

# Sin and Condemnation: The World's need to get right with God

(48)

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[Romans 1:18-3:20](#)

(Continuation from 10/16/16)

## C. God's Case Against the Moralist: Judgment, [Romans 2:1-16](#)

[Romans 2:1-16 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>1</sup>“Therefore you have no excuse, every one of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

<sup>2</sup>And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.

<sup>3</sup>But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same *yourself*, that you will escape the judgment of God?

<sup>4</sup>Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

<sup>5</sup>But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

<sup>6</sup>who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS:

<sup>7</sup>to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;

<sup>8</sup>but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

<sup>9</sup>*There will be* tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek,

<sup>10</sup>but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

<sup>11</sup>For there is no partiality with God.

<sup>12</sup>For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law;

<sup>13</sup>for *it is* not the hearers of the Law *who* are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

<sup>14</sup>For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves,

<sup>15</sup>in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,

<sup>16</sup>on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.”

10-23-16

Series: The Book of Romans

**(Romans 2:1-16) Introduction:** this is one of the passages that covers several subjects and can be studied from the viewpoint of any one of them. It is an excellent study on **judging, criticizing others, the judgment of God, self-righteousness, the moralist, and the legalist.** It also deals with the judgment of the heathen, and answers the question so often asked: “**What will happen to the heathen, to the person who never hears about Jesus Christ?**” (**Romans 2:11-15**). The present study is entitled: “**God’s Case Against the Moralist.**”

1. **The moralist (v.1).**
2. **The judgment of God is according to truth: perfect justice (v.2-5).**
3. **The judgment of God is according to deeds: eternal reward or punishment (v.6-10).**
4. **The judgment of God is without respect of persons: absolute impartiality (v.11-15).**
5. **The judgment of God is to be executed by Jesus Christ and His gospel (v.16).**

### 1. **(Romans 2:1) Moralist— Judging Others— Criticism: the moralist.**

**Romans 2:1 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup>“**Therefore you have no excuse, every one of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.**”

### **Principles of God’s Judgment--part 1 (Romans 2:1-5)**

After reading Paul’s severe condemnation of those who have abandoned God and plummeted into the gross sins mentioned in **Romans 1:29-31**, one naturally wonders about how God deals with the more upright, moral, and religious person who has a sense of right and wrong, and leads an outwardly virtuous life.

Many such ethically upright people would heartily concur with Paul’s assessment of the flagrantly immoral people he has just described. They obviously deserve God’s judgment. Throughout history many pagan individuals and societies have held high standards of conduct. As **E. F. Bruce** points out, the Roman philosopher Seneca, a contemporary of Paul, might have listened to Paul’s indictment and said, “Yes, that is perfectly true of great masses of mankind, and I concur in the judgment which you pass on them—but there are others, of course, like myself, who deplore these tendencies as much as you do.”

Paul imagines someone intervening in terms like these, and he addresses the supposed objector.... How apt this reply would have been to a man like Seneca! For Seneca could write so effectively on the good life that Christian writers of later days were prone to call him “our own Seneca.”

Not only did he exalt the great moral virtues; he exposed hypocrisy, he preached the equality of all men, he acknowledged the pervasive character of evil,... he practiced and inculcated daily self-examination, he ridiculed vulgar idolatry, he assumed the role of a moral guide.

10-23-16

Series: [The Book of Romans](#)

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. (*Romans* [London: Tyndale, 1967], pp. 86, 87)

Most Jews of Paul’s day believed in the idea that performing certain moral and religious works produced righteousness. Specifically, they could earn God’s special favor and therefore eternal life by keeping the Mosaic law and the traditions of the rabbis. Many even believed that if they failed in the works effort, they might forfeit some earthly reward but were still exempt from God’s judgment simply because they were Jews, God’s chosen people.

They were firmly convinced that God would judge and condemn pagan Gentiles because of their idolatry and immorality but that no Jew would ever experience such condemnation. They loved to repeat such sayings as, “**God loves Israel alone of all the nations,**” and “**God will judge the Gentiles with one measure and the Jews with another.**” Some taught that Abraham sat outside the gates of hell in order to prevent even the most wicked Jew from entering.

In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, the second-century Christian **Justin Martyr** reports his Jewish opponent as saying, “They who are the seed of Abraham according to the flesh shall in any case, even if they be sinners and unbelieving and disobedient towards God, share in the eternal kingdom.”

Even the unregenerate have the basic knowledge of good and evil built into them and into society. Consequently, many people today recognize and seek to uphold the moral standards of Scripture and profess to be Christians. But also like Seneca, because they are not true believers in God, they lack the spiritual resources to maintain that divine morality in their lives and are unable to restrain their sinfulness.

They trust in their baptism, in their church membership, in their being born into a Christian family, in the sacraments, in high ethical standards, in orthodox doctrine, or in any number of other outward ideas, relationships, or ceremonies for spiritual and even eternal safety.

But no one can understand or appropriate salvation apart from recognizing that he stands guilty and condemned before God, totally unable to bring himself up to God’s standard of righteousness. And no person is exempt. The outwardly moral person who is friendly and charitable but self-satisfied is, in fact, usually harder to reach with the gospel than the reprobate who has hit bottom, recognized his sin, and given up hope. Therefore, after showing the immoral pagan his lostness apart from Christ, Paul proceeds with great force and clarity to show the moralist that, before God, he is equally guilty and condemned.

In doing so, he presents **six principles** by which God judges sinful men: **knowledge (v. 1)**, **truth (vv. 2-3)**, **guilt (vv. 4-5)**, **deeds (vv. 6-10)**, **impartiality (vv. 11-15)**, and  **motive (v. 16)**.

## Knowledge

### Romans 2:1 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup> “Therefore you have no excuse, every one of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.”

Therefore, refers to what Paul has just said in the last half of [chapter 1](#), and specifically to the introductory statement:

### Romans 1:18-20 (NASB)

<sup>18</sup> “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, <sup>19</sup> because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

<sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

Addressing the new group of moral people, the apostle says, **you also are without excuse, every man of you who passes judgment.**

### Romans 2:1 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup> “Therefore **you have no excuse, every one of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.**”

As becomes clear in [verse 17](#), he was speaking primarily to Jews, who characteristically passed **judgment** on Gentiles, thinking them to be spiritually inferior and even beyond the interest of God’s mercy and care.

### Romans 2:17 (NASB)

<sup>17</sup> “But if you bear the name “Jew” and rely upon the Law and boast in God.”

But **every one of you** encompasses all moralists, including professing Christians, who think they are exempt from God’s judgment because they have not sunk into the pagan, immoral extremes Paul has just mentioned.

### Romans 2:1 (NASB)

<sup>1</sup> “Therefore **you have no excuse, every one of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.**”

Paul’s initial argument is simple. **In that you judge another**, he points out, **you condemn yourself**, because you obviously have a criterion by which to judge, meaning that you know the truth about what is right and wrong before God. Even the Gentiles know the basic truth of God’s “**eternal power and divine nature**” through natural revelation ([Romans 1:20](#)).

**Romans 1:20 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup>“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His **eternal power and divine nature**, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

They also have a sense of right and wrong by conscience ([Romans 2:15](#)).

**Romans 2:15 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup>“In that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.”

The Jew, however, not only had both of those means of knowing God’s truth but also had the great advantage of having received His special revelation through Scripture ([3:2](#); [9:4](#)).

**Romans 3:2 (NASB)**

<sup>2</sup>“Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.”

**Romans 9:4 (NASB)**

<sup>4</sup>“Who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple* service and the promises.”

Not only that, but almost all Jews of Paul’s day would have known something of Jesus Christ and of His teaching and claims even though they would not have believed He was the promised Messiah. Such knowledge would have made them still more inexcusable, in that their greater knowledge of God’s truth would have made them more accountable to it (see [Hebrews 10:26-29](#)).

**Hebrews 10:26-29 (NASB)**

<sup>26</sup>“For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

<sup>27</sup> but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.

<sup>28</sup> Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on *the testimony of two or three witnesses*.

<sup>29</sup> How much severer punishments do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?”

If relatively unenlightened pagans know basic truths about God and realize they deserve His punishment ([Romans 1:19-20](#), [32](#)), Paul was saying, how much more should Jews?

**Romans 1:19-20 (NASB)**

<sup>19</sup>“Because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

<sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

**Romans 1:32 (NASB)**

<sup>32</sup>“And although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.”

The same principle applies to Christians, both nominal and true. Because they have greater knowledge of God’s truth they are more accountable to it and more inexcusable when they self-righteously judge others by it. **James** gave a special warning to those who aspire to be Christian teachers, reminding them that, because of their greater knowledge of God’s truth, they will be judged more strictly by Him (**James 3:1**).

**James 3:1 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup>“Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.”

And the fact is, the moralists who condemn others’ sins are filled with their own iniquities which demand judgment by the same standard.

But it was not simply that those who are judgmental are wrong in assessing the moral standing of others but that they also are wrong in assessing their *own* moral standing. **You who judge practice the same things**, Paul insists.

**Romans 2:1 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup>“Therefore you have no excuse, every one of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; **for you who judge practice the same things.**”

The self-righteous make **two grave errors**: they underestimate the height of God’s standard of righteousness, which encompasses the inner as well as the outer life (the theme of the Sermon on the Mount), and they underestimate the depth of their own sin. It is a universal temptation to exaggerate the faults of others while minimizing one’s own, to notice a small speck in someone’s eye but not the log in one’s own eye (see **Matthew 7:1-3**).

**Matthew 7:1-3 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup>“Do not judge so that you will not be judged.”

<sup>2</sup>“For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.”

<sup>3</sup>“Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?”

Many self-sanctified, blind Jews who read these words of Paul would immediately have concluded that what he said did not apply to them. Like the rich young ruler (**Luke 18:21**), they were convinced they had done a satisfactory job of keeping God’s commandments (cf. also **Matthew 15:1-3**).

**Luke 18:21 (NASB)**

<sup>21</sup>“And he said, “All these things I have kept from *my* youth.”

**Matthew 15:1-3 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup> “Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said,

<sup>2</sup> Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.”

<sup>3</sup> And He answered and said to them, “Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?”

It was that self-righteous spirit that Jesus repeatedly undermined in the Sermon on the Mount. After declaring, “**unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven,**” He charged that the person who is angry at or insults his brother is as surely worthy of punishment as the murderer and that the person who lusts is guilty of adultery or fornication just as surely as the person who physically commits those immoral acts ([Matthew 5:20-22, 27-28](#)).

**Matthew 5:20-22 (NASB)**

<sup>20</sup> “**For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.**”

<sup>21</sup> “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’”

<sup>22</sup> “But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty *enough to go into the fiery hell.*”

**Matthew 5:27-28 (NASB)**

<sup>27</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’;

<sup>28</sup> but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Many Jewish men tried to legalize their adultery by formally divorcing their wives and then marrying the women they preferred. Because divorce had become easy and commonplace, some men repeatedly divorced and remarried.

But Jesus warned: “**but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery**” ([Matthew 5:32](#)). If one has enough knowledge to judge others, he is thus self-condemned, for he has enough to judge his own true condition.