ROMANS 2

No Partiality with God

The Moralist, the Jew, and the Judge Who Sees the Heart

> *"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?"*
> ROMANS 2:4

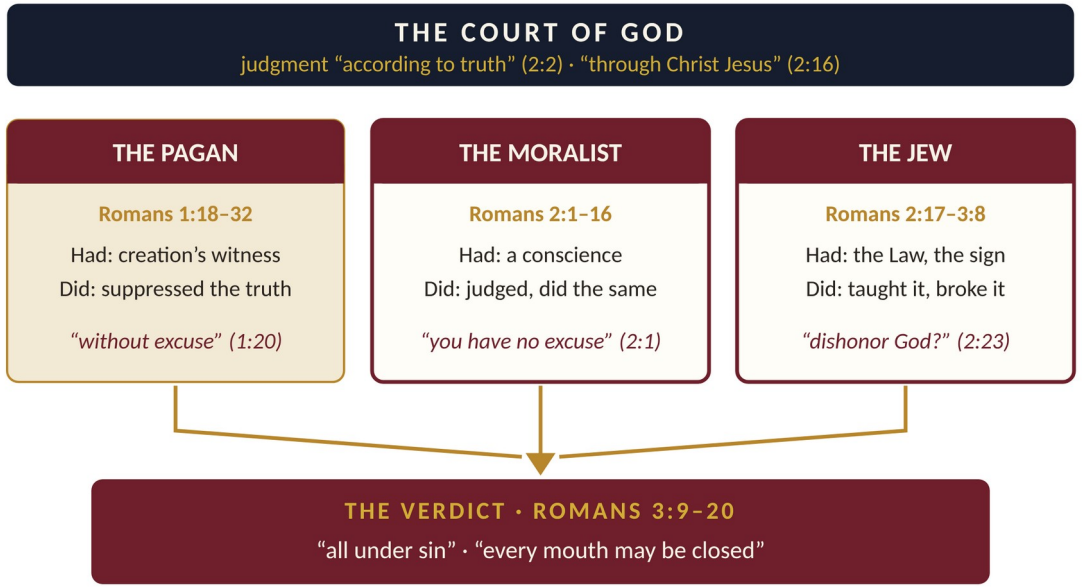
A SMITH FOR CHRIST STUDY · FOUR VOICES: GUZIK · SPROUL · SPURGEON · HENRY

Where Paul has brought us

1. 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"…

2. This is the second of three defendants in one long trial that runs from 1:18 to 3:20.

3. The background is Israel's own Scripture.



The Judge Who Does the Same

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

ROMANS 2:5

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,

DAVID GUZIK

Moralists like Seneca; goodness, forbearance, longsuffering cover past, present, future sin; God leads.

R.C. SPROUL

Judging others is the essence of hypocrisy; God's patience is meant to lead to repentance.

C.H. SPURGEON

Goodness draws rather than drives; the dearer Christ is, the blacker sin looks.

MATTHEW HENRY

Aimed especially at the Jews; hard hearts treasure up wrath; judge nothing before the time.

ἀναπολόγητος

ANAPOLOGĒTOS · "WITHOUT EXCUSE"

An apologia is a defense in court; the prefix an- cancels it — "without a defense," "inexcusable."

According to His Deeds

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

ROMANS 2:7

to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;

DAVID GUZIK

A real standard no one meets; all are self-seeking; Jew first in judgment too.

R.C. SPROUL

Justification by faith alone, rewards by works; no credit for ancestry or church membership.

MATTHEW HENRY

Golden sceptre or iron rod; refuse truth's service and become unrighteousness's slave.

ἐριθεία

ERITHEIA · "SELFISH AMBITION"

In older Greek the word described canvassing for office by underhanded means — the partisan who works the room for himself.

The Law, the Heart, and the Secrets

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

ROMANS 2:15

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,

DAVID GUZIK

Condemned for sinning, not for having the Law; judgment through Messiah is distinctively Christian.

R.C. SPROUL

Judged by the light we had; conscience is immediate general revelation; Christ the appointed Judge.

C.H. SPURGEON

A fixed day; secret life reveals the man; the Redeemer is the Umpire.

MATTHEW HENRY

Not hearing but doing; conscience is the candle of the Lord not quite put out.

συνείδησις
SYNEIDĒSIS · "CONSCIENCE"

Syn, "with," and eidēsis, "knowing": a knowing-with, a moral co-witness inside a man.

How God Judges — Romans 2:1–16

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

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

You Who Teach Another

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

ROMANS 2:17

But if you bear the name "Jew" and rely upon the Law and boast in God,

DAVID GUZIK

Every boast rested on possessing the Law; possession justifies no one.

R.C. SPROUL

God does not grade on a curve; hypocrites claim more righteousness than they possess.

C.H. SPURGEON

Inconsistency drives men from the faith; truth must be the teacher's inner experience.

MATTHEW HENRY

Spiritual pride most dangerous; a form of knowledge yields a form of godliness.

ἐπαναπαύῃ νόμῳ· καυχᾶσαι

EPANAPAUĒ · "YOU RELY UPON"

Epanapauomai is to rest one's weight on something, to lean back on it — the Law as a pillow.

The Circumcision of the Heart

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

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.

DAVID GUZIK

A rite is a label on a can; the evidence is fruit; a very big “if.”

R.C. SPROUL

An outward sign of what God promises inwardly; only heart baptism matters.

C.H. SPURGEON

Washed windows don’t clean the household; whitewashed sepulchres.

MATTHEW HENRY

Real Gentile instances like Cornelius; he is a Christian that is one inwardly.

περιτομή

PERITOMĒ · “CIRCUMCISION”

Peri, around, and temnō, to cut.

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.

What to carry from this chapter

1

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.

2

Kindness is not permission.

God's goodness, forbearance and patience are "riches," and their purpose is repentance.

3

God draws before He judges.

"The Lord does not drive you to repentance"; the sweetest repentance comes by drawing.

4

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.

More to carry

5

“Jew first” runs both ways.

Paul’s gospel phrase of 1:16 returns in 2:9–10 for judgment and glory alike.

6

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.

7

The Judge is Jesus.

God judges the secrets of men “through Christ Jesus” (2:16) — the Man appointed and raised (Acts 17:31).

8

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).

Talk it through

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

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

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

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

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

CLOSING

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

Full Deep Dive, O·I·A study, reflection journal and film: see the Romans study page.