

THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Week Three: 2:1-29

2:1-11 A General Statement of Coming Judgment Upon All- Jew and
Gentile

COSMIC LAW COURT

2:1 Therefore [therefore what?] all sin deserves death as do those who condone it: which evidences their nature you have no excuse, **O man**, [Universal] every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, **because you, the judge, practice the very same things.** [1:18-32]

2 **We know** that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who **practice [DO]** such things. “God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day Ps 7:11

3 Do you suppose, [Presume] **O man [Universal]**—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that **you will escape the judgment** of God?

- In 1:18-32 he spoke of God’s present ‘soft’ wrath. Here, Paul’s focus is a **FUTURE** day of judgment
- **Gentiles** are inexcusably culpable for sinning against God’s revelation in **creation**; so too will judgment come upon **Jews** who have the revelation in **Torah.**

4 Or **do you presume** on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to **lead you to repentance?**

- **What are the dangers of ‘presumption’?** This is prideful overconfidence (Mt 3:7-12; Phil 2:12)

- Let us not despair of His mercy because we fear his justice, nor love his mercy so much that we disregard his justice. - St. Caesarius of Arles, Bishop 5th cent.
- **Paul's point:** membership in the covenant does not make faithful observance of the covenant (righteousness) optional for salvation (marriage).
 - Covenant membership not a license to increase vice, sin, and unrighteousness cf, (6:1-14)
 - Repentance entails 'godly sorrow' (2 Cor 7:10) and a life-long commitment to seeking "glory, honor, and immortality" (Rom 2:7)

5 But because of your hard and impenitent heart **you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.**

- 'Hard heartedness' resisting the Lord and his law (Ex 8:15; Prov 28:14; Ezek 3:7; Matt 19:8)

6 He will render to each one **according to his works:** [On the Day of Judgment]

- Is Paul envisioning a future judgment at which the criterion will be, in some sense, 'works', 'deeds', or even 'works of the law'? If justification is by faith, is there a final judgment based upon works? (14:10-12)
 - 1 Cor 5:9 So then whether we are alive or away, we make it our ambition to please him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, **so that each one may be paid back according to what he has done while in the body, whether good or evil.**
- 'Judgement by works' Commonplace idea to Jews
 - Job 34:11, For according to the work of a man he will repay him, and according to his ways he will make it befall him.
 - Eccles 12:13-14, The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.
 - Sir 16:12-14, As his mercy is great, so is his correction also: he judgeth a man according to his works. The sinner shall not escape with his spoils:

and the patience of the godly shall not be frustrated. Make way for every work of mercy: for every man shall find according to his works.

- Jer 17:10, “I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.”

Believers are no more justified by WORKS ALONE than they are justified by FAITH ALONE; Paul defines Christian righteousness (covenant-keeping) as “faith working through love” (Gal 5:6)

(2:7-11) Paul brings in the echo of Covenantal Blessings and Curses of Deut 27:26; 28 AND ‘Israel-In-Exile’.

7 to those who **by patience in well-doing** seek for **glory and honor** and **immortality**, he will give eternal life; [Blessing]

8 but for those who are **self-seeking** [unsubmissive] and **do not obey the truth** [knowingly reject the revelation of the law], **but obey unrighteousness** [covenant breaking] there will be **wrath and fury**. [Curse]

9 There will be **tribulation and distress** for **every human being** who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, **The Jew First** (Lk 12:48) “Everyone to whom much was given, of him, much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.”

10 but **glory and honor** and **peace** for everyone **who does good**, the Jew first and also the Greek. **Future Mt 25:31-46**

11 For God shows no partiality. **Rom 14:11**

2:12-16 Torah Will Not Affect The Fairness of This Judgment

12 For all who have **sinned without the law** [Torah: the Mosaic Law described mainly in Exd, Lev, Num, Deut] will also perish without the law, [Torah] and all who have **sinned under the law** [Torah] will be judged by the law [Torah]. Some have the law others do not; all will be judged but only according to where they have been on this scale.

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**. Who are these DOERS and WHEN will they be JUSTIFIED? (Declared righteous covenant members)

- Paul has in view a future justification, not present which he deals with in Ch 3
 - However, present justification is the true anticipation of future justification.
 - Present justification is closely correlated with faith;
 - Future justification, acquittal at the final day, always takes place on the basis of the totality of the life lived (2 Cor 5:10)
- This is the first time Paul brings up JUSTIFICATION.
- Paul's first mention of 'justification' in the letter, states openly and cheerfully that 'the doers of the law will be justified' (2:13). A future and final declaration of justification.
- He has in mind a law court in which God is the judge and humans are appearing before him to have their cases tried. Some, declares Paul, will hear the verdict 'dikaios', 'in the right'.
 - These will not be the people who hear the Torah but do not perform it; BUT those who hear and 'do the law'.
- This aligns with Paul's straightforward statement in 2:6, quoting Psalm 62:11-12, that God will 'render to each person according to their works.'
 - Ps 62:11-12 Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God, and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love. For you will render to a man according to his work.

- What Paul means by this will be a bit of a puzzle for a little while. But it will gradually become clear as his argument proceeds in the following chapters.

14 **For when Gentiles**[the Doer's], **who do not have the law** [Torah], **by nature** do what the law requires, **they are a law to themselves**, even though they do not have the law [Torah].

- 'Do Not Have Torah': Gentiles are 'outside of the Torah' and in a strict technical sense are 'sinners' (Gal 2:15)
- 'Gentiles':
 - 1) Not, an imaginary category of Gentiles who in their pagan state somehow do the "law by nature" which Paul will later dismiss, or
 - 2) Paul has found some Gentiles who are 'reasonable people' living up to their consciences and being 'a law to themselves'.
 - RATHER, 3) he is creating a third-category: Gentile Christians who 'keep Torah'= this is a category of status (not yet of achievement or ethics but positional).
- 'By Nature': Paul means the 'uncircumcised man', outside of Torah (vv. 25-29).

Evidenced in his usage of φύσει 'nature' in 2:14 & 27

2:14 For whenever the Gentiles, who do not have the law, **do by nature** the things required by the law

2:14 ὅταν γὰρ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν, οὗτοι νόμον μὴ ἔχοντες ἑαυτοῖς εἰσὶν νόμος.

2:27 Then he who is **physically (by nature)** uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law.

2:27 καὶ κρινεῖ ἢ ἐκ φύσεως ἀκροβυστία τὸν νόμον τελοῦσα σὲ τὸν διὰ γράμματος καὶ περιτομῆς παραβάτην νόμου

- (Gen 26:1-5) Abraham righteous kept God's law prior to receiving circumcision [the covenant marker in the flesh]; in fact he was circumcised after being declared righteous Gen 15:6; 17:10, 22-24]

15 **They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts**, while **their conscience** also bears witness, **and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them** 16 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

- V 15a They show the work of the law is written on their hearts Jer 31:33
 - Paul is describing an inner christian-conflict of Christian conscience, not pagan
 - Verse 15 must be read closely with vs. 25-27
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2:17-24 Surely Israel Is the Solution to Solving the Problem of Universal Sin?

17 **But if you call yourself a Jew** and rely [rest upon] **on the law** and **boast in God** [their boast in God becomes a boast in torah v23]

18 and **know his will** and approve what is excellent because you are **instructed from the law**; 19 and if you are sure that you yourself are **a guide to the blind, a light** to those who are in darkness, 20 an **instructor of the foolish**, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—

21 you then who teach others, **do you not teach yourself?** While you preach against stealing, **do you steal?** 22 You who say that one must not commit adultery, **do you commit adultery?** You who **abhor idols**, do you **rob temples?** 23 **You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.**

- There is a hidden Adam in the Jew
- The Jew, called to be the people of the true God, is dishonoring her god by breaking his holy law: Israel is the people of the Messiah but only ‘according to the flesh’ 9:5

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

Ezk 36:16-27 'Exile' and the 'End of Exile'

- Paul isn't claiming that each individual Jew steals, commits adultery and robs; the point is: if ethnic Israel truly was redeemed, these things wouldn't be happening!
 - **The exile has not ended**, at least in the way it was expected.
 - Israel as an ethnic nation has not been redeemed! She is still in exile; still in her sins; still guilty of law-breaking.
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2:25-29 God is renewing the Covenant and Torah is Being Fulfilled

25 **For circumcision** indeed is of value **if you obey the law**, but if you break the law, **your circumcision becomes uncircumcision**.

26 So, **if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law**, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?

27 Then **he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law**.

28 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. 29 **But a Jew** is one inwardly, and **circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit**, not by **the letter** (Torah keeping). His praise is not from man **but from God**. Paul is speaking of the Christian. Circumcision of the heart: Lev 26:41; Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4; Ezek 44:9. In Christ the Exile has come to an END= through the resurrection. The covenant has been renewed (Jer 31). The only way forward [for Israel] is in the Spirit, not the letter [intensified Torah observance] in the secret of the heart, not in the BADGE of CIRCUMCISION. GOD is making new 'Law-keepers' apart from the letter and the flesh.