SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



DEEP DIVE

Romans

Chapter Two, Verses 1–29

No Partiality with God — The Moralist, the Jew, and the Judge Who Sees the Heart

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

Paul turns from the pagan of chapter 1 to the man nodding along — the moralist who judges others and the religious man who rests in the Law — and shows that God judges by truth, by deeds, without partiality, down to the secrets of the heart. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Paul's key words.

THE PASSAGE

Romans 2:1–29

excuse · deeds · conscience · boast · heart

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Three defendants, one Judge — and the kindness that waits for repentance

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"For there is no partiality with God." — Romans 2:11

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Romans 2:1–29

No Partiality with God — the judge who does the same, the kindness that leads to repentance, and the circumcision of the heart

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Romans 2 in 5 movements, in Paul's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the argument so you can see where Paul is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word
R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle
MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED
God — His character & actions
Command / instruction
Key repeated word
Sin / warning
Promise / blessing
Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 2:4

"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?"

† Before the Passage

Romans 1 ended with a list that every decent reader could agree with — idolatry, sexual sin, murder, deceit, "haters of God" — and with a verdict: "those who practice such things are worthy of death" (1:32). Somewhere in Rome a man is nodding. He does not bow to images; he condemns the vices Paul named. Chapter 2 turns and speaks to him: "Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment." The word Paul used of the pagan in 1:20 — *anapologētos*, "without excuse" — he now uses of the judge (2:1). The man in the gallery has been moved into the dock.

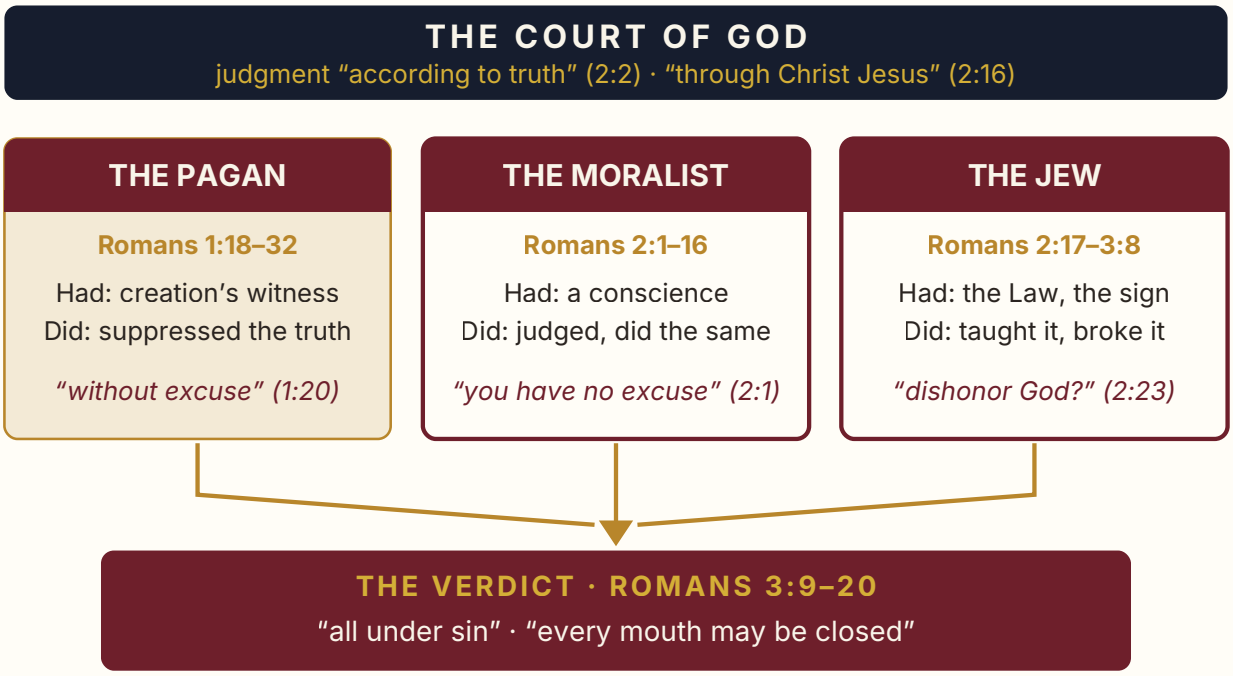
This is the second of three defendants in one long trial that runs from 1:18 to 3:20. First the pagan, who suppressed what creation told him (1:18–32). Then the moralist, who knows right from wrong well enough to condemn it in others (2:1–16). Then the Jew, who had the Law itself and boasted in it (2:17–3:8). The verdict comes in 3:9–20: "both Jews and Greeks are all under sin," "so that every mouth may be closed and all the

world may become accountable to God" (3:9, 19). Our teachers differ a little on who is addressed in 2:1–16: Guzik hears the morally respectable man of any race, while Henry and Sproul hear Paul already speaking mainly to his own people, who judged the Gentiles for the very things they did. Either way, the moralist and the Jew stand together by verse 17.

The background is Israel's own Scripture. "WHO WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS" (2:6) echoes Psalm 62:12 and Proverbs 24:12. The name of God blasphemed among the Gentiles (2:24) is Isaiah 52:5, spoken when Israel was in exile for her sins. And the circumcision "of the heart" (2:29) is not Paul's invention: Moses called for it (Deuteronomy 10:16), promised that the LORD would do it (Deuteronomy 30:6), and Jeremiah pleaded for it (Jeremiah 4:4). Paul is holding Israel to her own prophets.

Read the chapter as a hinge in the gospel's logic. Paul has said the gospel is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (1:16). Romans 2 repeats that phrase twice — but of judgment: "of the Jew first and also of the Greek" (2:9, 10). Before Paul can say "being justified as a gift by His grace" (3:24), he must take away every other hope — good manners, religious knowledge, a sacred rite. Romans 2 is the chapter where religion itself is put on trial.

FIGURE · THE COURTROOM OF ROMANS 1:18–3:20



Read left to right: three defendants, three different defenses — and one verdict that closes every mouth. Romans 2 is the middle box and the start of the third.

I
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 2:1–5

The Judge Who Does the Same

The moralist moved into the dock — and God's kindness misread as permission

> [1] *Therefore* ⚠ *you have no excuse*, *everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another,* ⚠ *you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.* [2] *And we know that the judgment of God* △ *rightly falls upon those who practice such things.* [3] *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?* [4] *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?* [5] *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,*
>
> ROMANS 2:1–5

ἀναπολόγητος

ANAPOLOGĒTOS · "WITHOUT EXCUSE" · G379

An *apologia* is a defense in court; the prefix *an-* cancels it — "without a defense," "inexcusable." The word occurs only twice in the New Testament, both in Romans: of the pagan who suppressed creation's witness (1:20) and of the man who judges him (2:1). Paul uses the same legal word on purpose. The judge's own verdict on others is the evidence against him: "in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself." He knows the standard well enough to apply it; he simply exempts himself.

χρηστότης · θησαυρίζεις

CHRĒSTOTĒS · "KINDNESS" · G5544 — THĒSAURIZEIS · "YOU ARE STORING UP" · G2343

Chrēstotēs is kindness that is useful and serviceable — goodness that does a person good. It stands with *anochē*, "tolerance" (G463, holding back), and *makrothymia*, "patience" (G3115, long-tempered). These are "riches," *ploutos*. Then Paul turns the banking word around: *thēsaurizeis*, "you are treasuring up" — the verb of Matthew 6:19–20 — but the treasure is *orgē*, wrath. The man who despises the riches of God's kindness is not saving; he is making deposits "in the day of wrath." The cause is *sklērotēs* (G4643), hardness, and an *ametanoētos* (G279), unrepentant, heart.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik sees Paul turning from the notoriously sinful to the morally respectable — men who, he says, Paul "assumes they are congratulating themselves that they are not like the people described in Romans 1." He names Seneca, the Roman moralist who condemned vice while keeping his own. God's judgment, Guzik explains, is "according to the facts of the case." Then he takes the three riches of verse 4 in order: goodness is God's kindness toward our past sin, forbearance toward our present sin, longsuffering toward our future sin. Men often mistake that patience for weakness — but "God **leads you to repentance**." He draws; He does not drive. And he quotes Spurgeon: "Every time you open the Bible the pages say, 'We speak with you that you may repent.'"

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul begins by warning that the chapter break is artificial: the indictment of chapter 1 is still running, and the gospel is not yet in view. The man who condemns others for what he does himself — "This is the essence of hypocrisy," and in judging, "we are in effect condemning ourselves," preachers included. Against our unreliable courts he sets God's: "the just judgment of God is always according to the truth." "The deepest hope harbored in the hearts of corrupt humanity is that, somehow, we will escape." We treat God as "a cosmic bellhop," and read His patience as permission — but "A judge who leaves wickedness unpunished is an unjust judge," and "the whole point of God's patience and forbearing is to lead you to repentance." Every unrepentant day is another deposit.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In "God's Goodness Leading to Repentance" (Romans 2:4, November 18, 1877) Spurgeon will not let God's patience be read as indifference. He counts the tokens of goodness his hearers have already received — "it is a great blessing to have been born of Christian parents," lives spared from accident and shipwreck, health and prosperity enjoyed while God was neglected — and argues that each one is aimed personally at the hearer. "Notice, dear friends, that the Lord does not drive you to repentance." Rather, "the sweetest and best repentance is that which comes, not by driving, but by drawing." And he tells how his own repentance deepened as Christ grew dear: "The dearer Christ is to us, the blacker is sin in our sight."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry allows the warning to fall on anyone who judges, "But he intends especially the Jews, and to them particularly he applies this general charge." Their condemnation of the Gentiles convicted themselves: "Therefore thou art inexcusable." Slighting "the riches of his goodness," he says, "is especially applicable to the Jews, who had singular tokens of the divine favour." And the hard heart keeps an account: "Those that go on in a course of sin are treasuring up unto themselves wrath." Yet he guards God's character even here — "The wrath of God is not like our wrath, a heat and passion" — and draws the lesson for every critic: "Therefore judge nothing before the time."

II
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 2:6–11

According to His Deeds

Two roads, two outcomes, one standard — and the Jew first in judgment too

6 *who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON* △ *ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS*: 7 *to those who by* *perseverance in doing good* *seek for glory and honor and immortality,* ☆ *eternal life*; 8 *but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness,* ⚠ *wrath and indignation*. 9 *There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil,* *of the Jew first and also of the Greek*, 10 *but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* 11 *For* △ *there is no partiality with God*.

ROMANS 2:6–11

"And lovingkindness is Yours, O Lord, For You recompense a man according to his work."

PSALM 62:12

ἐριθεία

ERITHEIA · "SELFISH AMBITION" · G2052

In older Greek the word described canvassing for office by underhanded means — the partisan who works the room for himself. It occurs seven times in the New Testament, five in Paul and two in James (Romans 2:8; 2 Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:20; Philippians 1:17; 2:3; James 3:14, 16); KJV renders it here "contentious." Verse 7 and verse 8 are a matched pair: one man *seeks* "glory and honor and immortality" by "perseverance in doing good"; the other seeks himself, refuses the truth and obeys unrighteousness. The question is not which man was religious, but which way he was facing.

προσωπολημψία

PROSŌPOLĒMPSIA · "PARTIALITY" · G4382

Literally "face-taking" — *prosōpon*, face, and *lambanō*, to receive: accepting a man for his face, his rank, his birth. KJV: "respect of persons." It occurs four times in the New Testament (Romans 2:11; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:25; James 2:1), always of God's refusal to do it or of our duty not to. Verse 11 is the hinge of verses 6–11: "of the Jew first and also of the Greek" in tribulation (v. 9), and the same in glory (v. 10) — "For there is no partiality with God."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik calls the principle of judgment "according to his deeds" "an awesome and fearful thought." He takes verses 7–10 at face value as a standard: "if someone genuinely did good at all times, he could merit eternal life of his own accord." But no such person exists, "because all, in some way or another are, have been, or will be self-seeking." The door of works is real, and it is shut. On "the Jew first," he reasons that if the Jews are first in line for the gospel and for reward, "then they are also first in line for judgment." Partiality, he explains, "means to judge things on the basis of externals or preconceived notions" — and God never does.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul reads the same verses differently. He refuses to set them against justification: "Our justification is by faith alone, but our rewards in heaven will be distributed according to our works." Those who seek God's glory and honor receive eternal life; the self-seeking receive indignation and wrath. And nothing is left out of the reckoning: "God considers every single sin we commit in thought, word, and deed," and the punishment of the lost corresponds to their sins. No partiality means that neither Jewish ancestry nor church membership counts for anything before the bench.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry states the rule of judgment plainly — God renders to every man according to his deeds — and keeps both sides of it in view. To those who will not have Christ's mercy he says, "Those that will not bow to his golden sceptre will certainly be broken by his iron rod." On verse 8 he sees how disobedience turns into bondage: "Those that refuse to be the servants of truth will soon be the slaves of unrighteousness." And the Jew's advantage is no shield: "God does not save men with respect to their external privileges" — "If to the Jews first, who had greater privileges, and made a greater profession, yet also to the Gentiles."

III
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 2:12–16

The Law, the Heart, and the Secrets

Judged by the light we had — and by Christ Jesus, who sees what no one else saw

> [12] *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;* [13] *for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.* [14] *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,* [15] *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,* [16] *on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.*
>
> ROMANS 2:12–16

FIGURE · HOW GOD JUDGES — ROMANS 2:1–16

1	**According to truth** The facts of the case — not our reputation, not our spin.	2:2
2	**According to deeds** What we did with what we knew — not what we knew.	2:6
3	**Without partiality** No favorites: Jew and Greek, church member and outsider alike.	2:11
4	**According to light** The written Law for those who had it; conscience for those who did not.	2:12–15
5	**The secrets, through Christ Jesus** The hidden heart, judged by the Man God appointed (Acts 17:31).	2:16

Five principles from the paragraph, top to bottom. Each one closes a door the moralist hoped was open; the last names the Judge.

συνείδησις

SYNEIDĒSIS · "CONSCIENCE" · G4893

Syn, "with," and *eidēsis*, "knowing": a knowing-with, a moral co-witness inside a man. It occurs thirty times in the New Testament. Paul pictures a courtroom inside the Gentile: the conscience "bearing witness" (*symmartyrousēs*), and the thoughts "alternately accusing or else defending" (*katēgorountōn ē kai apologoumenōn*) — prosecutor and defense, the same legal words as 2:1. The Gentiles do not have Sinai, but they have "the work of the Law written in their hearts." That is enough to condemn, never enough to save.

τὰ κρυπτά

TA KRYPTA · "THE SECRETS" · G2927

Kryptos is the hidden, the concealed — the word behind "crypt." Jesus used it of the Father who "sees what is done in secret" (Matthew 6:4). Romans 2:16 says that judgment reaches there, and that it comes "through Christ Jesus," "according to my gospel." The same adjective returns in verse 29: the true Jew is one "inwardly," *en tō kryptō*, literally "in the hidden place." What is hidden will be judged; what is hidden is also where God does His saving work.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik quotes Morris: "People will be condemned, not because they have the law or do not have the law, but because they have sinned." Possession of the Law is no advantage on judgment day. "A law to themselves" does not mean Gentiles invented a law; it means they carry the work of God's law on their hearts. Conscience, he says, is a moral compass men answer to even without the written word — yet no one has perfectly obeyed his own conscience, so no one is justified by it. On verse 16 he notes that judgment through the Messiah "is distinctively Christian," since Jewish teaching left the judgment to God the Father alone.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul insists Paul is not saying Gentiles keep the law better than Jews; both have sinned, and both will be judged according to the light they received — the Law for those who had it, the law written on the heart for those who did not. He distinguishes mediate general revelation, which comes through creation, from immediate general revelation, planted in the conscience; even a seared conscience is never wholly silent, "because God has given us a conscience." And "Christ has been appointed the perfect judge of all of the earth." Our only hope before such a Judge is to be clothed in His righteousness — "It is a divine cover-up."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon preached "Coming Judgment of the Secrets of Men" (No. 1849, July 12, 1885) on verse 16. There is a day fixed: "There has been a day for sinning, there ought to be a day for punishing." Its scope is the hidden life — hidden sins, hidden motives, even sins unknown to the sinner, for "That which a man does when he thinks that he is entirely by himself is the best revelation of the man." The Judge is Christ: "Our Redeemer will be the Umpire of our destiny," so "that the judgment may be indisputable." And all this is "according to my gospel": "The gospel offers you no opportunity of going on in sin, and escaping without punishment."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry reads verse 13 as the hinge: their having, hearing and knowing the law "would not justify them, but their doing it" — "it is not hearing, but doing that will save us." The Gentiles "did by nature the things contained in the law" and "had a sense of justice and equity," and he gives conscience one of his best images: "Conscience is that candle of the Lord which was not quite put out, no, not in the Gentile world." Then the whole paragraph is lifted to one day: "The secrets of men shall then be judged."

IV
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 2:17–24

You Who Teach Another

Nine privileges, five questions, and a name blasphemed among the nations

17 *But if you bear the name "Jew" and rely upon the* ⟲ *Law and* ⚠ *boast in God,* 18 *and know His will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the* ⟲ *Law,* 19 *and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,* 20 *a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the* ⟲ *Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth,* 21 *you, therefore, who teach another,* ⚠ *do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal?* 22 *You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?* 23 *You who boast in the* ⟲ *Law, through your breaking the* ⟲ *Law,* ⚠ *do you dishonor God?* 24 *For "*⚠ *THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU*," just as it is written.*

ROMANS 2:17–24

"... My name is continually blasphemed all day long."

ISAIAH 52:5

ἐπαναπαύῃ νόμῳ · καυχᾶσαι

EPANAPAUĒ · "YOU RELY UPON" · G1879 — KAUCHASAI · "YOU BOAST" · G2744

Epanapauomai is to rest one's weight on something, to lean back on it — the Law as a pillow. *Kauchaomai*, to boast or glory, is one of Paul's great words in Romans; here the Jew boasts "in God" (v. 17) and "in the Law" (v. 23). Verses 17–20 pile up nine privileges, every one of them true — the name, the Law, the knowledge of God's will, a guide to the blind, a light in darkness. Paul does not deny one. He asks only whether they are lived.

μόρφωσις · ἱεροσυλεῖς

MORPHŌSIS · "EMBODIMENT" · G3446 — HIEROSYLEIS · "DO YOU ROB TEMPLES?" · G2416

Morphōsis is a forming, an outline — in Romans 2:20 the Law truly holds "the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth." Its only other New Testament use is 2 Timothy 3:5: "holding to a form of godliness." The same word can name the real shape or the empty shell. *Hierosyleō*, found only here, is to plunder a shrine (KJV: "commit sacrilege"). The man who abhorred idols would still profit from their temples. Paul's five questions (vv. 21–23) end where Isaiah ended: God's name blasphemed "because of you."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that every boast in verses 17–20 centered on possessing the Law, which the Jewish man believed guaranteed his standing with God — and Paul is about to show that possession justifies no one. He quotes Trapp: "Hypocrites can talk of religion, as if their tongues did run upon patterns." On robbing temples he cites Morris: "Clearly some people held that a Jew might well make profits from dishonest practices connected with idolatry." God judges attitudes as well as actions, and the result of the gap between them is that His name is blasphemed among the Gentiles.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

In "The Jews Are as Guilty as the Gentiles" (November 20, 2005) Sproul applies the list straight to the church. We measure ourselves against the culture instead of God's law, but "God does not judge or grade on a curve." Holding the form of knowledge without its substance is an empty shell God sees through. "Hypocrites claim more righteousness than they possess," and "Hypocrisy is a damnable thing" — though he adds that the church is a gathering of sinners by definition: "The first qualification to join a church is that you must be a sinner." As for verse 24, "Unbelievers will blaspheme God at every opportunity"; we must not hand them more reasons.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's sermon notes on these verses ("Inconsistency: its Evil Effects," Romans 2:17–29) warn that the inconsistency of professing Christians drives many from the faith; the world watches church members, reports their failings gladly and enlarges them, so believers must give it no ground — "let your garments be always white." In "The Teacher Must Make the Truth Part of His Inner Experience" he turns verse 21 on the Sunday-school teacher: truth handed on like Gehazi laying Elisha's staff on the dead child does nothing if "the truth which we deliver is a matter apart from ourselves and unconnected with our innermost being."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry lists the Jews' privileges one by one and then names the danger in them: "Spiritual pride is of all kinds of pride the most dangerous." Knowing is not the same as being: "A form of knowledge produces but a form of godliness," and "The best work, when it is prided in, is unacceptable to God." On verse 21 he states the teacher's burden: "Examples will govern more than rules." Yet on verse 24 he is fair to the faith itself — "for the faults of professors are not to be laid upon professions."

V
MOVEMENT

ROMANS 2:25–29

The Circumcision of the Heart

A sign without its substance, a Jew who is one inwardly, and praise from God

25 *For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.* 26 *So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?* 27 *And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law?* 28 *For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.* 29 *But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.*

ROMANS 2:25–29

"Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live."

DEUTERONOMY 30:6

FIGURE · OUTWARD AND INWARD — ROMANS 2:28–29

	OUTWARDLY (2:28)	INWARDLY (2:29)
WHERE	"outward in the flesh"	**"of the heart"**
BY WHAT	"by the letter"	**"by the Spirit"**
SEEN BY	men — a mark on the body	**God — a changed heart**
PRAISE	"from men"	**"from God"**

"Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart …" — Deuteronomy 30:6

Read across each row: the left column can be seen and counted by men; the right column only God can see — and only God can praise.

περιτομή

PERITOMĒ · "CIRCUMCISION" · G4061

Peri, around, and *temnō*, to cut. The word appears six times in these five verses, with its opposite, *akrobystia* ("uncircumcision"), four more. Circumcision was the covenant sign given to Abraham (Genesis 17), and Paul does not despise it — "circumcision is of value if you practice the Law" (v. 25). But a sign points beyond itself. Paul will say in 4:11 that Abraham received it as "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised." Without that reality, "your circumcision has become uncircumcision."

γράμμα · ἔπαινος

GRAMMA · "LETTER" · G1121 — EPAINOS · "PRAISE" · G1868

Gramma is the written thing, the letter on the page; set against *pneuma*, it becomes one of Paul's great contrasts (Romans 7:6; 2 Corinthians 3:6). Then the last word of the chapter, *epainos*, praise. Many interpreters hear a wordplay behind it: "Jew" comes from Judah, and when Judah was born Leah said, "This time I will praise the LORD" (Genesis 29:35). The true Jew is the one whose praise — whose very name — comes "not from men, but from God."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik is blunt: a rite in itself saves no one, whether circumcision, baptism or any other ritual. "Circumcision and baptism do about the same thing that a label on a can does" — the label is meant to match what is inside. On verse 26 he writes, "*having* the law or *having* a ceremony isn't enough. God requires *righteousness*." He treats the law-keeping Gentile as a hypothetical test, quoting Manson through Morris: "If they are loyal to the good they know, they will be acceptable to God; but it is a very big 'if'." Real circumcision is proved another way: "The evidence is found in the work of God in our heart which shows itself in fruit."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul walks back to Abraham and the cutting covenant of Genesis 15, and calls circumcision a sign of God's separating grace: "It is an outward sign of what God promises to do inwardly." He admits the rite is "primitive and obscene," then turns it — the real obscenity is sin, and Christ bore its curse. Baptism and church membership work the same way: "Baptism does not save anyone," and "In the final analysis, the only baptism that matters is the baptism of the heart." "We look on outward appearances, but God looks on the heart." The law has done its work if it drives us to the gospel of Romans 3.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's note "Outward and Inward Religion" (Romans 2:25–29) piles up images of religion that never reaches the man inside: "Would the washing of the windows of a house make the inhabitants thereof clean?" "Washing the outside of a box will leave all the clothes inside as foul as ever." Mere outward reform can be "a clean-swept and garnished house" waiting for worse tenants, or "the whitewashing of sepulchres full of rottenness and dead men's bones." Outward observance without the heart is like offering the fat of rams — and to obey is better than sacrifice.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary · Romans completed after 1714

Henry reads the law-keeping uncircumcised as real people, not a hypothesis: "Doubtless, there were many such instances," and "Their uncircumcision was counted for circumcision," with Cornelius as his example. Their obedience will "help to add to thy condemnation." The rule cuts both ways: "External privileges, if they do not do us good, do us hurt." And he carries verse 29 straight into the church: "he is a Christian that is one inwardly." "The praise thereof, though it be not of men, who judge according to outward appearance, yet it is of God."

VI
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

Judging, patience, the appointed Judge, the hidden things, and the heart God circumcises

> *"Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you."*
>
> MATTHEW 7:1–2

> *"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."*
>
> 2 PETER 3:9

> *"because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."*
>
> ACTS 17:31

> *"For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil."*
>
> ECCLESIASTES 12:14

> *"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."*
>
> JEREMIAH 31:33

> *"Circumcise yourselves to the LORD And remove the foreskins of your heart, Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Or else My wrath will go forth like fire And burn with none to quench it, Because of the evil of your deeds."*
>
> JEREMIAH 4:4

> *But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."*
>
> 1 SAMUEL 16:7

> *"for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh."*
>
> PHILIPPIANS 3:3

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik closes the chapter with Newell's seven principles of God's judgment, each tied to a verse: "according to truth" (2:2), according to accumulated guilt (2:5), according to works (2:6), without partiality (2:11), "according to performance, not knowledge" (2:13), reaching "the secrets of the heart" (2:16), and "according to reality, not religious profession" (2:17–29). Read with the cross-references, the list is the whole Bible's witness in miniature.

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, five movements. Guzik walks the text and gathers the commentators; Sproul presses the doctrine of judgment and justification; Spurgeon preaches the goodness, the secrets and the heart; Henry gives the Puritan's plain counsel. Where one of them is not sourced for a movement, the cell says so.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · No excuse (1–5)	Moralists like Seneca; goodness, forbearance, longsuffering cover past, present, future sin; God leads.	Judging others is the essence of hypocrisy; God's patience is meant to lead to repentance.	Goodness draws rather than drives; the dearer Christ is, the blacker sin looks.	Aimed especially at the Jews; hard hearts treasure up wrath; judge nothing before the time.
II · Deeds (6–11)	A real standard no one meets; all are self-seeking; Jew first in judgment too.	Justification by faith alone, rewards by works; no credit for ancestry or church membership.	Not sourced for these verses in this study.	Golden sceptre or iron rod; refuse truth's service and become unrighteousness's slave.
III · Conscience (12–16)	Condemned for sinning, not for having the Law; judgment through Messiah is distinctively Christian.	Judged by the light we had; conscience is immediate general revelation; Christ the appointed Judge.	A fixed day; secret life reveals the man; the Redeemer is the Umpire.	Not hearing but doing; conscience is the candle of the Lord not quite put out.
IV · The boast (17–24)	Every boast rested on possessing the Law; possession justifies no one.	God does not grade on a curve; hypocrites claim more righteousness than they possess.	Inconsistency drives men from the faith; truth must be the teacher's inner experience.	Spiritual pride most dangerous; a form of knowledge yields a form of godliness.
V · The heart (25–29)	A rite is a label on a can; the evidence is fruit; a very big "if."	An outward sign of what God promises inwardly; only heart baptism matters.	Washed windows don't clean the household; whitewashed sepulchres.	Real Gentile instances like Cornelius; he is a Christian that is one inwardly.

ROMANS 2:1–29 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **The judge's own verdict convicts him.** The same word, *anapologētos*, is used of the pagan in 1:20 and of the man who judges him in 2:1. Knowing the standard well enough to condemn others is proof that we are accountable to it. THE GREEK
- **Kindness is not permission.** God's goodness, forbearance and patience are "riches," and their purpose is repentance. To read His patience as approval is to make deposits in a treasury of wrath. SPROUL
- **God draws before He judges.** "The Lord does not drive you to repentance"; the sweetest repentance comes by drawing. The same chapter that warns of wrath first offers kindness. SPURGEON
- **Two readings of "according to deeds."** Guzik treats verses 6–10 as a real standard that no sinner meets; Sproul reads them as the rewards of the justified. Both deny that anyone earns salvation — they differ on what the verses describe. GUZIK
- **"Jew first" runs both ways.** Paul's gospel phrase of 1:16 returns in 2:9–10 for judgment and glory alike. Privilege raises accountability; it never lowers it. THE TEXT

- **Conscience: enough to condemn, never enough to save.** The Gentile has "the work of the Law written in their hearts" — a candle not quite put out — but no one has obeyed even his own conscience. HENRY
- **The Judge is Jesus.** God judges the secrets of men "through Christ Jesus" (2:16) — the Man appointed and raised (Acts 17:31). The One who will judge is the One who was judged for us. SPURGEON
- **Form or shell.** *Morphōsis* names both the Law's true "embodiment of knowledge" (2:20) and the empty "form of godliness" (2 Timothy 3:5). The difference is whether the teacher teaches himself. THE GREEK
- **A sign points beyond itself.** Circumcision, baptism and church membership are labels; God reads what is inside the can. "The only baptism that matters is the baptism of the heart." SPROUL
- **Praise from God.** "Jew" comes from Judah, "praise." The true Jew's praise is "not from men, but from God" — the only verdict that finally counts. THE TEXT

† Questions for the Table

1 **Where do I most easily condemn in others the very thing I do myself — and what does that reveal about my heart?**

In that which you judge another, you condemn yourself — the verdict we pass is the standard we will face.

2:1-3; Matthew 7:1-2

2 **What specific kindnesses of God in my life have I treated as permission rather than as a call to repent?**

Spared, provided for, given another day — every token of goodness is aimed at a turned heart.

2:4-5; 2 Peter 3:9

3 **If God shows no partiality, what am I still counting on — family, church, record, reputation — to tip the scale?**

Neither ancestry nor membership counts; God does not take a man by his face.

2:6-11

4 **What would change this week if I lived as though my secrets will be judged by Jesus Christ?**

What a man does when he thinks he is alone is the best revelation of the man.

2:16; Ecclesiastes 12:14

5 **Where am I teaching, preaching or posting something I am not practicing — and who is watching the gap?**

Examples govern more than rules; God's name is honored or blasphemed through us.

2:21-24

6 **What outward marks of religion am I resting on, and what evidence is there that God has circumcised my heart?**

A label must match the contents; the evidence is fruit, and the praise is from God.

2:28-29; Deuteronomy 30:6; Philippians 3:3

Romans 2 takes away the last hiding place — not the brothel or the idol temple, but the pew and the lectern. The moralist and the religious man stand beside the pagan with no excuse, before a Judge who sees the secrets. That is not the end of the letter: the same God whose kindness leads to repentance will circumcise the heart by His Spirit, and His praise will be the last word.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry died in 1714 having reached Acts; the Romans volume of his *Commentary* was completed by his successors (John Evans) from his notes and method, and is cited under his name as it is published. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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