

## Romans Chapter 2- John Karmelich

1. Most Christians are familiar with the line, "What are you, some holier-than-thou person?"
  - a) It is the line we get when we tell someone what is wrong with their behavior.
  - b) In a sense, that is the key line of Romans Chapter 2.
  - c) While Chapter 1 primarily deals with immoral people, Chapter 2 deals with moral people.
  - d) Chapter 2 deals with the danger of our ego's thinking that we are "better people" because for example, we go to church regularly or we don't commit some of the bad practices listed in Chapter 1. In a sense, Chapter 2 is about the religious person thinking they are superior to the nonreligious from God's perspective.
  - e) With that in mind, we'll come back to the idea of the "holier-than-thou" cliché.
2. It might help to understand that the first few chapters of Romans are like an army "boot camp".
  - a) When one first joins, the military, one usually, spends a good period of time in hard, physical training. A purpose of training is to get a soldier in good physical condition.
  - b) Another purpose of boot camp is to teach soldiers how to take orders. The way that is done is often to "break them". Soldiers must be taught to be teachable and how to be a follower. That usually means breaking one's egos. Soldiers must be broken of their old way of thinking before they can be good followers and not question orders.
  - c) I state all of that as the early chapters of Romans fits the boot camp model. It is important for all Christians to learn just how much we need God in all aspects of our lives.
    - i) For example, Chapter 2 deals with the issue of thinking that the religious person is morally superior to the nonreligious. It is generally true that the religious person tends to live a mentally-healthier and more productive life. On the other hand it is not true that somehow, God looks upon the religious person as being a superior person to the nonreligious in terms of salvation.
    - ii) Chapter 2 is about "breaking the will" of the religious person. It is about teaching the moral depravity of the religious person as opposed to the nonreligious.
    - iii) For the religious person, Chapter 2 is our "army boot camp".
  - d) I'll explain this idea further in the next point.
3. One of the classic questions a Christian is asked is "What about the good guy or gal who doesn't believe in Jesus? I know this really sweet person that never goes to church. What about them?"
  - a) The best response I heard is "Sure, all good people get to go to heaven. All they have to do is never sin even once in their life and they can get into heaven." (Greg Koukl)
  - b) In other words, "All they have to do is go their whole lives and never break one of the 10 Commandments, and they can get into heaven". That response usually stops the argument. Everyone understands that no one is perfect. Remember, if we desire to spend eternity with God, He gets to "make the rules" as to who gets to heaven, not us.
  - c) God, by definition is perfect. A perfect God needs to judge perfectly. A perfect God cannot tolerate any sin whatsoever. The Greek philosopher Aristotle once asked the question, "I believe God can resurrect man, but I don't see how". Aristotle understood the concept of God being perfect, but he also understood mankind's imperfection. He couldn't reconcile how a perfect God could want to spend eternity with people who are imperfect. That is, Aristotle never figured out the "cross solution".
  - d) This leads us back to Romans Chapter 2. To paraphrase the main thought of this chapter: "You who are religious may be three-steps better than the immoral person, but you are still not perfect and God' requires perfection as an entrance requirement into heaven."
  - e) Trying to please God by our goodness is like trying to take a running leap across the ocean. Someone in good physical shape may be able to jump a few feet further, but they still come a long way short of trying to reach the goal of jumping across an entire ocean.

4. Let's say we as Christians know all of this. We know we are imperfect and we need God. If not, we wouldn't be Christians in the first place. Why should I study chapter 2? Glad you asked! ☺
- a) In context, Chapter 2 is given to show the religious person is not "guaranteed" salvation just because they are religious. The chapter is full of examples of ways people think they are morally superior to others.
  - b) The application for you and I is to remind ourselves just how much we need God in every aspect of our lives.
  - c) The danger for any Christian is that our ego wants to constantly get back on the throne of our life. Our life pattern is constantly, "We mess up. We ask God to forgive us and take over our lives. God does. God then "steps back" and tests us. Our ego's think we're ok again, in some aspect of our lives without God. Then we mess up again. Then we ask God for forgiveness. That pattern continues throughout our lives.
    - i) Why? Because God is constantly showing us just how much we need Him! It is almost as if God is constantly telling us, "Oh, you think you can handle that aspect of your life all by yourself now huh? Great, go give it a shot." ☺ After we come crawling back to God, we learn our lesson. That pattern continues all through our lives as we have to learn the hard way just how dependant upon God we are.
  - d) What the veteran-Christian needs to reflect upon when they read Chapter 2 is, "What area of my life do I still think of myself as morally superior to others? Being a follower of Christ requires humility in all aspects of our lives. That includes realizing that from God's perspective, we are all sinners. It's hard to tell someone else how much they need Jesus if they think of us as a "holier than thou person". We have to show that we are all morally depraved and all need forgiveness.
  - e) Does that mean that all sins have equal weight in God's eyes? No.
    - i) Jesus said to Pontius Pilate "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." (John 19:11).
    - ii) My point here is that Jesus is saying one type of sin is a greater sin than another.
    - iii) Therefore, somehow, not all sins are equal in God's eyes.
    - iv) The point of Chapter 2 is not about which sins are greater than others. The point of Chapter 2 is to show how we are all imperfect beings and all need God's forgiveness. It is about understanding how depraved and sinful man is despite whatever good deeds we do.
    - v) The benefit of good deeds is discussed in Chapter 3. That's the next lesson.
  - f) With all of that in mind, let's start studying about our depravity. ☺
5. Chapter 2, Verse 1: You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.
- a) Remember that the last couple of verses of Chapter 1 listed all sorts of depraved sinful acts that are committed by those who turn away from God. In context, this verse is now talking about "morale" people who are making judgments on that behavior.
  - b) The key phrase of this sentence is "no excuse". That means the moral person is no better than the immoral in the sense in that God is perfect and we are imperfect.
  - c) Let me paraphrase Paul's thoughts here in Verse 1: "Attention, you religious moral-types who think you are better people than those disgusting people in Chapter 1: Think again. You are no better. Just because you moral-types can successfully suppress those urges, doesn't mean you don't think about doing those things. Get off your high horse and realize that you are saved by the grace of God, and not based on any personal attribute."
  - d) God demands perfection in action and thought to spend eternity with Him. If you find that impossible, that is why the "cross" is the solution. Paul is building his case why the cross is the only solution through the early chapters of Romans.

- e) It's time to discuss the topic of "judging others". Paul is saying in this verse that when we judge others, we are also condemning ourselves because we are no better. So, can we as Christians judge others?
- i) Jesus said, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Matthew 7:1-2, NIV)
    - a) The problem with that verse in Matthew is that people fail to read it in context of the next verse, which is the illustration of "picking a speck of dust out of someone else's eye when you have a beam of wood sticking out your eye". (A paraphrase of Matthew 7:3-5.)
    - b) Jesus point here is that "moral people" are no better in God's eye than immoral people because we are all imperfect beings.
    - c) Another point Jesus is making is that people treat us based on how we treat them. If we go around condemning other's sins, we'll get the "What are you, some holier-than-thou person?" response. We need to approach people with the humble understanding that we are all imperfect people in need of God's forgiveness.
  - ii) So, does that mean we are never to judge people? No!
    - a) We are to judge behavior. We are not to judge salvation. Only God knows who is "in" and "out". All we can do is judge behavior.
    - b) For example, Chapter 1 of Romans taught us the behavior traits of those who willfully turn from God. That implies we should judge their behavior.
    - c) In the last few chapters of Romans, we'll get into God's expectations of us as believers. It requires change in behavior.
    - d) In conclusion, we are to judge behavior. The key is to combine "judging" with the humble attitude of realizing we are no better than others.
  - iii) When someone tells you, "You shouldn't judge people", a good response should be, "What's wrong with judging people? In fact, you're judging my behavior when you tell me I shouldn't judge others!"
    - a) The point is judging behavior is a necessary part of life. God is teaching us to balance that behavior with the realization we are no better. Judging ourselves and judging others is necessary. The key to judging others is to have a humble attitude and realize that deep down, we are all imperfect people. We would criticize much less if we focus on our faults as well.
- f) Meanwhile, Verse 2. ☺
6. Verse 2: Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth.
- a) This verse continues to condemn those who think they are morally superior.
  - b) The key is the last phrase of Verse 2: "based on truth". "Truth" is God's standard of right and wrong. Paul is stating that religious people will be judged as much as the "heathen of Chapter 1" because we are all imperfect beings. In other words, we can't escape God's judgment just because we act morally superior.
  - c) This verse hints at the issue of "relativism". Relativism is the idea of "there is no absolute right and wrongs. What is right for you is not right for me and we each live by our own set of right and wrongs". There is no absolute truth in relativism.
    - i) The problem with everybody living by their own standard of right and wrong is that nobody knows who is right and who is wrong.
    - ii) You can respond to that argument by making up some ridiculous comment like, "Well, I believe stealing from others is acceptable. It is my idea of right and wrong and who are you to say what I do is wrong?" The point is if everyone had their own standards of right and wrong, we have no idea as to "truth". This is why a higher standard of right and wrong is necessary, i.e., "God's laws".

7. Verse 3: So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment?
- a) Notice in Verse 3 the phrase, "Yet do the same things". That is the key here.
    - i) Verse 3 is about passing judgment on others, "Yet (we) do the same things".
  - b) These verses are best explained with an illustration of right and wrong behavior:
    - i) "Wrong": What you are doing is a sin! You should stop that! I go to church every Sunday and I would never act that way!
    - ii) "Right": I know that I'm no better a person than you. Still, we both need to live by a standard of right and wrong. God's standards say that behavior is wrong. What you're doing is wrong. When I'm doing it, please tell me as well.
  - c) We're getting back to the danger of "holier-than-thou". It is about thinking that somehow, we are superior people because we live a more moral life. Again, there are benefits to living a moral life. That is the topic of Chapter 3. We are focusing here on the issue of salvation. Salvation requires perfection.
  - d) This verse is about the danger of being a hypocrite. That is to pass judgment on others while being guilty of the same thing. It is about condemning others as sinners when we are no better.
8. Verse 4: Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?
- a) If you recall a few pages back, I talked about the pattern of 1) "Confessing our sins to God; 2) We then ask God to help us in some aspect of our lives; 3) We then go awhile without committing a specific sin. Our ego's think, "OK, I can now handle this on my own"; 4) God then backs off and says in effect, "OK, let's see if you can handle this on your own"; 5) We eventually mess up again and have to confess our sins.
    - i) The point is God's patience with us shows just how much we need him.
  - b) Which leads us back to Verse 4: "God's kindness, tolerance and patience" is the fact that God doesn't zap us with a lightening bolt every time we mess up. God let's us wallow in our sin long enough to realize it is wrong and we need His help in order for us to change.
  - c) We tend to make the mistake of asking mercy for our sins and justice for other's sins! Paul is saying in effect, "Don't worry about that person. God is dealing with them. It's not your job to fix them. You have your own faults to deal with. Focus on your behavior and let God worry about the person next to you."
    - i) In marriage, the best example of this is to help your spouse by praying for them and treating them how you want to be treated. I heard one bible teacher say, "God and my wife ganged up on me. I never stood a chance!" (Chuck Missler)
    - ii) What about dealing with the obnoxious person or the bully? I'm not against putting up boundaries. The bible deals with that in other places. Seek God and good godly counsel in such situations. The context here in Romans is to condemn others by thinking we are somehow morally superior.
9. Verse 5: But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.
- a) We're back to the "holier-than-thou" issue. If a person spends their whole life being judgmental of others and never looking at themselves, they are in for a big surprise on Judgment Day! (I'll talk a little more about "Judgment Day" later in this lesson.)
  - b) What if someone is a devout Christian, but at the same time has a "stuck-up, holier-than-thou" attitude and never looks at their behavior?
    - i) First of all, such a person doesn't understand Christianity. It starts with the humility of realizing we are all imperfect beings. Such a person should realize they are no better than others once they accept Jesus.
    - ii) That person may or may not be saved. That is not the issue. The issue here is about a person who "thinks" they are going to heaven based on their deeds.

- c) Here is a question. Does this verse argue for the existence of “purgatory”?
- i) Let’s define that word first. The word purgatory refers to a place that is neither heaven nor hell. It is a “third location” where people have to suffer for their sins, but not for eternity. It is a place of torment, but it is not permanent.
  - ii) The word purgatory is not in the bible. There is no reference to it whatsoever.
  - iii) I bring it up here as Verse 5 says, “You are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath”. One can read this verse out of context and think, “This verse is saying that a Christian, who is judgmental, is going to receive some sort of punishment (i.e., wrath) for their sins. Therefore, there must be some sort of purgatory location for God to dish out this punishment.”
  - iv) The problem is this verse is not talking about someone who has sought Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. Paul is talking about the “moral nonbeliever” in God who thinks they are superior people to the “heathen” who commits the sins listed near the end of Chapter 1.
  - v) If one truly is trusting God for their salvation, humility “comes with the territory”.
    - a) If one is seeking God on a regular basis, and say, reading God’s standards for right and wrong. We should understand how sinful we are. We can’t help but develop a humble attitude and realize our dependency upon God.
    - b) The danger is to think that we either 1) got baptized or some other ritual and “that’s that”. We can now live how we want and we are free to judge others. That is the issue Paul is warning against.
  - vi) Now let’s get back to the issue of purgatory. The problem with purgatory is that it is contradictory to the Gospel message. To put it another way, if Jesus died for your sins, and if we still have to go to purgatory, does that mean Jesus payment for our sins was insufficient? Does that mean Jesus only died for some of our sins, and the rest is our problem? Jesus died for all of our sins, past, present and future. His payment on the cross is fully sufficient for all our sins, period. The bible speaks only of is only heaven and hell. There is no purgatory.
10. Verse 6: God “will give to each person according to what he has done.”
- a) This is a quote of Psalm 62:12 and Proverbs 24:12.
  - b) Paul will spend the next few verses expanding upon this principal.
  - c) This verse is about judgment. God will judge people based on how they act.
    - i) That means the one who never heard of God will be fairly judged based on what information he did know about God and how he or she acted on that knowledge.
    - ii) This means the one who has more knowledge also has more accountability.
  - d) This gets back to the idea that God is perfect. If God is perfect, then He judges people perfectly. I am convinced that every person sent to heaven or hell will realize that the judgment was “fair”. They will look back at their lives, realize what they did and understand that however God judged them, it will be a fair judgment.
  - e) What about those who die at a young age? We’ll actually get to that in Romans 7. In summary, they get a “free pass” since they were not old enough to know better.
    - i) Personally, I sleep better knowing that children who die at a young age get to go to heaven. It is the only way to accept such a horror. It makes me wonder what an atheist would say to a young child who is dying of cancer. How can they comfort such a person without giving them a hope for something better?
11. Verse 7: To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.
- a) Remember that this verse is a commentary on Verse 6. Verse 6 says in effect that God judges people based on their deeds.
  - b) One would naturally argue here, “But aren’t we are saved by faith?” Yes indeed. But if we have true faith, our actions will naturally follow.

- c) With that in mind, notice the word “persistence” in Verse 7. God will save those who are persistence in changing their lifestyle so to live their life pleasing to God.
    - i) What does that mean? Think about the person who says, “I was baptized once” and then never thinks about God for the rest of their life in terms of accountability.
      - a) I am convinced the greatest lie Satan ever came up with is, “I’m going to heaven because I’m a good person, or my good deeds outweigh my bad deeds”. The majority of people who go through some sort of Christian ritual at some point in their life think they are saved because of that ritual.
    - ii) Think of a baptism or altar-call ritual in context of the word “persistence”.
    - iii) The evidence of the “saved” person is they are persistent in seeking God.
      - a) Does that mean the laundry never gets done because we are too busy seeking God? ☺ Of course not. It means Christianity is about regularly and consistently seeking God for guidance in our life.
      - b) I once heard Christianity described as “putting your money where your mouth is”. That cliché means if we are trusting in God, our actions follow.
  - d) Now let’s get back to the “good traits” of this verse: seek glory, honor and immortality
    - i) A Christian is one who lives for God’s glory, not our own.
    - ii) “Honor” refers to seeking to honor God in our lives, not ourselves. It is to know that we are “God’s representatives” to the world, and should live accordingly.
    - iii) “Immortality” is to realize our true home is in heaven. We are on earth only for a relatively short time. In that time, we are to live for God in our lives.
12. Verse 8: But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.
- a) Think of Verses 7-8 as the “carrot and the stick” approach: Verse 7 lists the benefits of following God. Verse 8 is the eternal condemnation of those who turn from God.
  - b) Let’s talk about the phrase “self-seeking”. In a sense, Christians are self-seeking since we want to be with God forever, we seek to live our lives accordingly.
    - i) Verse 8 is about those who desire to live for anything but God. In that sense, they are self-seeking as they desire to live for their own pleasure.
    - ii) One must understand that even the “moral atheist” can be self-seeking. There is a pleasure for one’s ego in thinking they are superior beings due to self-discipline.
  - c) The main point of this verse is that to reject God leads to eternal hell no matter how one lives their lifestyle. One can live with a “holier-than-thou” attitude and be in big trouble. It still brings God’s wrath upon someone because he or she is trusting in their own self-discipline and not Jesus’ payment on the cross for the forgiveness of sins.
13. Verses 9-11: There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; <sup>10</sup>but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. <sup>11</sup>For God does not show favoritism.
- a) Paul is essentially saying that all people who spend their lives turning from God will go to hell and all people who spend their lives turning to God go to heaven.
  - b) These three verses then go on to say both:
    - i) 1) There is a distinction between Jew and Gentile (i.e., a non-Jew);
    - ii) 2) There is no distinction between Jew and Gentile (i.e., a non-Jew).
    - iii) On one hand, Verse 9 and 10 both state that the order of judgment is that God will judge people of Jewish decent first and then non-Jewish people. In that sense, there is a distinction between Jew and Gentile.
    - iv) On the other hand, Verse 11 is emphasizing the fact that God does not show any favorites, and in that context, there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile.
  - c) Next, let’s discuss Paul’s use of the word “Jew”.
    - i) The word “Jew” is a shorted word from “Ju-dah”. At the time of Paul’s writing, the word “Jew” was a generic word that refers to anyone of Jewish decent.

- ii) The term “The Jews” was also used to describe the Jewish religious leadership by the Gospel writers.
  - iii) It is not a racist slur. Paul himself was Jewish and proud of it. (See: 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 11:22).
  - iv) The word Jew (again, short for “Ju-dah”) means “praise”. A “Jew” is one who praises God with their lives. It doesn’t mean a Jew is someone going around singing Gospel hymns all day. ☺ It means that every aspect of their life should be pleasing to God. It is “praise” in their lifestyle.
- d) One more translation note: Some translations use the word “Greek” instead of “Gentile”. The translations say something like, “There is no difference between Jew and Greek”.
- i) Remember the Greeks conquered the known world prior to the Romans. The Greeks were known for culture. The Romans were known for justice, superior technology, and other things, but not “culture”. Since the known world was under the Greek influence for centuries, that region was known as “Greek (influenced) people”. Therefore, Paul’s first century audience understood the word “Greek” as a synonym for Gentile.
- e) OK, why did Paul bring up this point in the first place? Why go to the trouble of stating that the order of judgment is Jewish people first, then Gentile?
- i) Part of it comes back to the “Holier-than-thou” issue. People of Jewish decent thought they were automatically saved because they were Jewish. They are God’s “chosen people”, and they thought they were automatically exempt from hell.
  - ii) The same way some people think baptism or walking up to the stage at an altar call is an automatic ticket to heaven, Jewish people of that day thought that behavior after-the-fact does not affect their salvation.
  - iii) Paul is using the “I’m Jewish-therefore I’m superior” as an example of someone who is not saved just based on that singular event.
- f) Now, let’s discuss the “batting order” for judgment. ☺ Paul clearly states that Jewish people get judged first. Why is that?
- i) The answer has to do with accountability. Since the Jewish people were given God’s laws, they are more accountable to God because they should know better.
    - a) Therefore, God will judge the Israelites first since they are his “Chosen People”. We’ll get into this topic more in Chapters 3 and 9.
    - b) It is similar to Jesus’ statement of “For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required”. (Part of Luke 12:48, NKJV).
  - ii) In a few pages I’ll discuss the “double judgment” of God. Revelation 20 teaches of two separate judgments, one for believers and one for nonbelievers. Paul here is focusing on the judgment for nonbelievers. During that judgment, those who had greater knowledge and therefore greater accountability will be judged first.
14. Verse 12: All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.
- a) This verse is saying that the Jewish person who tries his or her best to live under God’s laws will be judged on those standards and those who don’t know the law will be judged based on what they do know God.
  - b) In other words, God judges people fairly on what information they do know about Him.
  - c) For example, we instinctively know that stealing and murder is wrong. Even if one never has heard of God, He will judge the very naïve based on their instinctive knowledge.
  - d) So, is it better to be knowledgeable about God and be more accountable or better to be naïve? I’ll argue knowledgeable, as it draws us closer to God and gives us a happier life.
  - e) Understand there is a price for reading these lessons. ☺ We are now more accountable.
    - i) To paraphrase one of my favorite bible teachers, “There is a final exam after this bible study, but I’m not the one giving it.” (Chuck Missler).

15. Verse 13: For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.
- a) Paul is still hammering on the point of "knowledge and accountability".
  - b) Now, he takes it one point further by saying in effect, "It is not about knowing right from wrong, it is acting upon that knowledge." In other words, it's about behavior.
  - c) Christians can fall into this trap as well. We can know our bibles backwards and forwards. We will not be judged on our bible memorization skills. We will be judged on our behavior based on that knowledge.
  - d) One cannot talk enough about the "double-sided coin" of faith and behavior. We are saved by faith. If we have faith in God, we should act on that faith. That faith should affect our behavior. We are then judged by our behavior.
    - i) For example, if you have faith an elevator will hold your weight, then your behavior should follow by actually stepping in that elevator.
    - ii) Remember that Christians also get judged in heaven. We are saved, but there are bible verses that teach our rewards in heaven are based on our faithfulness. If we are truly faithful, our behavior should follow that faith.
  - e) The last words of verse 13 say "declared righteous". This is the idea of being declared "perfect" in God's eyes. That means accepting Jesus as the perfect payment for your sins. If you accept that concept, we should then live a life of gratitude based on that fact. That is where our faith-leading-to-behavior should go.
16. Verse 14: (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, <sup>15</sup>since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)
- a) The NIV translation, along with others, puts these verses in parenthesis. In fact, the New King James Version includes Verse 13 with this parenthesis.
    - i) There, don't you feel better now that you know that? ☺
  - b) The reason the translators put this text in parenthesis, is that Verses 13-16 are "off topic".
    - i) Chapter 2 mainly focuses on God's relationship with the Jewish people.
    - ii) Paul takes a detour for 3-4 verses to talk about God's relationship with Gentiles. Therefore, the translators put these verses in parenthesis for clarity.
  - c) These verses are back to the idea in effect that people who never heard of God's law can be saved because they "instinctively" know right from wrong.
  - d) There is a false idea that since the time of Jesus, only Christians can go to heaven. Paul is saying that idea is not true. What is true is that God judges people fairly based on what they do know. If an isolated person (say deep in the jungles somewhere) never hears of Jesus, that person will be judged fairly based on what they do know. God gives us instinctive knowledge of right and wrong, and those people will be judged on that basis.
  - e) With all of that in mind, I encourage you to read these verses again from that thought.
17. Verse 16: This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.
- a) This verse is still talking about the judgment day for of those who are naïve on the Law.
  - b) Now just because such people have never heard of Jesus, does not mean that Jesus won't be involved in the judgment process. ☺ Read below how Jesus is in charge of judgment:
    - i) Jesus said, "Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son". (John 5:22 NIV)." In this sentence "all" means "all". That means Jesus will be busy judging everyone one day.
  - c) It's time to talk about "judgment day": In Revelation chapter 20, this topic is discussed. There are actually two separate judgments. One is for Christians (and probably pre-Christian era "saints") and the other judgment day is for nonbelievers. Revelation Chapter 20 says these two judgment periods are a thousand years apart.

- i) The first judgment, which hopefully, we are all part of, is where one gets rewards in heaven based on one's faithfulness as a believer.
  - ii) The second judgment is nicknamed "The Great White Throne Judgment" based on Revelation 20:11. It states that everyone else is judged "based on their works" (i.e., behavior). Then, those people are sent to heaven or hell. Before this judgment takes place, there must be some sort of "holding tank" until their souls get judged.
  - iii) Just how "time" works in heaven is a mystery. Most argue that time as we now it doesn't exist in heaven. Since God created time, He is outside of it. When we die, we enter the "eternal now". If we go outside of time when we die, that means, for example, we go to heaven as say, the same time as someone who died long ago.
    - a) How do you reconcile that with the fact Jewish people get judged first?
    - b) How do you reconcile that with the fact people are in a "holding pattern" waiting their turn to be judged?
    - c) I can't. I just bring up the questions. ☺ The best I can explain it is time still exist from our perspective, but not God's. We'll just wait and see.
18. Verse 17: Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; <sup>18</sup>if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; <sup>19</sup>if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, <sup>20</sup>an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—<sup>21</sup>you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself?
- a) Here we get another one of Paul's famous run-on-forever sentences. ☺
  - b) Let's start by just reading the first and last phrase together:
    - i) "Now you, if you call yourself a Jew... do you not teach yourself?"
    - ii) What Paul is saying is that if a Jewish person has knowledge of God's laws, he is questioning if that person practices what they preach.
    - iii) In a sense, everything in between that first and last phrase are examples of how a Jewish person can think they are superior to others.
  - c) The danger of knowledge is that it can give one a big ego. You can think you are superior to others because you know more information than others.
    - i) Let's expand upon that by defining three similar terms:
      - a) "Knowledge" is based on what information you have learned.
      - b) "Intelligence" is how fast one comprehends such knowledge.
      - c) "Wisdom" is the application of knowledge.
    - ii) For example, let's say you are hungry, and there is some food right in front of you that you can eat. "Knowledge" is that we comprehend that if we eat that food, we will no longer be hungry. "Intelligence" is how fast we figure out that if we eat that food, we will no longer be hungry. "Wisdom" is actually eating the food.
    - iii) The problem is our society puts too much emphasis on knowledge and intelligence and not enough on wisdom. We put college professors (lots of knowledge) and "genius" (high intelligence) on a pedestal, but not nearly the same respect for those who have a lot of wisdom.
  - d) This leads us back to Paul's long sentence. To paraphrase Paul, "You Jewish people know God's laws well. You can recite them and teach them to others. My question to you is do you practice what you preach? Do you walk-the-walk and talk-the-talk? When it comes to God's law, you are knowledgeable and intelligent, but are you wise?" It might help at this point to re-read these verses with that in mind.
  - e) The "tone" of all the illustrations in these verses is all about having a big ego. It is all about thinking one is superior because of one's knowledge.
    - i) Paul's next set of verses then get into examples where they "fail" on wisdom.

- f) Now let's apply these verses to our own lives. Let's get back to the "holier-than-thou" issue that Christians face.
- i) The same danger that applies to the Jewish people Paul was writing to also applies to us as well. We can know our bible backwards. We can be great teachers and write great bible study lessons. ☺ The test is our personal behavior. It is our behavior Paul is concerned about.
  - ii) Remember I stated in the opening of this lesson that the early chapters of Romans are like an army boot camp. In boot camp, a purpose is to train a soldier to break one's ego and be a follower of the army leaders. You can't be a good leader until you can learn to take orders yourself.
  - iii) The early chapters of Romans are about "breaking us" of thinking we can live a life pleasing to God without His help. One way to have that false-thought is to have great bible knowledge without applying it. Paul is killing that false-argument here in Romans. He is emphasizing the fact that having good knowledge is not enough. Preaching bible knowledge is helpful, but not enough. What God is concerned about is how we act on that knowledge.
  - iv) In other words, let's "put our money where our mouth is". If we believe this stuff, we should act upon it.
  - v) As we work our way through Romans, understand that we are going to get to a point where the only way to act on that knowledge is to let God work through us. Paul is, one-argument-at-a-time, showing us how we can't make it on our own without God's help.
    - a) First Paul needs to show us that our behavior matters.
    - b) Eventually, Paul will show us that in order to behave in a way pleasing to God, we have to let God work through us to achieve acceptable behavior.
19. Verse 21 (cont.): You who preach against stealing, do you steal? <sup>22</sup>You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? <sup>23</sup>You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law?
- a) Let me paraphrase Paul here: "You Jewish people who teach others that stealing is wrong. Have you ever stolen anything once in your life? If you have, then you are guilty too. You who preach against adultery, same question. You Jewish people brag about knowing God's law, but do you practice what you preach?"
  - b) Let me give a technical note here. When it says "rob temples", what that refers to is the idea of stealing from a pagan temple. It can be rationalized by thinking, "Well, this is a temple built to a pagan god. Therefore, it is ok steal from that temple." It would be like a Christian thinking it is somehow acceptable to rob an abortion clinic at gunpoint because what they do is morally wrong. You cannot justify one wrong with another.
  - c) Let' look at something Jesus said, on the Sermon on the Mount: "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matthew 5:27-28 NIV)
    - i) That means Jesus says you are guilty of adultery for just thinking about adultery as opposed to just acting upon it.
    - ii) Here is one area where Christians and modern Jews disagree on what is a sin. Judaism teaches that only behavior counts as a sin. Christianity (i.e., Jesus) teaches that if one thinks about sinning, that counts as well.
    - iii) In a sense, both are right. God judges us based on behavior. Thoughts are not behavior. However, thoughts often lead to behavior. If God is perfect, then God cannot stand bad behavior, or thoughts of bad behavior, if we are to be perfect. If God wants us eliminate sin in our life for eternity, then God has to eliminate the thoughts as well. Therefore, "perfection" must include bad thoughts as sinful.

- iv) It is like the idea of killing a weed. The “root” (i.e., bad thoughts) must be removed as well in order to prevent the weed from growing again.
  - v) Which leads us back to Paul’s statement in Verse 22: “You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?”
    - a) Even if one never actually commits adultery, most, if not all married people have seen other attractive people and thought about it.
    - b) To save a lot of time on this, remember the “first look” is not the problem. One can admire God’s beauty in another person. It is the “second look” that is the problem and needs to be dealt with. We need to “take every thought captive to the obedience of God”. (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 10:5).
20. Verse 24: As it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.
- a) Paul ends this section with a quote of both Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:22.
  - b) This quote tells of the reputation of the religious Jews. To paraphrase, “Why would I ever want to be a Jew? Those holier-than-thou people don’t even live up to their own standards. Why should I worship their God when they don’t even live by their rules?”
  - c) Paul quotes two prominent Jewish prophets who both state the fact that the people living around the Jewish state were turned-off to God as the Jewish people were bad witnesses.
  - d) With that in mind, I am convinced one of the worse sins a Christian can commit is to sin “in God’s name”. God care about His name and His reputation. Therefore, He is “tougher” on believers than nonbelievers. For example, most pastors who steal or say, commit adultery get caught. This is because God won’t allow a bad public witness for Him to continue for very long.
    - i) “But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the LORD; and you may be sure that your sin will find you out.” (Numbers 32:23).
  - e) This leads us back to our behavior. God cares about our behavior because we are His witnesses to the world. Nonbelievers make their opinions about God often based on how, say, Christians act. Remember that Jesus said, people will know you are believers by your love for one another (John 13:35). This is about our public witness.
  - f) In context, this verse is only about the Jewish people and how they have failed, historically to live up to God’s standards. They failed to be a witness to the nations around them. In the broader context, this is also a warning to Christians that nonbelievers are watching our behavior. God expects obedience if for no other reason than the fact we are His representatives (witnesses) to the world.
21. Verse 25: Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. <sup>26</sup>If those who are not circumcised keep the law’s requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? <sup>27</sup>The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.
- a) The remaining verses of this chapter deal with the issue of circumcision.
  - b) It was a Jewish requirement that a male baby be circumcised when he is eight days old. (Leviticus 12:3). Circumcision is the removal of the foreskin on the penis. It is a symbolic removing the “flesh” from our lives. The penis represents the part of the body used to reproduce life. It is symbolic of a “new life” serving God and not “the flesh”. The flesh represents serving anything and everything other than God himself.
  - c) The point of these verses is that Jewish people think they are automatically saved just because they are circumcised.
  - d) The application for Christians is that some people believe they are saved just because they were baptized or once made a public statement of faith in Jesus. Paul is teaching that one act alone is not sufficient for salvation. It is not about a ritual, it is about our faith in God.

- e) To expand upon Paul's thoughts here, he is saying in effect, "What about the guy who doesn't get circumcised, but still obeys God's commandments? Isn't that person superior to one who goes through the circumcision ritual?"
    - i) The point is not about perfectly keeping all of God's laws. The point is that circumcision is just a ritual and it is insufficient unto itself for getting into heaven.
    - ii) When you think about a baby being circumcised, they don't usually have much say in the matter. ☺ It is the parents making the commitment. It is the parents saying, "We want to raise our child to obey God. We want to commit ourselves to raising this child to follow God".
    - iii) In a similar style, many Protestant churches have public "baby dedications" where the parents publicly declare their vow to raise their children to follow God.
    - iv) I view baby baptisms the same way. Let's face it, the baby isn't aware of what the symbolism is all about, it is only the parents. It is the parents showing their commitment to raise the children to follow God.
    - v) The mistake is to trust in circumcision or baptism or baby dedication and stop there. Salvation is a lifetime commitment. Those who say, get baptized at birth and then turn from God the rest of their lives are not going into heaven. You can't trust in that ritual for salvation. That is Paul's point in these verses.
  - f) Let's do a quick discussion of Christians and circumcision.
    - i) Paul states elsewhere that circumcision is not required for Christian salvation:
      - a) Paul wrote, "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts." (1st Corinthians 7:19 NIV)
    - ii) On a different note, I do recommend circumcision for health reasons. There have been some studies done of circumcision and its long-term health benefits.
    - iii) I also recommend it in the sense of a "baby dedication". It is a physical sign to the parents, not to the children of the parents' commitment to raising the child to God.
      - a) With that said, it is not a requirement for a Christian believer.
22. Verse 28: A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.
- a) A few pages back, I stated that the word "Jew" means "praise". That is a "pun". The last sentence of this chapter says, "Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God."
  - b) What Paul is saying is that a "true Jew" is one who's whole life is pleasing to God. He is "praising God" with his behavior. You shouldn't have to check a male-Jew's pants to see if he is a true Jew. ☺ You just have to watch their behavior.
  - c) Paul then "hints" at how to live out that behavior. He says, "Circumcision of the heart".
    - i) That term, refers to the secret of living the Christian life: It is about letting God work through us, by the Holy Spirit to change our thoughts and behavior to be in conformity with God-the-Father's will for our lives.
    - ii) I stated earlier that it is not about self-discipline, it is about the Holy Spirit working through us to change our behavior. It is about being obedient to God's laws not through self-discipline, but by letting God work through us for the better.
    - iii) How do you do that practically? Lots of prayer. Lots of trust in God. Lots of confession of sin and surrender of our will for God's will. It is a regular process and not a one-time thing.
  - d) I want to end this lesson where I started, with a discussion of "holier-than-thou".
    - i) It is a negative term used by nonbelievers stated in a hypocritical tone.
    - ii) The truth is Christians are no better than nonbelievers in the same sense that Jewish people are no better than non-Jewish people. That is, we are all imperfect people and God sees all of us as imperfect.
    - iii) The classic cliché is that Christians are not perfect, just forgiven.

- iv) Most of Romans Chapter 2 is Paul dealing with the “Jewish big ego” of thinking they are morally superior due to their superior knowledge of God’s law. Paul is teaching that is a false concept.
  - v) The lesson for Christians is to also understand that we are not superior people just because we are saved. In that sense, we are not “holier-than-thou”.
  - vi) The term “holy” implies “separated”, in that we are separated as a group from nonbelievers to be servants of God. In that sense, we are “holier-than-thou”. The key to be witnesses for God is to never act like it. “Holier-than-thou should refer to the fact God called us to serve Him. It does not mean we are superior to any human being in any way, shape or form. That’s the main idea of this chapter.
  - vii) What the knowledge of God (i.e., knowing your bible) should do is make us humble before God and humble before other people. It should make us realize our daily need for God and other’s daily need for God. We should look at the sins of others, not as something to be corrected, but as people needing Jesus.
  - viii) To quote Rick Warren, “Hurting people hurt people”. To put it another way, sinful people commit sins on one another. Try remembering that the next time someone cuts you off in traffic. ☺ Pray for them as opposed to seeking justice.
23. Let’s pray: Father, we confess our sin of thinking we are morally superior to others. Help us to see people as needing You as opposed to seeking revenge. Help us to have a good balance of justice and mercy for the sake of society and for the sake of our witness to You. Further, help us to let Your will be done through us. Help us and change us to submit every aspect of our lives in conformity to Your will. Do this, not only for our sakes, but to help us be Your witness to those around us. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.