SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Romans 2

No Partiality with God — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-09 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

The man who judges sinners is a sinner on trial, and God's kindness to him is a call to repent, not a pass. God judges by truth, by deeds, without favorites, down to the secrets — so the only Jew, and the only Christian, who stands is the one whose heart God has cut and whose praise comes from God.

00 The Text

ROMANS 2 (NASB95), MARKED

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

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,

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.

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.

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.

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.

Marked in the text

- **v1** "you have no excuse" — Sin / warning
- **v1** "you condemn yourself" — Sin / warning
- **v2** "rightly falls" — God — His character & actions
- **v3** "escape the judgment of God" — Sin / warning
- **v4** "the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience" — God — His character & actions
- **v4** "leads you to repentance" — Promise / blessing
- **v5** "stubbornness and unrepentant heart" — Sin / warning
- **v5** "storing up wrath for yourself" — Sin / warning
- **v5** "the day of wrath" — Time / place / contrast
- **v6** "ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS" — God — His character & actions
- **v7** "perseverance in doing good" — Command / instruction
- **v7** "eternal life" — Promise / blessing
- **v8** "wrath and indignation" — Sin / warning
- **v9** "of the Jew first and also of the Greek" — Time / place / contrast
- **v11** "there is no partiality with God" — God — His character & actions
- **v13** "doers of the Law will be justified" — Time / place / contrast
- **v15** "the work of the Law written in their hearts" — God — His character & actions
- **v15** "conscience" — Time / place / contrast
- **v16** "God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus" — God — His character & actions
- **v17** "boast in God" — Sin / warning
- **v21** "do you not teach yourself?" — Sin / warning
- **v23** "do you dishonor God?" — Sin / warning
- **v24** "THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU" — Sin / warning
- **v28** "outwardly" — Time / place / contrast
- **v29** "inwardly" — Time / place / contrast
- **v29** "circumcision is that which is of the heart" — Promise / blessing
- **v29** "by the Spirit, not by the letter" — Time / place / contrast
- **v29** "his praise is not from men, but from God" — Promise / blessing
- **v12** "Law" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v25** "circumcision" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

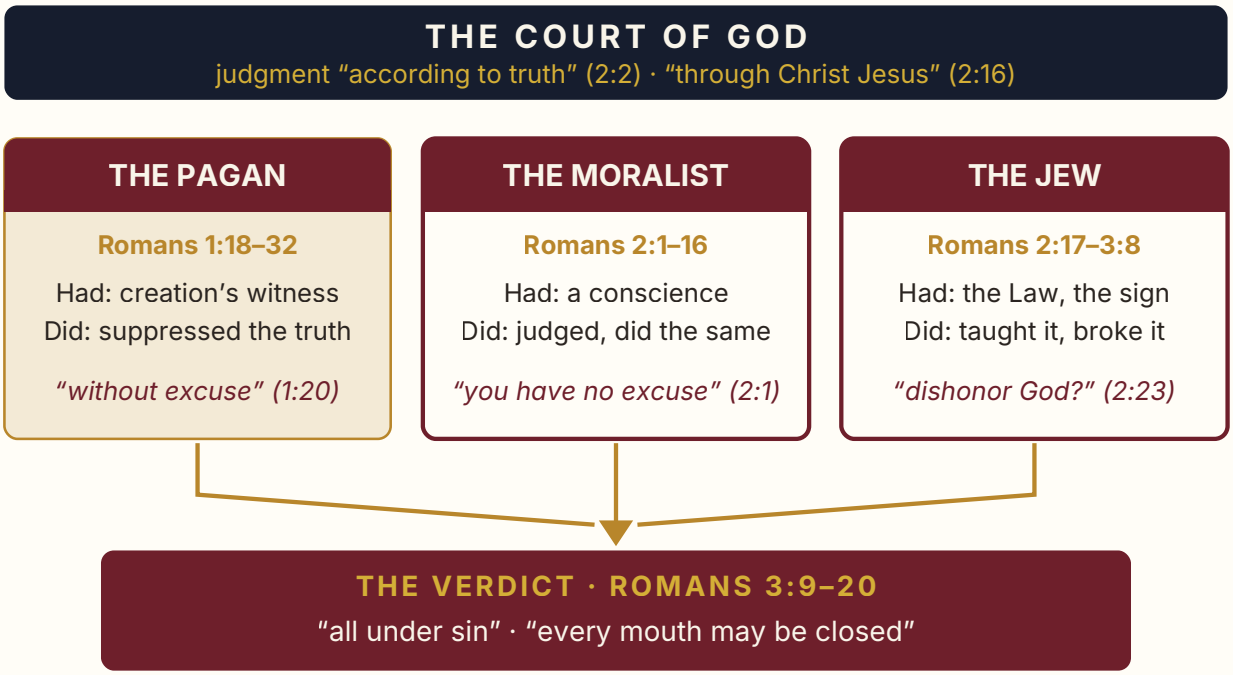
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 2:1

"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."

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.

Setting. Paul has just finished the pagan's indictment (1:18–32), ending with people who "practice such things" and approve those who do them (1:32). Romans 2 opens with "Therefore" and turns to the one who agrees with that list — "everyone of you who passes judgment." By verse 17 the man in the dock has a name: "you bear the name 'Jew.'"

Structure:

- vv1–5 — **the judge who does the same:** no excuse; in judging another you condemn yourself (v1). God's judgment rightly falls on those who practice such things (v2). Do you suppose you will escape (v3)? Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness, tolerance and patience — not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance (v4)? Stubbornness and an unrepentant heart are storing up wrath for the day of wrath (v5).

- vv6–11 — **according to deeds:** God will render to each person according to his deeds (v6). Two roads: perseverance in doing good, seeking glory, honor and immortality → eternal life (v7); selfish ambition, disobeying the truth, obeying unrighteousness → wrath and indignation (v8). Tribulation for evil, glory for good, "of the Jew first and also of the Greek" (vv9–10). "For there is no partiality with God" (v11).
- vv12–16 — **the Law, the heart and the secrets:** without the Law → perish without the Law; under the Law → judged by the Law (v12). Hearers are not just; doers will be justified (v13). Gentiles without the Law show the work of the Law written in their hearts; conscience bears witness, thoughts accuse or defend (vv14–15). All on the day God judges the secrets of men through Christ Jesus, according to Paul's gospel (v16).
- vv17–24 — **the Jew's boast:** nine claims — the name, relying on the Law, boasting in God, knowing His will, approving the essentials, guide to the blind, light in darkness, corrector of the foolish, teacher of the immature (vv17–20). Five questions: teach yourself? steal? commit adultery? rob temples? (vv21–22) — and, boasting in the Law, do you dishonor God by breaking it? (v23). Isaiah 52:5: God's name blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you (v24).
- vv25–29 — **the circumcision of the heart:** circumcision has value if you practice the Law; break it and it becomes uncircumcision (v25). The uncircumcised who keeps the Law is regarded as circumcised, and will judge the transgressor (vv26–27). Not outward, in the flesh — but inward, of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; praise not from men but from God (vv28–29).

Repeated words, with counts (NASB95):

- **Law** — 22 times: v12 (4), v13 (2), v14 (4), v15, v17, v18, v20, v23 (2), v25 (2), v26, v27 (3). Every occurrence falls in vv12–27; the first eleven verses never use it.
- **judge / judgment / judged** — 10: v1 (3), v2, v3 (2), v5, v12, v16, v27.
- **God** — 11: vv2, 3, 4, 5, 11, 13, 16, 17, 23, 24, 29.
- **circumcision** — 6 (vv25 twice, 26, 27, 28, 29), plus **uncircumcision / uncircumcised** — 4 (vv25, 26 twice, 27).
- **Jew** — 5: vv9, 10, 17, 28, 29; **Greek** — 2 (vv9, 10); **Gentiles** — 2 (vv14, 24).
- **wrath** — 3 (v5 twice, v8); **heart / hearts** — 3 (vv5, 15, 29); **teach / teacher** — 3 (v20, v21 twice).

Contrasts:

- judging others / doing the same (vv1, 3); riches of kindness / storing up wrath (vv4–5)
- seeking glory, honor, immortality / selfishly ambitious (vv7–8); eternal life, glory, peace / wrath, tribulation, distress (vv7–10)
- without the Law / under the Law (v12); hearers / doers (v13); accusing / defending (v15)
- teaching others / not teaching yourself (v21); abhorring idols / robbing temples (v22)
- circumcision / uncircumcision (vv25–27); outwardly / inwardly; flesh / heart; letter / Spirit; praise from men / from God (vv28–29)

Shape of the chapter: a narrowing spotlight. It starts on "everyone of you who passes judgment," widens to "each person" and "every soul of man," then narrows to "you … who bear the name 'Jew,'" and lands on the smallest, most hidden place of all — the heart.

Chapter theme (my words): No one gets out of God's court by being better than the next man, knowing more Bible, or carrying the right religious mark. God sees the secrets, judges without favorites, and only a heart He has changed will stand.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 2:16

"on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus."

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.

Who is "O man" in verse 1? Guzik hears the moral, respectable person of any background — the kind of Roman moralist (he names Seneca) who condemned vice and kept his own. Henry allows that wide application but says Paul "intends especially the Jews," and Sproul likewise reads "O man" as Paul's kinsmen judging the Gentiles. The text supports both: the address is general in vv1–16, and by v17 it is unmistakably the Jew. For me the point is the same — the man nodding at Romans 1 is now on trial.

Does "according to his deeds" (vv6–10) teach salvation by works? No teacher here says so, but they read it differently. Guzik takes it as a real standard no one meets: "if someone genuinely did good at all times, he could merit eternal life," but "all … are, have been, or will be self-seeking." Sproul reads it as the judgment of the justified and the unjustified alike: "Our justification is by faith alone, but our rewards in heaven will be distributed according to our works." I will hold both: works can never earn, and works will always reveal.

Who are the Gentiles who "do instinctively the things of the Law" (vv14–15, 26–27)? Sproul: Paul is not saying Gentiles keep the law better; everyone is judged by the light they had, and conscience is enough to condemn. Guzik calls the law-keeping Gentile a hypothetical — "a very big 'if'" (Morris, quoting Manson). Henry takes them

as real: "Doubtless, there were many such instances," with Cornelius as his example. Many later interpreters see Gentile Christians in vv26–29, since the heart is circumcised "by the Spirit." Paul's argument in 3:9–20 settles the bottom line: no one is justified by the works of the Law.

Why "through Christ Jesus" (v16)? Guzik: judgment through the Messiah "is distinctively Christian." Spurgeon: the Redeemer is the "Umpire of our destiny," so the verdict will be "indisputable." The Judge of my secrets bore my sin — terror to the hypocrite, comfort to the penitent.

What is the true circumcision (vv28–29)? Sproul: "an outward sign of what God promises to do inwardly." Guzik: a label on a can. Henry carries it into the church: "he is a Christian that is one inwardly." Moses promised it (Deut 30:6); Paul says the Spirit does it.

Word study (Greek):

- **without excuse — *anapologētos* (G379):** no defense in court; only here and 1:20 in the New Testament. The pagan and the moralist get the same word.
- **kindness — *chrēstotēs* (G5544):** goodness that does good; with *anochē* (tolerance, G463) and *makrothymia* (patience, G3115), the "riches" of v4.
- **storing up — *thēsaurizō* (G2343):** to treasure up, amass; the banking verb turned toward wrath (v5).
- **selfishly ambitious — *eritheia* (G2052):** self-seeking, partisan rivalry; KJV "contentious" (v8).
- **partiality — *prosōpolēmpsia* (G4382):** "face-taking," accepting a person for his status; four times in the NT (v11).
- **conscience — *syneidēsis* (G4893):** "knowing-with," the inner witness; it accuses or defends (v15).
- **secrets — *kryptos* (G2927):** the hidden things judged (v16); "inwardly" in v29 is the same word.
- **embodiment — *morphōsis* (G3446):** form — real substance or empty shell; also 2 Tim 3:5 (v20).
- **rob temples — *hierosyleō* (G2416):** plunder a shrine; only here (v22).
- **circumcision — *peritomē* (G4061); letter — *gramma* (G1121); praise — *epainos* (G1868):** the sign, the written code, and the verdict from God (vv25–29).

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. The judge's own verdict convicts him: same word for pagan and moralist (1:20; 2:1).
2. God's kindness is not permission; its purpose is repentance (2:4).
3. God draws before He judges — "not by driving, but by drawing" (Spurgeon).
4. "According to deeds": Guzik sees a standard no one meets; Sproul sees the rewards of the justified. Neither teaches salvation by works.
5. "Jew first" runs both ways — privilege raises accountability (1:16; 2:9–10).
6. Conscience is enough to condemn, never enough to save — "the candle of the Lord … not quite put out" (Henry).
7. The Judge of the secrets is Jesus (2:16; Acts 17:31).
8. Signs point beyond themselves: "the only baptism that matters is the baptism of the heart" (Sproul); the true Jew's praise is from God.

Cross-references: Matt 7:1–2 · Ps 62:12 · Prov 24:12 · 2 Pet 3:9 · Acts 17:31 · Eccl 12:14 · Jer 31:33 · Isa 52:5 · Deut 30:6 · Jer 4:4 · 1 Sam 16:7 · Phil 3:3 · Rom 3:9–20

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ROMANS 2:29

"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."

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.

Command to obey — "Do not think lightly of His kindness." I can list the kindnesses: I'm alive, I'm married, I have work, men trust me with their stories. Romans 2:4 says every one of those is a hand on my shoulder turning me toward repentance. Today I'll name one sin I've kept because God "hasn't done anything about it," and I'll repent of it specifically, out loud, to Him.

Sin to confess — judging the man I'm like. It's easy for me to sit across the table from a man fresh out of prison or relapse and feel like the healthy one. Paul says "in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself." My pride, my temper, my secret thought life — they're "the same things" in different clothes. I confess that I've judged men to feel better about myself.

Warning to heed — teaching what I don't practice. "You who teach another, do you not teach yourself?" I teach, I write, I publish. Henry is right: "Examples will govern more than rules." The men I disciple will forget my outlines and remember my life. Where the two don't match, God's name is dishonored through me.

Promise to trust — the Spirit circumcises the heart. I can't cut my own heart. Moses said the LORD would do it (Deuteronomy 30:6); Paul says it is "by the Spirit." That is the hope for every man I serve who has tried to clean the windows and found the house still dirty. Outward reform won't hold; a new heart will.

Example to follow — living for praise from God. "His praise is not from men, but from God." I want to do the hidden things well — the prayer no one hears, the honesty no one checks, the kindness no one sees — because the Judge sees the secrets, and His "well done" is the only review that lasts.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Where do I most easily condemn in others the very thing I do myself — and what does that reveal about my heart? (2:1–3; Matthew 7:1–2) *The verdict we pass is the standard we will face.*
2. What specific kindnesses of God in my life have I treated as permission rather than as a call to repent? (2:4–5; 2 Peter 3:9) *Every token of goodness is aimed at a turned heart.*
3. If God shows no partiality, what am I still counting on — family, church, record, reputation — to tip the scale? (2:6–11) *God does not take a man by his face.*
4. What would change this week if I lived as though my secrets will be judged by Jesus Christ? (2:16; Ecclesiastes 12:14) *What a man does when he thinks he is alone is the best revelation of the man.*
5. Where am I teaching, preaching or posting something I am not practicing — and who is watching the gap? (2:21–24) *Examples govern more than rules.*
6. What outward marks of religion am I resting on, and what evidence is there that God has circumcised my heart? (2:28–29; Deuteronomy 30:6; Philippians 3:3) *A label must match the contents.*

Worship. The Judge of all the earth is the Lord Jesus — the One who sees every secret is the One who carried every sin I'd want hidden. His kindness came first, His patience is still running, and His Spirit cuts what I could never cut. I praise Him that the last word of this chapter is not wrath but praise — praise from God.

Prayer. Father, I have no excuse. I've judged others for what I do, and I've read Your patience as permission. Thank You for the riches of Your kindness that keep leading me back. Search the secrets You already see. Circumcise my heart by Your Spirit, so that what I teach I live, and Your name is honored, not blasphemed, through me. I want Your praise, not men's. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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