

Approximately Expository 35 minutes



Romans 2 - “The Danger of Religious Self-Righteousness”



Opening Prayer:

Father God, in the name of Jesus, we thank You for Your holy Word. We ask that You would search our hearts today. Remove pride. Remove self-righteousness. Remove anything that keeps us from fully surrendering to you Lord Jesus. Let Your Spirit convict, correct, and comfort us. May you Jesus, be glorified as we open Romans chapter 2. In Jesus Christ mighty name we pray, amen.



Historical Setting:

The Apostle Paul wrote Romans around A.D. 57 while in Corinth. The church in Rome was made up of both Jewish and Gentile believers. There was tension between the two groups.

In chapter 1, Paul clearly described the moral collapse of pagan society. Many Jewish readers would have nodded in agreement... **“Yes, Paul! Those pagan Gentiles are sinful!”**

But in chapter 2, Paul turns the spotlight.

He essentially says, **“Before you start pointing fingers ... examine your own heart.”**

Rome was filled with open immorality. But religion was also present ... especially among Jews who had the Law of Moses. They had Scripture. They had covenant history. They had tradition.

Yet having truth is not the same as obeying truth.

Romans chapter 2 confronts religious pride.

1. Beware of Judging Others (Romans 2:1-4):



(NIV)

Romans 2:1-4 You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. ² Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. ³ So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? ⁴ Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not

realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? ¹

Paul begins:

  (NIV) **“You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself...”** (v.1)

In chapter 1, Paul exposed obvious sin.
In chapter 2, he exposes hidden pride.

-   It's easy to condemn “those people.”
-    It's harder to confront our own hearts.

Jesus said in Matthew chapter 7:5,

  (NIV) **“...First take the plank out of your own eye...”** (Matthew 7:5 NIV)

¹ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ro 2:1–4.

Paul reminds them in verse 2:

  (NIV) **“Now we know that God’s judgment against those who do such things is based on truth.”** (v.2)

God judges with perfect accuracy. He sees motives, not just actions.

Verse 4 is powerful:

  (NIV) **“Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?”** (v.4)

- God’s patience is not permission.
- God’s kindness is an invitation.

 If you’re breathing, God is being patient with you.

   He is giving you time to repent.

2. God Judges the Heart (Romans 2:5-11):



(NIV)

Romans 2:5-11

⁵ But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

⁶ God "will repay each person according to what they have done." ^u

⁷ To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.

⁸ But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.

⁹ There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; ¹⁰ but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the

Gentile. ¹¹ For God does not show favoritism. ²

Paul warns in verse 5:

  (NIV) **“But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself...”** (v.5)

 Notice ... the issue is not ignorance.

   It is stubbornness.

God sees the heart.

Verse 6:

  (NIV) **“God ‘will repay each person according to what they have done.’”** (v.6)

- Works do not save us.
- But works reveal us.

² [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ro 2:5–11.

Look at verse 11:

  (NIV) **“For God does not show favoritism.”** (v.11)

- Being Jewish didn't guarantee righteousness.
- Being religious doesn't guarantee salvation.
- Going to church doesn't guarantee new birth.

God does not grade on a curve.
He judges truthfully.

3. Hearing vs. Doing (Romans 2:12-16):

  (NIV) ***Romans 2:12-16*** ***¹² All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³ For it is***

not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. ¹⁴ (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.) ¹⁶ This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares. ³

³ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ro 2:12–16.

Paul explains that Gentiles who didn't have the Law still had **conscience**.

Verse 14-15.   (NIV) **“Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law... they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts...”** (vv.14-15)

Every person has moral awareness.

But verse 13 cuts deep:

  (NIV) **“For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.”** (v.13)

- Hearing sermons is not enough.
- Owning a Bible is not enough.
- Posting Scripture online is not enough.

This is all great... however...

   The question is: Has your heart been changed?

👉 Religion can inform the mind but leave the heart untouched.

4. The Trap of Religious Confidence **(Romans 2:17-24):**



(NIV)

Romans 2:17-24 ¹⁷ **Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God; ¹⁸ if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; ¹⁹ if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, ²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— ²¹ you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? ²² You who say**

that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? ²⁴ As it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.” ^{o 4}

Now Paul speaks directly to the Jew: Look at verse 17.

  (NIV) **“Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God...”** (v.17)

The Jews had confidence in:

- . Their heritage
- . Their knowledge
- . Their role as teachers

⁴ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ro 2:17–24.

But Paul asks: Verse 21.

  (NIV) **“You, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself?”** (v.21)

That hits hard.

- They preached against stealing ... but stole.
- Preached against adultery ... but committed adultery.
- Condemned idols ... but dishonored God.

Verse 24 is devastating:

  (NIV) **“As it is written: ‘God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.’”** (v.24)

  When believers live hypocritically, the world mocks God.

The problem wasn't lack of knowledge.



It was lack of transformation.

5. True Religion Is Inward (Romans 2:25-29):



(NIV)

Romans 2:25-29

²⁵ Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. ²⁶ So then, if those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? ²⁷ The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.

²⁸ A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. ²⁹ No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart,

**by the Spirit, not by the written code.
Such a person's praise is not from other
people, but from God.** ⁵

Paul addresses circumcision ... the outward sign of covenant.

Look at verse 25.

  (NIV) **“Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised.”** (v.25)

   In other words ... outward ritual without inward reality is meaningless.

Then he gives one of the most powerful definitions in the New Testament:

Look at verses 28-29.

⁵ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ro 2:25–29.



(NIV)

“A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly... No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit...”

(vv.28-29)

God wants heart transformation.

- Not just attendance.
- Not just tradition.
- Not just morality.



A new heart.



This points us directly to Jesus.

Because if salvation depended on perfect obedience, we would all fail.

Romans chapter 2 levels the ground.

Chapter 1 condemned obvious sinners.

Chapter 2 confronts religious sinners.

By chapter 3 Paul will say:

“All have sinned.”

The Gospel in Romans 2:

Romans 2 prepares us for grace.

If we are honest, we all stand guilty.

- We judge others.
- We fail our own standards.
- We fall short of God's holiness.

But here is the glory of the gospel:

- Jesus fulfilled the Law perfectly.
- Jesus never sinned.
- Jesus never judged hypocritically.
- Jesus never failed.

   And on the cross, He took the judgment we deserved.

God does not save the morally superior.

 God saves the humble repentant.

Religion says: "Try harder."

 The gospel says: "**Trust Christ.**"

Invitation: Be Born Again:

- Maybe you've grown up around church.
- Maybe you know Scripture.
- Maybe you've been religious for years.

But let me ask you lovingly:

Has your heart been changed?

Romans 2 warns us ... outward religion cannot save you.

- You must be born again.
- You must surrender your pride.
- You must admit your sin.
- You must trust in Jesus alone.

Salvation is not inherited.

👉 It is received.

- If you realize today that you've been relying on religion instead of relationship...

- If you've been pointing fingers instead of repenting...
- If you know you need a new heart...

👉 Jesus is ready to save you.

The kindness of God is leading you right now.

- Turn from sin.
- Call upon His name.
- Believe that He died for you and rose again.
- Surrender your life to Him.

He will give you a new heart.
He will fill you with His Spirit.
He will make you new.



(NIV)

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.



(NIV)

Romans 10:9 If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.



Let us Pray.

**Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner...
I know I cannot save myself....
I believe You died on the cross for my
sins...**

**I believe You rose again from the
dead....**

**Today, I turn from my sin and I call upon
Your name....**

Forgive me, Lord....

Wash me clean....

Give me a new heart....

Fill me with Your Holy Spirit...

I surrender my life to You....

**From this day forward, I want to follow
You as my Lord and Savior...**

**Thank You, Jesus, for saving me....
In Your mighty name I pray,
Amen.**

If you prayed that prayer from your heart,
the Bible says,   (NIV) **Romans 10:13**
**“Everyone who calls on the name of the
Lord will be saved.”** You are not saved by
religion. You are saved by grace through
faith in Jesus Christ.

 Let us Pray.

 **Closing Prayer:**

**Father God, we thank You for the truth of
Romans chapter 2. Search us, Lord.
Remove hypocrisy. Remove pride. Give
us tender hearts that repent quickly and
trust fully in you Lord Jesus.**

**Thank You that salvation is not based on
our performance but on Christ’s finished**

work. Thank You for Your kindness that leads us to repentance.

For anyone listening who needs to surrender today ... draw them by Your Spirit. Let this be the moment they are born again. Create in them a clean heart, O God.

We give You all the glory, Lord Jesus. You alone are righteous. You alone are Savior. You alone transform hearts.

**In Your mighty name we pray,
Amen.**



Matthew 28:19-20