mark 7:1-14 CJB 1 The P'rushim and some of the Torah-teachers who had come from Yerushalayim gathered together with Yeshua 2 and saw that some of his talmidim ate with ritually unclean hands, that is, without doing n'tilatadayim. 3 (For the P'rushim, and indeed all the Judeans, holding fast to the Tradition of the Elders, do not eat unless they have given their hands a ceremonial washing. 4 Also, when they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they have rinsed their hands up to the wrist; and they adhere to many other traditions, such as washing cups, pots and bronze vessels.) 5 The P'rushim and the Torah-teachers asked him, "Why don't your talmidim live in accordance with the Tradition of the Elders, but instead eat with ritually unclean hands?" 6 Yeshua answered them, "Yeshu'yahu was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites- as it is written, 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from me. 7 Their worship of me is useless, because they teach man-made rules as if they were doctrines.' 8 "You depart from God's command and hold onto human tradition. 9 Indeed," he said to them, "you have made a fine art of departing from God's command in order to keep your tradition! 10 For Moshe said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' 11 But you say, 'If someone says to his father or mother, "I have promised as a korban" ' ' (that is, as a gift to God) " ' "what I might have used to help you," 12 then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. 13 Thus, with your tradition which you had handed down to you, you nullify the Word of God! And you do other things like this."

So the result of this hypocritical behavior of these Believing Jews Paul is berating in chapter 2 is that God's name is being blasphemed by gentiles. In other words, these Jews who think their Jewishness (especially marked by their circumcision) gives them special privilege before God, and even those who claim to have some sort of belief in Yeshua don't live the good and righteous lives that are the standard presented in the true Law (the Torah, the Law of Moses), and the result is that the gentile nations think that what Jewish Believers believe is all rather worthless since it certainly doesn't seem to be reflected in their lives. These Jews Paul is addressing are hurting the cause of the Gospel.

Wow. What an indictment and how deeply we all had better think about this as it pertains to ourselves and to whatever congregation or fellowship we belong. Are we so rules conscious, so firmly entrenched in our manmade traditions, and so certain that we hold all the truth, and yet we don't display and live out the most fundamental elements of our faith so we're mostly a turn off to people who desperately need Christ but in us they see no reason to seek Him?

Mathew 22:36-40 CJB 36 "Rabbi, which of the mitzvot in the Torah is the most important?" 37 He (Yeshua) told him, "'You are to love

ADONAI your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.' 38 This is the greatest and most important mitzvah. 39 And a second is similar to it, 'You are to love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All of the Torah and the Prophets are dependent on these two mitzvot."

Most Christians are familiar with verses 37 – 39. But verse 36 and verse 40 are generally overlooked. Verse 36 says that the commandments to love God and love our neighbor are taken from where? From the Torah, the Law of Moses. Loving God and loving our neighbor isn't a New Testament innovation; Christ says it comes from the Law. But equally important are the words of verse 40 when Yeshua says that all of the Torah (the Law) and the Prophets are built upon the foundation of these two bed-rock God-principles. That means that the 10 Commandments rest upon loving God and loving our neighbor. The 10 Commandments are the 10 basic divine statements about how we show love to Our Creator and to our fellow man. And then the remaining 600 + laws of the Torah rest upon the 10 Commandments, each of them a nuance or a case study of one or another of the 10 Commandments and each giving important instructions regarding everyday circumstances, behaviors and predicaments and showing us how to love God and love our neighbor in the midst of our circumstances. But if however we take these laws to mean and to live out is not done in an attitude of sincerely loving God and loving our neighbor, then we've more than missed the mark; we have not attained nor recognized the standard for righteousness that the Law was created to show us. This is precisely what Paul is accusing the Jewish Believers of Rome of doing and he's reading them the riot act because of it. They of all people should know better, because as Jews they have had every advantage and especially they have had the Law in their midst for 1300 years.

So in verse 25 Paul now takes direct aim at the bull's eye of pride of these Believing Jews of Rome: their circumcision. They have leaned on their circumcision, depended upon it as proof of their righteousness, and that was never what was intended by God. Now I'm going to step on some toes. Within the Messianic and Hebrew Roots movement is this insistence among many that they are Torah observant and you should be as Torah observant as they are, in the standard they set, or you are less pious than them. This is the 21st century version of Paul's rant in Romans about Jews and their wrong-minded pride and reliance on being physically circumcised (indicating to them a national attachment to Judah, and a belief that being Jewish made them righteous). Let me tell you something: no one is Torah observant. And that goes for the most fastidious Ultra-Orthodox living in Israel as well. For one thing, about one-third of the Torah is directly dependent upon altar sacrifices, a Temple and a Priesthood, none of which exists. For another, many of the commandments are nearly impossible in today's world under today's laws and governments. This idea of demanding supposed rigid Torah observance according to the standards of some particular group almost always incorporates mostly Halakhah along with a healthy dose of personal preference, and very little of the Biblical Law of Moses.

Does that mean that after years of saying otherwise that I'm now saying we should not obey the Law of Moses? As Paul would say, "Heaven forbid!" I'm saying that we need to be humble enough to realize that as hard as we may sincerely try, and should try, we simply can't do it all and insist that we are Torah observant because in some cases circumstances prevent it, although in other cases (such as Kosher eating) it can be done rather easily. In other cases laws are stated in an ancient cultural idiom that no longer exists, and we're not even sure how those particular laws were carried out in ancient times.

At the other end of the scale, I must also say that any excuse for saying that since some laws can't be done then that means we don't have to do any of them is based on poor Bible scholarship. There has never been in a time in Israel's history from the moment they received the Law on Mt. Sinai, that they could do every single law precisely as written. Some laws were entirely circumstance related; some couldn't be done until Israel crossed the Jordan and settled in Canaan. Because of the fall of mankind and the inherent fallen nature of the world, many times one law would inherently conflict with another in their non-ideal world, just as it does in our non-ideal world. Once the Israelites got to Canaan there were other circumstances that prevented some laws of being carried out as written. They couldn't carry out all the Law in exile, but the Scriptures make it clear that they were never excused from doing the parts of the Law that they could do, especially as regarded morality and worshipping God. If the principle is that every single one of the 600 laws and commandments must be doable to its fullest at the current moment or none are enforceable, then never has the Law been enforceable. But of course the Bible makes it clear that that has never been God's attitude, instruction, or standard.

Even so, as we have learned that the Law is not abolished and as Believers in Christ we are indeed to obey it as best as can be done, we do it not to attain salvation but rather in obedience as the redeemed lifestyle of one who has been saved by grace. We must also not stand in judgment of others because they do the Law somewhat differently than we do, or perhaps don't do what we strongly believe they ought to do. And we must always carry out our desire to obey the Law in light of what our Messiah and Lord taught us: do the Law in the spirit of love, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and do the Laws for the purpose and pattern they were intended, which is to do them in far more than merely the ritual or the letter.

So in verse 25, after Paul seems to almost shame the Jews for even having a circumcision, he backtracks a bit and says that circumcision certainly has value, but only when you do what the Law says. Of itself, without accompanying proper behavior, you might as well have your circumcision undone. On the other hand, verse 26 says that if an uncircumcised man (a gentile Believer) lives his life by doing what the spirit and standard of the Law requires, won't it be as though he was one of God's set apart people: a Jew? In fact, this gentile Believer will act as a kind of judgment against a Believing Jew who knows all about the Law and in obedience to the Law has received a circumcision, but chooses not to be obedient to much of the remainder of the Law.

Then we get one of the more controversial and difficult statements so far: verse 28 has Paul saying that a true Jew or a real Jew isn't one who has merely had a circumcision in his flesh; but as it turns out, that's about as far as his faith takes him when it comes to doing the Law. And in fact, the point of circumcision is not about an operation in the flesh, but rather it is an important spiritual issue. Circumcision was always meant to be an outward sign of an inward spiritual condition. And the internal condition was to be a circumcised heart.....spiritually speaking, not literal. So a gentile Believer who trusts God and strives for the standard that the Law demonstrates, and does it with a sincere, loving, contrite heart, is more of a true Jew than a Jew who has had a circumcision and knows the Law backward and forward but doesn't do the Law or have a good spirit about whatever part of it he does do.

What is a "real Jew"? This has been debated endlessly. But clearly to Paul the standard of whether a person is or is not a "real Jew" is a spiritual measure and not a physical measure. So as it allows for the idea that a Believing gentile should be counted as a "real Jew" in the sense that Paul means it, I agree with that concept. But as Paul says clearly, it is meant purely in a spiritual sense and not in a literal sense. So it is not that a God-fearing gentile becomes a physical Jew or

even a national Jew. A Believing gentile does not suddenly have the right to immigrate to Israel as a Jew. It is also not that gentiles replace physical, national Jews. And it is not that gentiles suddenly acquire a Hebrew heritage or supernaturally find themselves with Israelite genes. Rather it is that Israel (and therefore Jews) was always about reflecting spiritual ideals of God's set apart people, whose main task was to serve God and bring about His will on earth. God was faithful to them; Israel was not faithful to Him. From the time Abraham was set apart, it was made clear that a gentile, by declaring Abraham's god as his own god, could become part of the set apart people. Essentially all any gentile does to come to the Lord, even in modern times, is to declare that Abraham's god, the God of Israel, is his or her God . Although I truly doubt that most gentile Christians even realize that that is what they're doing when they accept the Lord. Because by Paul's day the term Jew had become more of a national title that also includes a national religion (Judaism), I think I much prefer, and wish Paul had used, the term "true Israelite" rather than "true Jew". Because I think Israelite is closer to what he actually intended. Technically it was Israel that was meant to embody God's ideal of a set apart people for Himself; not Jews per se. But, once again, Paul of course speaks in the idiom of his day and in his day no one talked any longer about Israelites or Hebrews; those were more or less dead terms. Rather it was only about the remnant of the Israelites, the Jews.⁷⁵

McGee: Circumcision was the badge of the Mosaic system -- and that's all it was. There was no merit in the rite itself. That badge indicated that the man believed the Mosaic Law. Now for them to be transgressors of the Law brought circumcision into disrepute. That which should have been sacred, became profane.

This thought can be applied to our church sacraments. Water baptism is rightly a sacrament of the church, if it is the outward expression of a work of God in the heart. But it is a mockery if the person who is baptized gives no evidence of salvation. This also can be said of church membership. The lives of some church members make membership a mockery.⁷⁶

Guzik: For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law: Paul recognizes that a Jew may protest and say that his salvation is based on the fact that he is a descendant of Abraham, proven by circumcision. Paul rightly answers that this is irrelevant in regard to justification.

The Jew believed that his circumcision guaranteed his salvation. He might be punished in the world to come, but could never be lost.

In Paul's day, some Rabbis taught that Abraham sat at the entrance of hell and made certain that none of his circumcised descendants went there. Some Rabbis also taught "God will judge the Gentiles with one measure and the Jews with another" and "All Israelites will have part in the world to come." (Barclay)

Circumcision (or baptism – or any ritual in itself) doesn't save anyone. In the ancient world the Egyptians also circumcised their boys but it did not make them followers of the true God. Even in Abraham's day Ishmael (the son of the flesh) was circumcised, but it did not make him a son of the covenant.

Circumcision and baptism do about the same thing that a label on a can does. If the outer label doesn't match with what is on the inside, something is wrong! If there are carrots inside the can, you can put a label that says "Peas" but it doesn't change what is inside the can. Being born again changes what is inside the can, and then you can put the appropriate label on the outside.

⁷⁵ <http://www.torahclass.com/teacher/author/tom-bradford/new-testament-studies/new-testament-romans>

⁷⁶ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

Of course, this is not a new thought. The Law of Moses itself teaches this principle: Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer (Deuteronomy 10:16).⁷⁷

The Jews were inclined to believe that they would be spared at the last judgment by virtue of their circumcision. Circumcision was required of all Jewish males for entrance into the covenant (Gen. 17:9–14; Lev. 12:3), and hence it was likely viewed as a form of covenant protection. Circumcision was required of all Jewish males for entrance into the covenant (Gen. 17:9–14; Lev. 12:3), and hence it was likely viewed as a form of covenant protection. Paul argues, however, that those who violate the law are counted before God as uncircumcised. In other words, they are outside the covenant and therefore destined for judgment. Circumcision would be of value (Gk. *ōpheleō*) for salvation if the circumcised would obey the law perfectly, but no one can do that. Paul takes up the issue of circumcision again in Rom. 4:9–16; Gal. 2:3–5; 5:2–12; 6:12–15.⁷⁸

25–26 If you are a transgressor of Torah, your circumcision has become uncircumcision! The physical act of circumcision does not make a person righteous, but instead obeying Torah. Without obedience to Torah, the reality behind the symbol becomes meaningless (Kasdan, *God’s Appointed Customs* 17). See “Circumcision (B’rit-Milah),” Gen. 17.⁷⁹

26 **Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?**

McGee: To use another figure of speech, if my wife loses her wedding ring, that does not mean she becomes unmarried. Marriage is more than a wedding ring, although the ring may be the symbol of it.⁸⁰

Guzik: Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law: If a Gentile were to keep the righteous requirement of the law through his conscience (as Romans 2:15 shows), would he not be justified, instead of the circumcised Jewish man who did not keep the law? The point is emphasized: having the law or having a ceremony isn’t enough. God requires righteousness.

Morris quoting Manson: “If they are loyal to the good they know, they will be acceptable to God; but it is a very big ‘if’.”⁸¹

Not circumcised. This literally translates as “foreskinned” or “foreskinned from birth” (in v. 27) and is a different word than what Paul used for circumcision. The point is that both the “foreskinned” (Gentile) and the “circumcised” (Jew) are among the righteous—but not by merit of physical action.⁸²

⁷⁷ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

⁷⁸ ESV Study Bible Notes

⁷⁹ Complete Jewish Study Bible Notes

⁸⁰ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁸¹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

⁸² NIV First-Century Study Bible Notes

On the other hand, an uncircumcised person who keeps the moral norms of the law will be counted as circumcised, i.e., a member of the covenant people.⁸³

27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?

McGee: Using again the illustration of a wedding ring, to wear a wedding ring speaks of something sacred. But to be unfaithful to that which it stands for makes the wedding ring a disgrace. On one occasion when I was in a motel in another city, I saw a man who was a deacon in a church, sitting at a table, having a very friendly talk with a very beautiful young lady who was not his wife. The thing that impressed me was that as his hand hung over the side of the table, the light was shining on his wedding ring, making it stand out. I thought, what a mockery! When the man saw me, he was embarrassed, of course. But, you see, the wedding ring was meaningless.

The point Paul is making here is that circumcision should stand for something.⁸⁴

Guzik: And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? This is God's answer to the one who says, "What about the Pygmy in Africa who has never heard the gospel?" God will judge that Pygmy by what he has heard, and how he has lived by it. Of course, this means that the Pygmy will be guilty before God, because no one has perfectly lived by their conscience, or perfectly responded to what we can know of God through creation.

The problem of the "innocent native" is that we can't find an innocent native anywhere.

"What about the Pygmy in Africa who hasn't heard the gospel?" is a good question, but there are two far more important questions:

- What about you who hear the gospel, but reject it? What excuse is there for you?
- What about you, who are commanded to take the gospel to that Pygmy in Africa (Matthew 28:19), but refuse to do it?⁸⁵

And those (uncircumcised) Gentiles who keep the law will stand at the judgment and condemn (either literally or by the testimony of their good deeds) the Jews who had the covenantal advantages of the law (the written code) and circumcision.⁸⁶

28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

Cf. Isa 29:13.

⁸³ ESV Study Bible Notes

⁸⁴ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁸⁵ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

⁸⁶ ESV Study Bible Notes

29But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is *that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

“Whose praise...” = It is reality that counts with God. The true Jew (a contraction of “Judah,” which means “Praise”) is one who is circumcised in heart, who has judged his sinfulness in the sight of the Lord, and who now seeks to walk in accordance with the revealed will of God.

For the Christian, the same searching questions apply... If we glory in the gospel, our disobedience to the gospel dishonors God.

Let us not confuse Romans 2 with Revelation 20: at the Judgment Day there will be no reasoning or preaching: only condemnation “according to their works—the things written in the books.”

God’s great announcement of these principles of His Throne is here given to awaken us out of any false hopes about ourselves.⁸⁷

McGee: The Mosaic Law had already stated that circumcision was of the heart. Listen to Moses in Deuteronomy 10:16: "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked."⁸⁸

Guzik: Whose praise is not from men but from God: All the outward signs of religion may earn us praise from men, but they will not earn us praise from God. The evidence of our rightness with God is not contained in outward signs or works, and it is not assured because of our parentage. The evidence is found in the work of God in our heart which shows itself in fruit.

William Newell summarizes Romans 2 with “Seven Great Principles of God’s Judgment” that are worth noting:

- God’s judgment is according to truth (Romans 2:2)
- God’s judgment is according to accumulated guilt (Romans 2:5)
- God’s judgment is according to works (Romans 2:6)
- God’s judgment is without partiality (Romans 2:11)
- God’s judgment is according to performance, not knowledge (Romans 2:13)
- God’s judgment reaches the secrets of the heart (Romans 2:16)
- God’s judgment is according to reality, not religious profession (Romans 2:17-29)⁸⁹

True Jewishness and true circumcision are matters of the heart. They are the work of the Holy Spirit. The letter/Spirit contrast occurs three times in Paul (see also 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:6) and always compares the old era of redemptive history with the new age inaugurated by Jesus Christ. The law is described as letter because it cannot and does not transform anyone. The reference to the work of the Spirit demonstrates that the obedience described in Rom. 2:26–27 and in vv. 7, 10 is the result of the Spirit’s work. Therefore, it is not the obedience of the unregenerate that is in view here but rather the obedience of those who, by the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, have repented of their hard hearts (v. 5), who have received the Holy Spirit, and who are being enabled by the Spirit to live a new life characterized by obedience to God.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Chuck Missler, Notes on Romans, khouse.org

⁸⁸ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁸⁹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Rom/Rom-2.cfm?a=1048001

⁹⁰ ESV Study Bible Notes

Circumcision of the heart. Paul was not introducing something new but was alluding to Moses and the prophets (see Dt 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; 9:25–26; 31:33; Eze 44:7). The purpose of circumcision from the beginning was to reflect a spiritual reality, a metaphor for the heart's attachment to God.⁹¹

⁹¹ NIV First-Century Study Bible Notes