

Romans 2:1-11 (NKJV)

1 Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

2 But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.

3 And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?

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Rom 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

5 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

6-7 who “will render to each one according to his deeds”: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality;

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Rom 2:8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, **9** tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;

10 but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

11 For there is no partiality with God.

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Rom 2:6-7 [God] “will render to each one according to his deeds”: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality.

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- Those who hold to the more traditional, Reformation-driven interpretation of Romans — namely, that Paul is addressing matters of soteriology (initial salvation) in the early chapters of Romans — struggle to explain verses such as these

Rom 2:13 For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified.

- These interpretive conundrums all fade away when the right hermeneutical keys are applied to a study of Romans

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Keys for Interpreting Romans Correctly

1. A correct understanding of JUSTIFICATION

2. Knowing that Paul is writing to believers about matters of SANCTIFICATION unto maturity – sometimes called soul-salvation, resulting in reward – NOT to unbelievers about matters of initial salvation (regeneration)

- That is what Paul means by GOSPEL and SALVATION in 1:16
- He is proclaiming the gospel of kingdom inheritance to children of God

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- In the latter half of chapter 1 Paul warns children of God to beware living unrighteously, for it typically leads to a downward spiral
- Paul lists numerous sins, any one of which could be committed by Christians
- 1:18-32 is a serious warning of God's wrath that will be revealed against those who continue in these sins, living in ungodliness and unrighteousness

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Believers will incur God's wrath for:

1. Suppressing truth (v. 18)
2. Not glorifying God (v. 21)
3. Committing horrible sins (vs. 22-32)

God's wrath will be revealed by giving over those who are guilty of these sins to:

1. uncleanness (v. 24)
2. vile passions (v. 26)
3. a debased mind (v. 28)

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Most Christians don't think the latter half of Rom. 1 applies to them, because:

1. They think the list of sins and God's consequent wrath upon these sinners describes the condition of unbelievers
- But that is not correct, for Paul applies the text to believers specifically!
2. They have an incorrect understanding of justification which has been passed down from the Reformation

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- Most within evangelical Christianity believe and teach that justification is positional, legal, and forensic ...
- Meaning that when someone becomes regenerated, their past, present, and future sins are forgiven, and they are credited with the righteousness of Christ
- As a result, they think "there is no condemnation (judgment) to those who are in Christ Jesus" – quoting Rom. 8:1, but not quoting the entire verse – "who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit"

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- Justification is NOT positional, legal, or forensic
- It is behavioral, meaning that God declares righteous those who are *living* righteously
- Those who are NOT living righteously are declared unrighteous – whether saved or not
- Thus, justification is not a soteriological matter; it is a sanctification matter, a matter of lifestyle, of behavior – dependent on whether one walks according to the Spirit or the flesh

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- What that means for children of God is that whether or not they are justified in God's eyes determines their verdict at the Judgment Seat of Christ, that is, whether they will be positively or negatively rewarded
- That is how the concept of justification is used throughout the entire Bible, both OT and NT – including the book of Romans
- The bottom line of ch. 1: your present behavior is absolutely critical to your Judgment Seat verdict

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Four Incorrect Responses to Sinning

1. Hypocrisy

Rom 2:1 Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

2 But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.

3 And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?

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- The Jewish believers don't think they are guilty of the sins listed in ch. 1, because they keep the Mosaic law, which the Gentiles do not have
- Although some of the Gentile believers are most likely guilty of the vile passions in vs. 23-27 – for those things were more typical of the Roman culture – the Jews, nevertheless, are culpable of many of the sins listed in vs. 29-32
- Paul lets them know they are hypocritical and will not be excused

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Robert Govett on Romans (1813-1901, British pastor and theologian):

Knowledge of what is right, and condemnation of what is evil are not enough. Judgment at last will be according to works. The apostle now commences convicting the Jew of his sinfulness, and exposure to the wrath of God. He [the Jew] could quite agree with all that Paul said against 'those wicked idolaters, the Gentiles.' But the Holy Ghost now shows him to be under the same penalty and wrath of God, because he was guilty of the same transgressions which had been specified in the former chapter.

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- The Jews must think their close relationship with Jehovah and their keeping of the most important aspects of the law (at least in their minds) exempts them from judgment
- But Paul says, "There is no partiality with God." (v. 11) – Jehovah is not merely loving, He is righteous
- What often accompanies hypocrisy is an "I'm-better-than-you-are" attitude
- It's the same attitude the Pharisees had, shown in their condescending attitude toward others – Jesus referred to this:

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Luke 18:9 He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

10 Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, "God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.

12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess."

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Luke 18:13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!"

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

- Many modern fundamentalists have the same attitude as these first century Pharisees

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- They do not commit immorality or homosexuality, so they think they are okay spiritually and far more accepted by God than those who are committing those sins
- But they seem to overlook the fact that they are full of pride, bitterness, gossip, dishonesty, coveting, lust, hatred, maybe even pornography – and a host of other things – all of which are also listed in Romans 1

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- Do they think they will escape the wrath of God?
- Will they be able to hide their sins because they are not as severe as the sins of others?
- There is no partiality with God! Better to fall on your face before Him in humility NOW, than be ashamed in His presence at the JSC

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Four Incorrect Responses to Sinning

2. Impenitence

Rom 2:4 Do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

5 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

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- We serve a marvelous God, who is good and patient and who suffers long with us, despite our sinning
- He could judge instantly, but He forbears – and why?
- Because His goodness leads us to repent – to turn away from our sinning and start living righteously
- God allows many to continue in their ways an entire lifetime, giving perpetual opportunities to repent and return to Him

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God said to the Israelites:

Ezek. 33:11 I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.

- The same is true today, for He is the same – yesterday, today, forever!
- Believers presume upon God's goodness when they continue in sin, thinking God will not judge them, because their sin is so less offensive than others who are committing the BIG sins

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- Presuming upon God's goodness is hardness of heart, callousness that results in impenitence, which is a refusal to repent
- Notice what God says about those who are guilty of presuming in this manner:
v. 5 You are treasuring (storing) up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.
- Judgment is being stored up for the future, and you will experience the full force of God's wrath at the Judgment Seat of Christ

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- You will be naked and ashamed, for you will NOT be glorified or rewarded
- Instead, you will be cast into the darkness outside, the relative darkness outside His bright ruling realm
- There in the earthly realm of the kingdom you will weep and gnash your teeth, that is, consciously regret your foolish lifestyle decisions during this life
- So take God up on His offer of repentance NOW and you will be truly joyful LATER!

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HOW God will judge His children at the Bema?
Rom 2:6-7 Who “will render to each one according to his deeds”: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality;
8-10 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

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- *render* = to recompense; repay
- *deeds* = works
- All mankind will be repaid according to their WORKS, what they have done, how they have lived
- That is true of all the judgments recorded in the Scriptures
- But the emphasis here is on believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ

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Rom 2:16 in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

- That which is secret and hidden will be made manifest
- This is clearly a reference to believers, because Paul adds, “according to my gospel”
- His gospel is the good news of kingdom inheritance for those who persevere in righteousness and suffering for Jesus’ sake

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Robert Govett on Romans:

Here is a word to believers: this is the sowing time. According to the quantity and quality of the seed sown will be the harvest. Christ calls then His disciples to fill up this day with good works. But it is not enough to begin well, to start off with great zeal, and then to cool and ... nay, even to turn back! It must be ‘patient continuance in well doing.’ So says the Saviour. The seed on the good ground “are they, who in an honest and good heart having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience,” Luke 8:15 ... God’s prize shall more than repay the difficulties and troubles of service.

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What rewards does God give to those who do good?

- *eternal life* – but not referring to the GIFT of eternal life, which is received by faith alone, resulting in regeneration (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5)
- This is the REWARD of eternal life, which is bestowed on those who live righteously and patiently endure until the coming of Christ
- The word *eternal* in Greek means *age-lasting* or *age-during* (*eonion*)
- Thus, *age-during life* will be enjoyed in the coming millennial age

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What rewards does God give to those who do good?

- *glory* – glowing in some degree – as seen in Christ’s transfiguration and also 1 Cor. 15
- Those who are not glorified will be naked and ashamed
- *honor* – an elevated position of ruling with Jesus in His New Jerusalem

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Matt 10:32 Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.

33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Luke 9:26 Whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory.

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What rewards does God give to those who do good?

- *immortality* – should be *incorruption* – referring to an incorruptible body
- Will those consigned to the darkness outside be given bodies of incorruption?
- *peace* – calmness of soul that will characterize those who are with Christ in New Jerusalem
- Those who weep and gnash their teeth do not have peace of soul, but rather turmoil

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- Negative rewards will be given to those who are self-seeking and disobedient

vs. 8-9 indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;

- While righteous believers will be rewarded with peace, unrighteous believers will be recompensed with tribulation and anguish

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Four Incorrect Responses to Sinning

3. Denial of Guilt

- Paul makes the emphatic point that God’s judgment is impartial and applies to all believers, both Jewish and Gentile

Rom 2:11 For there is no partiality with God.

- That is important for both Jews and Gentiles to hear, because:
- The Gentile believers may tend to think they are exempted from judgment, because they do not have the law, like the Jews

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- The Jewish believers may tend to think they are exempted from judgment because they have the law and keep it, for the most part, unlike the Greco-Romans

- How does Paul respond to this incorrect thinking?

Rom 2:12-13 For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified;

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Rom 2:14 for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves,

15 who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them)

16 in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

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- The word *perish* (v. 12) leads many traditionalists to think Paul is talking about Hell, but that is not the meaning of this Greek word
- To perish is to become lost, destroyed or rendered useless (Luke 15 – lost sheep, coin, son)
- Paul is saying that those who are guilty of committing one or more of the sins in the latter half of ch. 1, will experience the consequence of losing their soul at the Judgment Seat, which means they lose their reward (see Matt. 16:24-27)

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- Their works will be tested by fire and nearly everything will burn up, because they are characterized by works of the flesh, not fruit of the Spirit
- And that applies, whether they are Jews, having the Mosaic law, or Gentiles, not having the law ...
- Because all believers have the work of the law written in their hearts
- Furthermore, even unbelievers know the essence of right and wrong, because all have a conscience

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- The purpose of conscience is described in v. 15 – to accuse (condemn a particular thought or action as inappropriate) or excuse (accept a particular thought or action as appropriate)
- Seeing that all men have a conscience, all are without excuse and will one day stand before God as judge, giving an account for how they behave, whether righteously or unrighteously
- That is especially true of believers, for we have the law written on our hearts

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- Thus, even Gentiles are culpable for their sinning, because although they don't have the Mosaic law, their conscience leads them to obey the law nonetheless
- And when they do so, they confirm that all men can live righteously
- If they do not live righteously, they will be exposed by God when He reveals all things
- Incidentally, the Jews are not guiltless if they are sinning, because God doesn't justify (declare righteous) those who merely hear the law, only those who do it!

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- The Jews constantly heard the law read in synagogue, but that was not good enough
- How many countless thousands of Christians hear the Word of God preached in church every Sunday for decades throughout their lives? But that's not good enough!
- God doesn't want mere hearers of the law; He wants doers of the law – those who apply what they are hearing through obedience

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Four Incorrect Responses to Sinning

4. Boasting

Rom 2:17 Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God,

18 and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, 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,

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Rom. 2:20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.

21 You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal?

22 You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

23 You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?

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

- The Jews boasted that they were God's chosen people
- They had the sign of circumcision in their flesh to prove it
- Four glorious benefits possessed by Israel:
 1. The Mosaic law
 2. The one true God
 3. The Word of God
 4. The Stewards of God's truth

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- The Jews viewed themselves as guides and lights and instructors and teachers
- Their audience? The Gentiles, who were blind and in darkness and foolish and babes
- But Paul pushes back:
- "You might think of yourselves as teachers of others, but do you teach yourself?"
- "You might preach 'Do not commit adultery,' but don't you commit adultery?"

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- Paul probably has in mind the sin of lusting
- "You preach 'thou shalt not steal,' but don't you steal?"
- Paul probably has in mind, stealing in their business dealings by charging exorbitant prices
- "You abhor idolatry, but aren't you guilty of robbing temples?"
- Perhaps Paul has in mind their robbing of God by withholding their tithes and offerings

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- "You boast in the law, but don't you break the law too!"
- And because of this (v. 24), the name of your God is blasphemed among the Gentiles
- Boasting in the law while dishonoring God through disobedience is a terrible testimony!
- The Gentiles mock Jehovah as being the God of lawbreakers – for His people break His own laws
- During the time of Christ the Pharisees were guilty of doing the same things

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- They were in outward conformity to the law, for the most part
- But inwardly their hearts were full of pride and breaking the spirit of God's laws
- Is modern Christianity any different?
- Many fundamentalist groups boast in a similar manner
- They think they have the truth and others don't, and they think they are earnestly contending for the faith by fighting with other evangelical Christians who have different views than their own

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- They go so far as to brand their brethren as heretics on the internet and separate from them
- And they do all of this publicly, convincing themselves they are being true to God's Word – which is their badge of honor –
- They often refer to themselves proudly as fighting fundamentalists
- They would not consider themselves to be murderers, but they have vitriolic hatred in their hearts, which is murder in God's eyes, according to Jesus

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- They are lawbreakers too, guilty of committing several of the sins named in ch. 1
- They are typically hyper-separational
- They set their own rules for how people should dress and what kind of music they should listen to and what Bible versions they should read – and a host of other rules they call "standards," which are not addressed in the Bible but which they have made as rules for themselves and often for their churches

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- They look down at any believer or church that has "lesser standards" than their own
- It is prideful and condescending, yet it happens all the time in fundamentalism
- They are modern Pharisees who disgrace the name of Christ in the culture, yet they see no need to repent, because they arrogantly think they are living righteously
- May God have mercy on fundamentalist Christianity!

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- Do YOU have a condescending attitude toward others who are sinning, even though you are guilty of sinning also?
 - Do you think others are unrighteous, but you are righteous?
 - Beware of boasting and arrogance!
 - What will be your reward?
- Rom 2:6-7 [God] "will render to each one according to his deeds": eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality.

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- Eternal life by doing good?
 - Absolutely! Those who live righteously will be richly rewarded by God with age-lasting life
 - But remember also ...
- Rom 2:8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, Rom 2:9 tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;
- Which verdict applies to you?

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