

(1) Sunday Sermon Version of Romans 2

1. Introduction

Charles Swindoll's book 'Insights on Romans' is the basis we are using for our teaching on the book of Romans. Today, we are studying Romans 2 which sits in the centre of the Charles Swindoll's teaching entitled 'The Wrath of God' that spans from Romans 1:18 to 3:20 (see 'Major Themes of Romans' hand-out).

Romans chapter 2 starts with the words 'you, therefore' which as we all know means that we have to look at the reason it is there for you. We should not, therefore, proceed to consider Romans 2 without reminding ourselves of what Paul has been teaching in the first chapter of Romans.

(2) In Romans 1:16,17, Paul introduces the great theme of the entire book of Romans. It is the answer to the great question: How can we get right with God?

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'" (Romans 1:16,17)

Romans 1:18-32 gives us reasons why no one is exempt from God's judgement and why the gospel is necessary. God has provided evidence of His existence in the underlying order of the universe which, though marred by the fall, points to a Creator (yet humanity rejected its creator and went its own way). It is an absolutely amazing, masterful design. The immensity and majesty of the universe, the complexity of even the smallest particles, and the inter-relatedness of everything, all point to a God who is so vast and powerful that our minds don't have a hope of taking Him all in. Humanity deserves God's wrath, because it has rejected the evidence of God's **'eternal power and divine nature'** that is evident in creation choosing instead to believe in other gods or themselves and what they can achieve.

It must gail God that He has made such a magnificent and complex creation so that we can see Him within it and yet humankind tries to explain it away without reference to Him. The more science knows and uncovers, the more amazing creation is revealed to be and the more it points to God, and yet all many do is to make up more and more elaborate reasons why things exist as they do without God.

In fact, many people claim to be so enlightened by science that they categorise faith in God as 'unreasonable' (or more truthfully 'pathetic'). Why do they do this? Because they say that science can explain everything and it cannot explain or prove God, so He cannot exist. They want to put God in a box that is explainable by science. God, on the other hand, refuses to submit to scientific examination so that His existence can be proved. Why? Because He wants us to understand that He

makes the rules and not the science that He created to enable things to exist and maintain order. God created the tool of science to make things work as they do and it is being used in an attempt to disprove His existence and to thwart His plans and purposes.

Many in the world believe in a 'god' of some sort, but their 'god' is nothing like the one true God of the Bible and whom Paul served. The enemy has blinded their eyes so that they see God as something far less than He is. Some have **'exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images'** created by a human hand, while others see god in nature or in animals. Unfortunately, many of us have a made up 'god' who is someone that our imaginations have created. He could be the woolly bearded, floating on the clouds type of 'god' who is always reaching down to us, or one that loves us so much that he lets us get away with anything that isn't too bad (like a kind, but firm, earthly father who takes a 'boys will be boys' stance when we sin). Many in the church have a picture of 'god' as this all wise, ever patient, butler-like character who serves our every need because he loves us and wants us to prosper in every way; or he might be an angry, brutal, impatient 'god' like a bad earthly father who is constantly looking for an excuse to punish us and squeeze the life out of us so that we submit to his every whim. Satan doesn't mind if we believe these lies. He just wants us to be blinded to the one true God and His Son.

Whether we like it or not, we cannot make God be anything other than who He is. We can know something about Him from the Bible and through personal relationship with Him. He is the Almighty Creator, who is loving and yet all powerful (omnipotent), all knowing (omniscient) and present everywhere (omnipresent). God makes the rules. We may not agree with everything He does, but our opinion is irrelevant. God is God and He sets the standards. We cannot escape Him or get away from His will – no one can. In effect, we are completely at His mercy. Thank God for Jesus, for where would we be without Him!

2. God's Righteous Judgement (2:1-16)

Paul has proven that the world deserves God's wrath and now he is making it more specific to individual readers of his letter, especially the Jews. The **Jewish people at that time divided the world into two groups**: the Jews, who were the chosen people of God; and everyone else, the Gentiles. The Jews saw the Gentiles as dogs, the despised outsiders, who were people without the law of God. They agreed with Paul that God's wrath was upon the Gentiles because they were Gentiles and not at all because of the way that they lived. **Many Jews thought that the wrath of God did not apply to them simply because they were Jews and already saved irrespective of how they lived.** They also strongly objected to Paul's gospel, because it was telling them they needed salvation when they believed that they were already saved; and worse, it was stating that it was possible for Gentiles to be saved.

In this passage, Paul uses a number of arguments to show that many Jews were on the wrong side of God's righteous judgement and so were under the wrath of God.

Paul here is setting out to prove that to God no one is righteous and all are subject to His wrath because they are on the wrong side of His righteous judgement. It doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a very moral Gentile, you are still a sinner and, therefore, guilty before God. In fact, everyone who has ever been born is guilty before God and, the Bible declares that the only way to salvation is through Jesus Christ. Paul is trying to reach those people who don't really see themselves as sinners and who, therefore, cannot see why Christ had to die, because they think that as they are they can satisfy God. The Jews were certainly like this and so are many today in the Western world. They fail to see themselves as sinners, because they do not understand that the essence of sin is their refusal to give God the glory and total obedience that is His right. The type or form of sin is not relevant.

- **(3) Romans 2:1-4 God's Judgement is Based on Truth as should ours**

“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. Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. 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? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?” (NIV)

Paul's first argument: The Jews judged others and yet failed to see that they were just as bad, if not worse, in the way that they lived before God.

As believers in God, we have no problem with God passing judgement on those who practice obviously evil things because His judgement is based on truth. God sets the rules and has the right to judge. When we feel resentment toward God for not eradicating evil from the world, we forget that this would mean the end of us too!

Paul reminds us that if we judge others, then we should expect that same yardstick of judgement to be used on ourselves. When we judge others, we tend to observe them and rate them against ourselves. If they are better than us, then they are very good; and if worse than us, we have a right to judge them. When driving on a motorway, people who go slower than us are jerks and idiots, especially if they hog the middle lane. Those who drive faster than us though are clearly a menace to safety. And those who undertake or drive too close are violent criminals!

(4) 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. “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me

take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." (Matthew 7:1-6)

When we discern error in another, it is not wrong to hold them accountable, but we must be aware of our motives for doing so.

- Have we adopted an attitude of self-righteousness that cares nothing for the soul of another?
- Do we get a kick out of seeing someone else fail?
- Does it make us feel better about our own failures when we see someone else fail?
- Do we truly love the person we are correcting as Jesus taught us we should and so we are only correcting out of a motivation of love?
- Do we name the sins of another and then like a modern-day Pharisee show no mercy or compassion?
- Have we condemned others for the sake of selfish gain?
- Are we in fact diverting attention away from our guilt by pointing an accusing finger at the wrongdoing of another?

I don't think it is a good idea to judge others unless you are fairly sure that you are able to see the truth of things as God sees it. God's Word does help us in this, but even when we know the truth of God as reveal in His Word, we must make sure that we are not judging the person with such a plank in our own eye that we cannot see things as they really are. We also need to remind ourselves that God has stated that we will be judged by Him by the measure of judgement that we apply to others. This tends to keep us from making rash judgements or to be overly critical of others.

Paul also points out that we are 'mere men' and most of us far from perfect. We might like to be perceived as someone who has their act together in God, but many are living behind a mask that hides some obvious sins. In warning people not to judge, Jesus and Paul caution against the insidious sin of hypocrisy. God knows who we really are and what we do in secret. Before we judge others, we certainly need to get our own house in order.

Does this mean that we should turn a blind eye to evil or allow the sin of another to go unchecked because we are not perfect? Certainly not!

"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted." (Galatians 6:1)

God does want us to care about right and wrong. He wants the righteousness of His body the church of Jesus Christ to reflect that of heaven. He wants us to be agents of good and His righteousness in this dark world and for us to stand against evil.

The best place to start is with **self-examination**. We are unable to do much for Jesus in regard to spreading His righteousness if we have a log or plank stuck in our eye. If we genuinely care about the righteousness of God, if we authentically desire to condemn sin and uphold justice, if we truly want to be champions of good, we must make sure that we are right with God by prayerfully assessing our life in Him. **Let the Holy Spirit point out where you are going wrong and put it right**. Then, we can call the sin of another to account, because we would have got rid of the planks in our own eye. We don't have to be perfect because this is unattainable on this earth; we just need to be working towards becoming more Christ-like keeping short accounts of sin with God and trying to live as He wants us to. Being aware of our own flaws, we will more likely judge others with a humble attitude in a spirit of grace.

“Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!” (1 Corinthians 6:2,3)

So why are any of us alive, if God's wrath is upon humanity? The answer (in verse 4) is **God's grace manifested in His kindness, tolerance and patience**. In His **kindness, He provides us with the time and opportunity and prompts a desire within us towards repentance**. He would like everyone to turn away from doing wrong things and choose to go His way instead.

The Greek word translated as **'lead' in verse 4 is 'ago'** which means **'to bear, bring, carry or lead'**. I like to think of **God bearing or carrying us in life** in such a kind and loving way that it will bring us to a place where we want to repent of doing things that displease Him, but I can also picture a **parent carrying a screaming, writhing child** who has been caught out doing something that he shouldn't do and his parents are in the process of removing him from the scene and disciplining him. God loves us too much to fail to discipline us when we are hurting ourselves by sinning. He sees the ultimate consequence of our sin and wants to spare us from this. We need to work out our salvation with reverence and godly fear. Above all, let us be very careful that we don't pass judgement upon God and what He does.

- **(5) Romans 2:5-11 God's Judgement is Impartial**

“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. God 'will give to each person according to what he has done.' To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honour and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” (NIV)

Paul's second argument: The Jews showed contempt for God's kindness by stubbornly not repenting of the wrong things that they were doing before God.

Paul's third argument: The Jews chose to be self-seeking and rejected God's truth instead of persistently doing good.

Every person who has ever lived will one day have to stand before God and give an account for their time on earth. Our completely impartial God will stand in judgement on us all and we will all have equal opportunity to stand before Him and to present evidence of our own righteousness. The standard will be the same for all. The deeds of each man and woman will be laid on a scale and weighed against the holy, righteous character of God. Obviously, no amount of good deeds will balance the righteousness of God on the other side – not even close. Everyone will be found wanting for "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The things that are important to humankind when weighed on God's scale will mean nothing. Wealth, power, position, race, colour, nationality, heritage, philosophy, intellect and religion will all count for nothing. God is going to judge each person with complete impartiality and give to each person according to what they have done. Anyone daring to presume that their deeds on their own are sufficiently good to enter the kingdom of heaven or that God who sees all will overlook sin has chosen a bleak future.

Why do we as Christians, at times, act foolishly by being stubbornly unrepentant when we know the consequences of being caught out by God? What are we storing up for ourselves that we be revealed on the day of judgement?

"Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear." (1 Peter 1:17)

Rewards for persistence in doing good in God's eyes: eternal life, glory, honour and peace. God wants us to choose to go His way in life by persistently choosing to do that which is pleasing to Him, to live for His glory, to live a life that brings honour to God, and to live with eternity in our hearts so that we live for God's future rather than just for today. Our reward from God will be eternal life, and reflecting back to us the glory and honour we win for Him by our lives on earth, and giving us peace as a bonus. Eternal life means eternal enjoyment of God. On the day of judgement, those who qualify will hear their names when the book of life is read. This eternal life begins here, but there we will enter into it in all its glory and fullness, to be forever with the Lord and ever in the presence of God.

Does this passage teach that doing good on its own is enough for God to grant us eternal life in His kingdom? No! The context of this passage is talking about God's wrath and our inability as humans to be able to get on the right side of God's judgement. No one can do enough good to appease God. This whole section of Scripture is not considering the question of justification or the way of salvation. What

he is considering is what condemns us and puts us on the wrong side of God's inevitable judgement and so subject to His wrath. He is proving that the whole world lies guilty before God and that there is none who can be regarded as righteous.

We will all be judged by our works and what we do in life. [Works can condemn a man, but no one will be saved by them](#). God's question to us all will be: 'How did you live?' and He will judge us accordingly. At the same time, the apostle Paul is showing that our works or the way that we live does actually show that we have a right relationship with God and are saved. In other words, [salvation always leads to us to do the type of works that Paul is describing here](#), i.e. living lives that ["by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality"](#). This is one passage that proves we must not take a verse out of context and establish a teaching or doctrine upon it.

Penalties for rejecting the truth, following evil and living a life that puts self first: God's wrath and anger, trouble and distress (Greek word 'stenochoria' which literally means 'a narrow place' – there is no more distressing thought to me than to be stuck fast in a narrow place with no hope of escape). We all, at times, put ourselves first and do things that are not right in God. [Thank God for Jesus, as in Him, we can escape God's wrath and anger, and the eternal trouble and distress this will bring, as we will hear our names when the book of life is read. We deserve the same punishment as everybody else, but He took it for us.](#) What a Saviour!

- **(6) Romans 2:12-16 God's Judgement is Universal**

["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. 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. \(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.\) This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares."](#) (NIV)

[Paul's fourth argument: The Jews thought that because they were chosen by God to have His law that this was good enough in and of itself for them to get on the right side of God's judgement and avoid His wrath.](#)

[Paul's fifth argument: Like the Gentiles, the Jews failed to obey even their moral consciousness, which was given by God to help them do the right thing.](#)

The Jewish people have the Law which is a codified instruction to them to explain the way God wanted them to live. They also have enormous help from God in the form of prophets and the other parts of God's Word. Unfortunately, [all failed to obey that Law perfectly](#), so on this level do not pass the test of God's judgment. So, they

also [deserve God's wrath and punishment](#). They will be judged by the very Law that they failed to obey.

And how about everyone else? How is it just or fair that God punishes them for breaking rules that they knew nothing about? Paul states '[the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.](#)' The truth is that every person on this earth bears the image of God – an image damaged by sin. Part of that image includes [an innate sense that some actions are good and some are bad](#). I have called this our [moral consciousness](#). The details may [not be accurate](#) and our understanding of good may be [flawed](#), but we all have something within us that prompts us to do what it thinks is right. [Guilt is the universal reaction to doing something one's personal ethic or moral consciousness forbids](#).

[Our moral consciousness enables us to understand, in an imperfect way, the requirements of the Law or the way God wants us to act. Our conscience bears witness or backs this up, as does our thought processes which accuse or excuse our actions.](#) The apostle Paul sees the conscience as an independent witness within, which examines and passes judgement on a person's conduct. Outside of God's new covenant in Christ and God's Old Testament Law, [God is going to use this process and the person's response to it, as the basis of His judgement of them](#). I believe that even the fact that we have a moral consciousness (with a conscience as part of it) that tries to get us to do what it thinks is right is a [proof of God's existence](#). Without it, society would be much more violent and survival of the fittest would reign supreme. In the case of the Jews, their conscience helps them to do the right thing within the framework of what God had revealed to them within the Law.

[No one has ever perfectly obeyed their moral consciousness with its conscience. So, even by this imperfect standard, no one lives righteously and so is subject to God's wrath.](#) I don't know how God will judge those people who have not had a chance to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures are not clear on this topic, but I do know that God will judge them fairly and impartially. Some have taken these few verses and built a doctrine that teaches these people will be judged by the knowledge of God's truth that they have. Again, [these verses are found in a passage of Scripture that is teaching, not about salvation and justification, but about God's wrath and the reasons why none of us have any excuses that will avail with God when we face His judgement](#). However, all this is irrelevant to us who do have the good news of Jesus Christ. We will be judged by God solely in the light of this.

[God's judgement is always fair and always according to a standard of which we are aware, whether it be the law or this sense of right and wrong that is in the whole of the human race.](#) The law is the basis for judgement and condemns the Jews, and the moral consciousness the Gentiles. So everyone is in the position of being under the wrath of God. [Any knowledge that we have, in one form or another, of the will of](#)

God and of right and wrong, far from helping us, simply turns out to be the source of our condemnation.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is not only our Saviour, He is also going to be the judge of all (“The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgement to the Son.” – John 5:22). People are always ready to attack the character of God. They often say, ‘How can a God who is so far removed and distant from us, judge us? He does not understand human nature and human conditions and life in this world.’ The judgement is in the hands of One who has been through it all. He has lived in this world as man as well as God and has suffered under the law and under sin.

Everyone is going to stand before the judgement seat of Christ and be judged. If a person sins, it does not matter what they have done, it will be punished. Jesus is going to judge us and will judge our secrets. Paul says this to remind us that we shall not only be judged according to our actions, we shall be judged according to everything that is true of us – what we are like on the inside. He knows everything. He knows exactly what we do with our time and money. Everything is known and recorded and we shall be judged according to all these things. The Pharisees knew how to look good on the outside, but Jesus knew their hearts – let us not be like them who thought they could get away with it. Paul places this judgement of the secrets of all men as part of the gospel (good news) message.

Christians are also going to be judged. Because their names are written in the book of life, they will have eternal life, but they will also suffer loss as a result of any unconfessed sin that they have committed and for doing their own thing instead of God’s will. We must make sure that we don’t live in eternity with regret for the missed opportunities we had here on earth to do the right thing in God. Better by far to have Jesus say, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant!’

(7)“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.” (1 Corinthians 3:11-15)

"If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the Law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said,

“It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” and again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Hebrews 10:26-31)

(8) “If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.” (1 John 1:6-10)

3. Privilege Brings Responsibility (2:17-29)

- (9) Romans 2:17-20 The Brag

“Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth.”

God did create all of humanity to worship Him, yet He intentionally and specifically called the offspring of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – the Hebrew people – to be His instruments of righteousness in the world. And while God gave the Gentiles over to their degrading passions, He held the Hebrew people accountable and chastised them like His children. Of all the races of humanity, the Hebrews received the blessing of the Law to steward for the sake of all, which gave many Jews not only a sense of high calling, but an exalted sense of superior worth and pride. In fact, many smugly believed that **their heritage as God’s chosen people’ exempted them from judgement**. Many Jews thought they could get away with anything in God’s eyes, because of the covenant that God had made with the ancestor Abraham that they had inherited as a result of their parentage. Paul’s purpose is not to suggest that his Jewish reader’s unique privilege as God’s chosen people is bad, but to help them understand that their religion does nothing to transform them.

Charles Swindoll defines religion as **doing external things to make the inner person worthy of salvation**. Behaving correctly on the outside will do nothing to cleanse the inside. **No amount of religious effort will distance us from our sin or bring us closer to God – it is all pain and no gain!** Remember, **religion cannot save you!** No matter what church liturgy, tradition, heritage or ritual you follow, it in itself will not bring you God’s favour. **Only the grace of God provides us with a salvation we cannot earn, God’s favour that we do not deserve, and God’s kindness that we cannot ever hope to repay.**

Paul here identifies 5 sources of religious arrogance for the Jewish people of his day. These five sources of Jewish arrogance should prompt us to take a close look at our own spiritual attitudes and the general spirit of our church. After all, the privileges once the domain of the Hebrew nation are now the privileges of the Christian – at least for this season of God’s redemptive plan.

1. **Their title:** The Jews were often extremely proud of their heritage and used their title to separate themselves from all non-Jews. They were God’s chosen people and so above all other nations. **Our title:** When we don the title Christian, who receives the glory, God or self? We should wear the label ‘Christian’ with honour. To declare yourself a Christian is to publicly affirm a code of conduct that others can trust and invites your peers to hold you accountable to it. When they look at us, they should see something of God within us and our lives should bring glory to Him rather than bring His name into disrepute.
2. **Their possession of the Law:** God chose the Hebrew people to bear His Word to the rest of the world. Many even thought that this responsibility exempted them from God’s judgement. **Possession of divine truth:** Do we so love God’s Word that we input it into our lives allowing it to transform us into the person God wants us to be? Or do we behave as if God’s truth doesn’t apply to us or that we have somehow risen above the need for God’s grace? We have a responsibility as Christians to protect and steward God’s written Word. We have been chosen by God to bear His message to the rest of the world.
3. **Their unique relationship with God:** they would often brag about their superior standing before God compared to all other nations. **Our unique relationship with God.** In what do we boast or assign credit, the grace of God or our own merit? As believers, we now have peace with God by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, we have the Spirit of God living within us, a privilege more wondrous than the Old Testament heroes could have imagined. It is not us, but God in us that makes the difference.
4. **Their knowledge of God’s will:** the Jews believed that their knowledge of God’s instruction gave them the ability to discern His plan for the ages. They had the writings of the prophets and this knowledge of the future undoubtedly fuelled their elitist national pride. **Our knowledge of God’s will.** Are we simply bunkering down until end-time events usher in the next stage, or do we do what we know God wants us to do in His strength and power? “We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10)
5. **Their responsibility to instruct the nations:** God charged the Jews with the responsibility to teach the rest of the world about Him. Many Jews thought mere possession of the truth automatically gave them superior ability to accomplish their task. **Our responsibility to instruct the nations.** As we teach, memorise and quote Scripture, do we practice the truth we preach so

that the world might be won, virtually without a word? Jesus commanded His disciples to go and make disciples of all the nations (Matthew 28:19,20). We need to allow the Word of God to be seen on our actions. We need to preach the gospel and if necessary use words.

- **(10)Romans 2:21-24 The Failure**

“you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who brag about the law, do you dishonour God by breaking the law? As it is written: ‘God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you’.”

Paul is highlighting here the **ineffectiveness of the Jewish faith**. They were not practising what they were preaching. He points out that their flawed, deeds-oriented theology is insufficient, and then he levels a stinging indictment from the very Law they claim to cherish.

The apostle Paul dons the robes of a barrister to cross-examine the self-righteous Jews, first by probing their integrity and then by bringing irrefutable evidence of guilt against the source of the Jew’s religious pride: their heritage. **The Jew cannot – any more than the Gentile – claim exemption from God’s judgement on the basis of religious heritage**. In fact, Paul points out that the example of the Jews has been so poor, that the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles. In other words, the **Gentiles judged God by what they saw in the Jews**.

In the same way, we **cannot blame people today for judging God, Christ, the truth of God, Christianity, the salvation of God and the power of God by what they see in church members**. Do people look at us and see misery or defeat or blatant sin? The world is looking on and judging and, if they see these things in us, they will ask, ‘What sort of God leaves His people so defeated by circumstances and trials?’ In effect, we are dishonouring the name of God and bringing Him into disrepute. What a terrible thing hypocrisy is that can make a person think they are a worshipper of God when the whole time they are bringing the name of God into disrepute and causing others to blaspheme it.

Hypocrisy is a sin that besets us all and is something of which we constantly need to be aware. It is a snare, because you can be an unconscious hypocrite as the Pharisees often were. The world when it looks at us often sees our hypocrisy better than we see it in ourselves, because we don’t want to see it or believe it.

What is a hypocrite like?

- They tend to take only a general, objective, theoretical or intellectual interest in the truth. They know the words, but they don’t let the words impact their life.

- They suffer from a kind of complacency. A hypocrite is always self-satisfied and pleased with themselves and never conscious of any deficiency. They never examine themselves, because they have never seen the need for self-examination. They are alright and they don't really need to do anything differently.
- There is never any humility about the hypocrite. They are doing such wonderful things and are such a good person that God cannot but be pleased with them!

We are all hypocrites by nature. That is the result of sin. And [the only way to discover it, escape from its clutches and avoid it is to examine ourselves](#). We need to make sure that we are right with God, especially before taking the bread and cup.

(11)“Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.” (1 Corinthians 11:27-32)

When we prayerfully examine ourselves, if we cannot see any of the fruits of the Spirit or any of the results of the divine life within us, then we are heading straight for this hypocrisy that the Jews were so often guilty. The thing that ultimately matters is this: have we received a new nature that is born again of God? Have we got the life of God in our souls? You can be highly moral, well versed in Scripture, argue profoundly about it, teach and preach to others concerning it, and yet still be condemned. It is the state of the heart that matters.

- **(12)Romans 2:25-29 Circumcision of the Heart**

“Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? 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 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.”

Paul's sixth argument: Although the Jews had circumcision, which they thought was the ultimate proof that God had chosen them and wasn't going to reject them no

matter how they lived, they failed to understand that what God wanted was circumcision of the heart.

Many Jews thought that circumcision proved they were exempt from divine wrath. They may have sinned and failed, but they were God's chosen people and He would never go back on His own family - circumcision proved it. Circumcision represented a Jewish man's participation in God's covenant with Abraham and was one of the most cherished and personal affirmations of the faith of the Jews. This initiation, accomplished on the eighth day of life, was a visible reminder that God had claimed the boy as His own, that he was a son of the covenant.

Circumcision, performed as a legal requirement, put a man under an obligation to keep all the rest of the law. To be a Jew will do a man good in the sight of God only if he keeps the Law. A Jew who breaks the Law is no better than a Gentile. Conversely, a Gentile who keeps the law of God will surpass a Jew in God's eyes, no matter how well-versed that Jew may be in the sacred Scriptures. Acceptance before God is not a matter of natural descent or external marks like circumcision.

Paul reminds his Jewish readers that circumcision is but an outward symbol of what should be true on the inside. God cares about circumcision of the heart by which His followers show honour to Him by obeying His Law and becoming like Him in character. We can accomplish physical circumcision on our own without God's help, but circumcision of the heart requires a kind of supernatural surgery that is beyond our capability. And what is the proof of circumcision of the heart: obedience to God and His will. What makes a Jew right with God is their relationship with God and not circumcision. A Jew whose life is praiseworthy by God's standards and has a heart that is right before God is the Jew who will have divine approval.

Would you prefer a spouse who proudly wears a wedding ring and yet is having an affair on the side, or a mate who is loyal but doesn't wear a ring? The wedding ring should be a circular symbol of fidelity – an outward symbol of what's true of the wearer's heart. How foolish it would be to think that the ring is the most important element of a marital union or that it can keep a person faithful to their partner.

4. Conclusion

At the end of this section, Paul has conclusively proved that God is justifiably angry with humanity, and that all people will be without excuse when they eventually stand before Him for judgement. His wrath burns with fearsome, looming finality against humanity that has rejected Him and which is fully deserving of His judgement verdict of eternal separation from Him in a place of indescribable suffering. Paul wants us to understand the gravity of our position in God's eyes so that later we can understand the cost to Him of what He did for us in Jesus. Then we will better understand how anything that devalues what Jesus did, or anything that tries to circumvent, improve or surpass the work of Jesus, is completely rejected by God. I would not like to stand

before God and try to justify taking a path to right-standing with Him that wasn't the way of salvation that He provided for us in Jesus.