

# **Romans 02 - Condemnation of the "Good Person"; Condemnation of the Jews; The Law Cannot Save; Conscience**

## **II. Sin (Rom 1:18—3:20)**

- (2) Condemnation of the moralist (2:1-16)
  - (A) God will judge hypocrisy (2:1-5)
    - (a) God's judgment will fall on the hypocrite (2:1-3)
    - (b) God's judgment may not be immediate granting time for repentance (2:4)
    - (c) God's judgment is sure (2:5)
  - (B) God will judge according to works (2:6-11)
    - (a) Principle stated (2:6)
    - (b) Applications (2:7-8)
    - (c) Applications inverted (2:9-10)
    - (d) God's impartial judgment (2:11)
  - (C) God will judge according to obedience to His revelation (2:12-16)
    - (a) Principle stated (2:12)
    - (b) Applications (2:13-16)
      - (i) Jews under the Mosaic Law (2:13)
      - (ii) Gentiles under conscience (2:14-16)
- (3) Condemnation of the Jew (Rom 2:17—3:8)
  - (A) The Law cannot save the Jew (2:17-24)
    - (a) Advantages of being a Jew (2:17-20)
    - (b) Jewish hypocrisy (2:21-24)
      - (i) Described (2:21-22)
      - (ii) Results (2:23-24)
  - (B) Circumcision cannot save the Jew (2:25-27)
    - (a) Partial obedience to the Law (2:25)
    - (b) Uncircumcised law keepers are circumcised (2:26)
    - (c) Uncircumcised law keepers will condemn the circumcised (2:27)
  - (C) Jewish birth cannot save the Jew (2:28-29)
    - (a) What pleases God is spiritual rather than physical birth
    - (b) God will fulfill His program through Israel in faith
    - (c) Application

## Romans 2

### (2) Condemnation of the moralist (2:1-16)

Verses 1-16 might be titled "the guilt of the moralist"...it's addressed to the person who thinks they don't need the gospel because they are a good person and do good deeds. This section is a wake up call to anyone who is trusting in works or self-righteousness to enter heaven. If you believe that when you die, God is going to weigh your good deeds against your bad deeds to make a decision about whether or not you deserve eternal life in heaven or eternal damnation in hell, they 2:1-16 is a wake up call.

How someone answers the question: If you were to die tonight, why should God let you into heaven? Most people's belief system is that because I'm a good person. Verses 1-16 show us how that doesn't cut it.

#### (A) God will judge hypocrisy (2:1-5)

##### (a) God's judgment will fall on the hypocrite (2:1-3)

**1 Therefore** you have no excuse, you *foolish* person, everyone of *you* who **passesjudgment**; for in that *matter in* which you judge someone else, you condemn yourself; **for you who judge practice the same things.**

**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.

**1** Therefore, you have no excuse—every one of you who judges. For when you pass judgment on another person, you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, practice the very same things.

**1** Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

- "Therefore" - relates to 1:18-20, not to 1:21-32

- Paul begins by saying that God's judgment will fall upon the hypocrite...the person who says one thing but does another

— Paul begins to develop here that hypocrisy is a problem for the moralist, the religionist, the so-called "ethical" individual

— "...passes judgment" - *krino*, does not mean to estimate a man's value but to condemn his person

- "...for you who judge practice the same things" - Paul begins by saying that God's judgment will fall upon the hypocrite...the person who says one thing but does another

— Paul begins to develop here that hypocrisy is a problem for the moralist, the religionist, the "ethical" individual

— Inevitably, the moralist breaks the same rules that he/she imposes on someone else.

Whatever your standards are, whatever you use to judge others, if someone were to

examine your life carefully, they will find multiple instances in which you have broken the very same rules that you have imposed on others.

— This was Christ's whole problem with the Pharisees (Matt 23:23; Cf. 7:1-5). Everyone steeped in religion violates the same standard that they seek to impose on others.

2 And we know that the **judgment of God** rightly falls upon those who practice such things.

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

2 Now we know that God's judgment against those who act like this is based on truth.

2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

— "...judgment of God" - unlike Rom 1, this reference to wrath points to God's final judgment

— For instance, someone may think that since their immoral thoughts are not observable, they are free of guilt. But God looks at the heart.

— Consequently, those who have practiced the same sins as those listed previously, although not in the same way (not outwardly, but inwardly) should not think they will escape judgment

— Rather than acting like judges of the outwardly immoral, these people should view themselves as sinners subject to God's judgment. They should not misinterpret God not judging them quickly to be an indication that they are blameless; they should realize that God is simply giving them time to repent (v4; Cf. Jer 18:6-11; 2 Peter 3:9).

- God will judge the people that the hypocrites judge for their deeds, but...

3 But do you suppose this, you *foolish* person who passes judgment on those who practice such things, and *yet* does them as *well*, that **you will escape the judgment of God?**

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?

3 So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on those who practice these things and then do them yourself, do you think you will escape God's judgment?

3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

- ...God will also judge the hypocrites (who judge others yet don't practice what they preach) as well

— Because the moralist, the religionist, does not practice the same things that he/she imposes on others, God will judgment them

- "...you will escape the judgment of God?" - or, 'did you think that you would escape—You?' - the death-chamber of self-righteousness is open to each of us...

*The only barrier to receiving truth is the assumption that you already have it.*

*The principle that keeps us in eternal ignorance is condemnation before investigation.*

(b) God's judgment may not be immediate, granting time for repentance (2:4)

4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His **kindness and restraint and patience**, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to **repentance**?

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?

4 Or are you unaware of his rich kindness, forbearance, and patience, that it is God's kindness that is leading you to repent?

4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

- If the judgment of God is so severe, why hasn't it fallen yet?

- "...kindness and restraint and patience" - the rich attributes of God that allows Him to delay judgment so that as many as possible will come to repentance

— Paul explains that God's judgment may not be immediate because His overarching hope is that the person to be judged will come to repentance

— The reason why the judgment of God has not fallen on us for our hypocrisy already is because God is giving us plenty of room to repent and turn to Him

— God allows ample time for people to come to a saving knowledge of His Son. The Bible is filled with this concept...there is always a season of divine grace before judgment comes:

- God held back the flood waters for 120 years to give people an opportunity to repent (Gen 6:3), but not a single person (other than Noah's immediate family) followed his call for repentance.
- When Joshua entered the Promised Land, he annihilated the Amorites, but God had given them 400 years to repent (Gen 15:16)
- God is patience and holding off judgment now so that all may come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9)

— We become so accustomed to the grace of God that we deceive ourselves into believing that a delay in God's judgment is a denial of God's judgment. We think if there is a postponement of God's judgment, we think God's judgment has been canceled.

- "...repentance" - *metanoia*, to change your mind

— When you change your thinking, your behavior changes as well. If we start with our behavior, we have nothing more than a New Year's resolution.

— When our belief system or thinking process changes, a change of behavior becomes so much easier. We need to ask the world to change their thinking about Jesus Christ, especially in His rightful role as Savior and Redeemer. We need to stop emphasizing the behavior and start emphasizing the thinking, and watch the behavior change as a result.

(c) God's judgment is sure (2:5)

5 But because of your **stubbornness** and unrepentant heart you are **storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God**,

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,

5 But because of your stubborn and unrepentant heart you are reserving wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

- But, Paul says, a delay of judgment is not a denial of judgment. God's judgment is coming for the unrepentant.

— Those who remain stubborn and unrepentant have God's wrath gradually storing up like water builds up behind a dam. After God told Abraham that the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full (Gen 15:16), God gave them another 400 years to repent. During that time, they did every type of debauched practice known to mankind and never repented, and God's wrath was being stored up against them during that time (Lev 18:24-30).

- "...revelation" - *apokalypsis*, an unveiling of something previously hidden. This is the third usage of *apokalypsis* so far in Romans:

- Paul called the gospel an *apokalypsis* (1:16)
- Paul called God revealing Himself in Creation is *apokalypsis* (1:18)
- Now, Paul calls the unveiling of God's wrath will be a *apokalypsis* of God's righteous judgment (2:5)

— When the judgment of God is revealed, what is the criteria for how His judgment is carried out?

1. God will judge according to works (v6-11)
2. God will judge according to obedience to His revelation (v12-16)

- "...stubbornness" - *sklerotes*, sclerosis, hardening of arteries, etc.

- "...storing up wrath for yourself" - this verse does not say God stores up wrath, but those who stubbornly refuse to repent store up wrath for themselves

— The wrath of God is in proportion of human sin. The concept of storing up wrath against the judgment includes this concept.

— This means those who sin much or with more knowledge will be punished much. Those who sin less or with less knowledge will be punished less (Cf. Luke 12:47-48).

- "...the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" - taken by itself, this verse may seem to lend support to the idea of a single general judgment of all humanity. However, the Scriptures do not support such a concept.
- This phrase must be interpreted in conjunction with passages which clearly indicate that several judgments of different groups occur at different times:
  - The judgment of Israel at Christ's Second Advent (Ezek 20:32-38)
  - The judgment of Gentiles at Christ's Second Advent (Matt 25:31-46)
  - The Great White Throne judgment (at the End of the Kingdom Age) (Rev 20:11-15)
- The focus of this passage is on the *fact* that God will judge all peoples, not on the details of who will be judged *when*...unless, you flee to that Cross at Calvary and you will "not come into judgment" (John 5:24) for it has been already "finished" (Cf. Rom 8:1).

(B) God will judge according to works (2:6-11)

(a) Principle stated (2:6)

6 who WILL REPAY EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS:

6 who will render to each person according to his deeds:

6 For he will repay everyone according to what that person has done:

6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

- Quoted from Ps 62:12; Prov 24:12; Cf. Rev 20:11-15

- If a person does not come to God on the basis of His grace, the only other judgment option God has is to judge us according to our deeds

— It will not deal with what we intended to do, hoped to do, planned to do, or wanted to do. It will deal with what we did.

(b) Applications (2:7-8)

7 to those who by perseverance in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, *He will give eternal life*;

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

7 eternal life to those who strive for glory, honor, and immortality by patiently doing good;

7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

- Paul says it is indeed possible to guarantee eternal life and entrance into heaven through good works, but you must be 100% perfect for your entire life. If you deviate in any sense, even a single time, you are guilty and no longer a candidate to enter on your good works.

— Paul meant that if a person obeys God perfectly, they will receive eternal life. Those who do not will receive His wrath. He later clarifies that no one can obey God perfectly, so all are under His wrath (3:23-24).

8 but to those who are self-serving and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness,  
*He will give* wrath and indignation.

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

8 but wrath and fury for those who in their selfish pride refuse to believe the truth and practice wickedness instead.

8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

- For those who have slipped up even that one time in their good works, who are not 100% perfect their entire life, are under God's wrath and indignation

(c) Applications inverted (2:9-10)

9 *There will be* tribulation and distress for every soul of mankind who does evil, **for the Jew first and also for the Greek**,

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

9 There will be suffering and anguish for every human being who practices doing evil, for Jews first and for Greeks as well.

9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

- Paul makes the same point in v9-11 as in v7-8, but in reverse order...

- The wrath of God is coming...if a person will not receive the grace of God then he will be judged according to his works, which will result in "tribulation and distress for every soul of mankind"

- "...for the Jew first and also for the Greek" - just as the Jew was the vehicle for dispensing the grace of God on the earth, through which the entire earth would be blessed, the same is true with judgment

— Because the Jew had greater light, judgment will come upon them first, and after that it will move out to the world of the Gentiles (1 Peter 4:22)

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

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

10 But there will be glory, honor, and peace for everyone who practices doing good, initially for Jews but also for Greeks as well,

10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

- These things (glory, honor and peace) will come to everyone who is perfect in their deeds
- "...who does what is good" - the perfect standard of righteousness; living the life Jesus led, pure and utter perfection

(d) God's impartial judgment (2:11)

11 For there is **no partiality** with God.

11 For there is no partiality with God.

11 because God does not show partiality.

11 For there is no respect of persons with God.

- "...no partiality" - when God decides to mete out His judgment on the unsaved, He will be thoroughly and completely fair (Cf. Acts 10:34; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25)

— Omniscient God judges without partiality, there is no partiality or favoritism in His judgments

— After God delivers His judgment, no one will have standing or accusation that God didn't not carry out His judgment fairly and impartially

(C) God will judge according to obedience to His revelation (2:12-16)

(a) Principle stated (2:12)

**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;

**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;

**12** For all who have sinned apart from the Law will also perish apart from the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law.

**12** For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;

- "...sinned without the Law" - those who have no knowledge of the 10 Commandments or Mosaic Law (Gentiles)

— The Gentiles do not have the Mosaic Law since God did not give it to them, therefore, He will not judge them by that Law

- "...sinned under the Law" - those who received the Mosaic Law and the light from the Law (Jews)

— The Jews, however, received the Law, so God will judge them by it

(b) Applications (2:13-16)

(i) Jews under the Mosaic Law (2:13)

13 for *it is* not the hearers of the Law *who* are righteous before God, but the doers of the Law *who* will be justified.

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

13 For it is not merely those who hear the Law who are righteous in God's sight. No, it is those who follow the Law, who will be justified.

13 For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

- Paul now applies what he said in v12, but in reverse order (Jews [v13], then Gentiles [v14-16])

— The Jews who had the Law, knew the Law, will be judged by the Law. They must keep the Law perfectly.

— Saul, before he became Paul, prided himself on measuring up to a perfect standard (Cf. Phil 3). In Saul's mind, he had kept the Law perfectly.

— Paul now says here, to the Jews, that if you do not accept Christ, the only standard that will apply to you is the standard of Moses. If you're a Jew and you reject Jesus, you get Moses.

— The Mosaic Law does not just stand in judgment on a person's action, it also stands in judgment on a person's innermost thoughts, convictions and motives. This is Jesus' main point in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:21-22,27-28; Cf. John 5:45). It includes sins that our heart has committed already, that our hands have not gotten around to yet.

#### (ii) Gentiles under conscience (2:14-16)

14 For when Gentiles who do not have the Law instinctively perform the *requirements* of the Law, these, though not having the Law, are a law to themselves,

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,

14 For whenever gentiles, who do not possess the Law, do instinctively what the Law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the Law.

14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

- So what about the Gentiles? Since the Law was not given to them and they are not familiar with it, what will be their criteria for judgment?

— Paul says here that those without the Law are judged by the same standard (the Law). But how could that be? How could those who don't have the Law be judged by the Law? Answer in v15...

15 in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their **conscience** testifying and **their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them**,

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,

15 They show that what the Law requires is written in their hearts, a fact to which their own consciences testify, and their thoughts will either accuse or excuse them

15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;

- "...conscience" - *con* = "with"; *science* = "knowledge"; so "conscience" means "with knowledge"

— Conscience is the barometer that God puts in every person, saved or not, that accuses or excuses them of their behavior. God has taken His Law and put it into the heart of every person, saved or unsaved, through conscience.

- Paul says that both Jews and Gentiles are judged by the same standard (the Law) because the Law of God is written on our hearts (conscience)

— This gets back to the distinction between general revelation and special revelation.

Examples of general revelation is the plain existence of God as found in nature, the design of the universe, and in something he is developing here, conscience.

— Paul is saying that the Gentiles, who did not receive the written Law on tablets of stone, have the Law written in their hearts. God wrote the 10 Commandments on the heart of every single member of the human race.

— After the Fall, man became like God in the fact that we knew the difference between good and evil (Gen 3:22). Man understood the difference between good and evil because of conscience, the internal law of God that He has written on the hearts of every person.

- "...their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them" - our conscience can either excuse our thoughts/deeds or condemn them

— However, our conscience cannot forgive us. It will accuse us when we step out of line and it can excuse us when we do right, but it cannot forgive us for past wrongs. This is what is called a "guilty conscience."

— Psychologists talk about the fact that the human race generally feels a sense of guilt. The reason why is that the human race, according to the internal law inscribed on the hearts of every person, is guilty. And because my conscience does not have the power to forgive me, I stand accused and condemned before it.

— Heb 9:14 talks about how the guilty conscience can be forgiven...only by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. If a person will not receive by faith the shed blood of Christ, then Moses stands in judgment of them, as well as their guilty conscience.

Heb 9:14: how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, *cleanse your conscience from dead works* to

serve the living God?

- In the Nuremberg Trials after WWII, when the Nazis were tried for their war crimes and what they did to the Jews, their defense was that they were simply following orders from higher-ups. However, they were convicted anyway because "following orders" wasn't a sufficient defense/excuse for the atrocities they committed, and the reason given was because of the conscience. Their conscience accused them that what they were doing was wrong, and they should've obeyed it.
- The Bible talks about people who can violate their conscience so such a long time that their conscience stops warning them; they become dead to what their conscience is telling them because they have violated the standards of God so frequently in their lives that they lose sensitivity to the prompting that their conscience is designed to bring.
- Our conscience can become deadened from perpetual rebellion against God (conscience becomes seared as with a hot iron, 1 Tim 4:2; Cf. Rom 1:28). Once it is deadened (seared), we lose that warning that our conscience is designed to give to us, and at that point, all bets are off on the sinful atrocities that will be committed.

	<b>General</b>	<b>Special</b>
<b>Examples</b>	Nature, conscience (Rom 1–2)	Incarnation, Scripture, miracles
<b>Availability</b>	All	Some
<b>Accomplishment</b>	Accountability (Rom 1)	Salvation (Acts 4:12; 2 Tim 3:15)
<b>Form</b>	Non-written or non-verbal	Written
<b>Quality</b>	Natural	Supernatural, miraculous

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

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

16 on that day when God, through Jesus the Messiah, will judge people's secrets according to my gospel.

16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

- When it's all said and done and unbelievers, those whom did not receive the grace of God and thus are judged on the basis of their works, are standing at the Great White Throne judgment, God will judge them based on a standard:

— The standard for the Jews will be the 10 Commandments and the entire Mosaic Law (all 613 commands), with the standard being 100% perfection

— The standard for the Gentile will be their conscience, the Law of God in written in their hearts, with the standard being 100% perfection

— And the revelation that God has already given will be used on that final day...

- In Rev 20:11-15 there are two sets of books: the Book of Life (singular) and the "books" (plural)

— The Book of Life is a record of every person who has put their trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior, and has thus received (been imputed) the righteousness of Christ in which they are able to stand before God the Father in pure perfection

— However, what is in the "books" has puzzled commentators...what is written in the "books" by which the unsaved are judged? What is written in the "books" for the Jews is the Mosaic Law, and for the Gentiles the revelation of God's Law through conscience.

In this section (Rom 2:1-16) God is seen as the Creator-Sovereign of the universe conducting the moral government of His human creatures. God's absolute standards are known. God punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous impartially according to their works, which reveal their hearts. Since no human being—Jesus Christ excepted—can be declared righteous (justified) by God on the basis of his own merit, *every human is condemned by God.*

When we examine the standards of God, we see how foolish the idea is in the minds of people to think they are a good person. I'm somehow going to make it because I'm ethical. You're not really that ethical...maybe when compared to your neighbor, but that is not the standard. The standard is the righteous character of God, as it has been expressed in the Mosaic Law and in the conscience of every person.

At this point in Paul's argument the way a person can secure a righteous standing before God has not yet been presented. Here the emphasis is on the justice of God's judgment, leading to the conclusion that nobody on his own can be declared righteous by God.

Paul starts by making clear that all of us, whether good, bad, or indifferent, all stand condemned before the applied standard. Once we grasp that we are sinners and dealing with a Holy God whose righteousness and justice *cannot be compromised*, then we can begin to understand and accept the solution God has provided.

(3) Condemnation of the Jew (Rom 2:17—3:8)

The Jews of course are a special race of people that God began in Gen 12 with His promises to Abraham. They spent 400 years in Egyptian bondage before God rescued them out of bondage and took them to Mount Sinai and gave them His Law. The Law of God is a perfect representation of God's moral character. If you want to understand what God is like, you study the Law of God.

Paul's point in this passage (2:17—3:8) is that Israel, who received the Law, violates that Law all the time. Thus, simply having received the Law and becoming custodians of the Law has no power to save the Jew.

(A) The Law cannot save the Jew (2:17-24)

(a) Advantages of being a Jew (2:17-20)

17 But if you call yourself a **Jew** and rely upon the Law and boast in God,

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

17 Now if you call yourself a Jew, and rely on the Law, and boast about God,

17 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,  
— "...Jew" - Paul had been speaking of Jews as included in the larger category of "good people" in v1-16, but now he addresses them specifically

— The Jews were very self-righteous, and Paul explains the basis of their arrogance in these verses

— The Jew believed that everyone was destined for judgment except himself. It would not be any special goodness which kept him immune from God's wrath except for the fact he was a Jew.

18 and **know His will** and **distinguish the things that matter**, being instructed from the Law,

18 and know *His* will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law,

18 and know his will, and approve of what is best because you have been instructed in the Law;

18 And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;

- Paul begins to list some advantages that the Jews had, being the receivers and custodians of the Law...
- "...know *His* will" - one of those advantages is that they knew God's will, because they were custodians of the Law and the Law reveals God's perfect moral character
- "...distinguish the things that matter" - they prided themselves on approving what was essential, because they knew and understood God's Law

19 and are confident that you yourself are a guide to people who are blind, a light to those in darkness,

19 and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,

19 and if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light to those in darkness,

19 And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,

- Because of these advantages from the Law, the Jews presupposed certain things about themselves...

1. "a guide to people who are blind" (v19)
2. "a light to those in darkness" (v19)
3. "a corrector of the foolish" (v20)
4. "a teacher of the immature" (v20)
5. "possessing in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and truth" (v20)

20 a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, possessing in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth—

20 a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth,

20 an instructor of ignorant people, and a teacher of infants because you have the full content of knowledge and truth in the Law—

20 An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

- Verses 19-20 shows the role in which some Jews pretentiously gloried in playing: that God called them to enlighten the Gentiles with the advantages God gave them
- So the Jews had revelation from God, a moral compass, that no other nation has received from God in the history of the world...

- (b) Jewish hypocrisy (2:21-24)
  - (i) Described (2:21-22)

21 *you*, therefore, who teach someone else, do you not teach yourself? *You* who preach that one is not to steal, do you steal?

21 you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal?

21 as you teach others, do you fail to teach yourself? As you preach against stealing, do you steal?

21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

- ...yet they squandered it. They treated the Law of God as a "good luck charm."

— In v21-24, Paul asks rhetorical questions that poke holes in the Jews' hypocritical facade

— If they looked at their personal lives in comparison to the Law of God that they were given, they would see that they are violating the Law of God constantly

— They taught others the Law, but they didn't teach themselves; they instructed people to not steal, yet they stole themselves. Outwardly, they looked very pious and religious, but inwardly they were corrupt.

— Knowledge of the ways of the true God is not enough...God judges according to truth and not according to appearances. God judges according to what people actually do—because it is what they believe—and not according to just what they say.

22 You who say that one is not to commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who **loathe idols**, do you rob temples?

22 You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

22 As you forbid adultery, do you commit adultery? As you abhor idols, do you rob temples?

22 Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?

- "...loathe idols" - one thing the Babylonian captivity cured was idolatry in Israel; unlike the OT where idolatry ran rampant, there were no idolatrous components in Judaism in the first century

— However, the Jews in the first century would go into a pagan temple, find an idol made of gold, steal it and cash it in and use the money for their own benefit, yet still claim that they were not idolaters (Cf. Acts 19:37)

— By doing this, they betrayed their own idolatry, which was love of money. In addition, instead of staying away from what they professed to abhor, they went after pagan idols.

— Their Gentile neighbors saw their inconsistency and blasphemed God (v24) because of it

#### (ii) Results (2:23-24)

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

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

23 As you boast about the Law, do you dishonor God by breaking the Law?

23 Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?

- Because the Jews were breaking the Law God had given them, they were dishonoring God

24 For "THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU," just as it is written.

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

24 As it is written, "God's name is being blasphemed among the gentiles because of you."

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

- Quoted from Is 52:5 [LXX]...

- The enemies of God, even today, love it when those who preach or proclaim the gospel are found to be corrupt or hypocritical

— Corruption and hypocrisy provide an opportunity for the enemies of God to blaspheme Him

— After David sinned with Bathsheba, Nathan rebuked David saying that his deed had given the enemies of God an opportunity to blaspheme Him (2 Sam 12:14, NASB95)

It is important to keep the following passage (v25-29) in context. Paul is dealing with Jews and making a distinction between Jews who believe and Jews who do not believe. He is not teaching that Gentile Christians become spiritual Jews; rather, he is teaching that every Jew is not a full Jew. A completed Jew is one who has had both circumcisions, the circumcision of the flesh, which is outward obedience to the Abrahamic Covenant, and an inward circumcision of the heart as an act of obedience to the New Covenant.

[Fructenbaum]

(B) Circumcision cannot save the Jew (2:25-27)

(a) Partial obedience to the Law (2:25)

25 For indeed **circumcision** is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a violator of the Law, **your circumcision has turned into uncircumcision**.

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.

25 For circumcision is valuable if you observe the Law, but if you break the Law, your having been circumcised has no more value than if you were uncircumcised.

25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.

- "...circumcision" - a ritual Jewish male babies would undergo, on the 8th day after birth, which identified these babies with the Abrahamic Covenant. It served as an outward sign that this baby belonged to Abraham and his lineage, and thus were under the protective custody of the Abrahamic Covenant.

— Circumcision was very similar to water baptism today...water baptism is an outward sign of an inward reality, namely the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which happened at the point of faith

— Next to the Mosaic Law, the Jews boasted almost equally in their circumcision. The Jews felt circumcision guaranteed their acceptance by God, provided they did not sin "very much."

— Over time, the Jews began to look at circumcision as a "good luck charm" reasoning that if they are circumcised, they are saved. That circumcision somehow equated to salvation and right standing before God.

- Paul's point here is to argue what point/benefit is there to keeping some of the Law (circumcision) if you're going to break the rest of the Law? What good does it do for you if you keep 1% of the Law but violate 99% of the Law?

- "...your circumcision has turned into uncircumcision" - can be interpreted as: if you are a lawbreaker, your circumcision has become a foreskin.

(b) Uncircumcised law keepers are circumcised (2:26)

26 So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will his uncircumcision not be regarded as circumcision?

26 So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?

26 So if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the requirements of the Law, his uncircumcision will be regarded as circumcision, won't it?

26 Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?

- Circumcision, here used, is the mark of the nation's separation to God, but is valid only if one were thus really separated to God

— If God had to choose between a circumcised Law breaker and an uncircumcised Law keeper, He would go with the latter

— God is saying that He is not impressed with people who keep 1% of His requirements and reject 99% of His requirements

(c) Uncircumcised law keepers will condemn the circumcised (2:27)

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 violator of the Law?

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?

27 The man who is uncircumcised physically but who keeps the Law will condemn you who break the Law, even though you have the written Law and circumcision.

27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?

- Paul is here (v27), and in v28-29, contrasting two types of Jews, not Jews and Christians  
- Today, we have cans and bottles with labels that indicate what is inside. Circumcision was a "label," and implied that the Jew was obedient to God. However, if he was not completely obedient, the label was not only worthless, but misleading. The content of the can are more important than the label.

— The Jews had put more emphasis on the presence of the label than on the contents of the can

— Paul reminds the Jews that reality is more important than profession, and obedience more vital than testimony

— Circumcision would not shield them from God's wrath if they failed to do all He commanded

(C) Jewish birth cannot save the Jew (2:28-29)

(a) What pleases God is spiritual rather than physical birth

(b) God will fulfill His program through Israel in faith

(c) Application

28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

28 For a person is not a Jew because of his appearance, nor is circumcision something just external and physical.

28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

- What pleases God is not your ethnicity (national birth) or circumcision, but your spiritual birth and spiritual circumcision (Cf. Matt 3:9; Rom 9:6)

— God is unimpressed with people who think they are right with God because they are of the right ethnicity/heritage, or have gone through some sort of ritual early in life (circumcision)

29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from people, but from God.

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.

29 No, a person is a Jew inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, brought about by the Spirit, not by a written law. That person's praise will come from God, not from people.

29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

- What impresses God is spiritual birth, not nationality, and circumcision of the heart (spiritual circumcision), not of the physical body (Deut 30:6)

- What God has been after from the Jewish nation/Israel since the beginning has been faith, which leads to obedience. This is what God expected when He came the first time through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

— Jer 31:31-34 describes the time in history where God will change the heart of the Jewish people through what we call the New Covenant

— At that time, Israel will not obey God because they have a replica of the 10 Commandments written on a stone somewhere. God says they will be obeying Him because He will do an internal work, circumcising their hearts and giving them an inner compulsion to obey Him.

— In Matt 3:7-9 John the Baptist recognized this fallacy among Jews in general and the Jewish religious leaders that they felt they had some special standing before God because they were God's chosen people