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By Dan Maines

Romans 2

Romans 2:1

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

† Paul shifts from describing the Gentile world's sins in chapter 1 to addressing the Jew who judges others. The Jewish leaders condemned Gentile immorality but were guilty of the same sins. This fulfills Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7:1-2, "Do not judge, so

that you will not be judged."

† The covenant context is important. Israel had the law and prided themselves in it, yet by failing to keep it they stood condemned.

† Josephus (Antiquities 20.9.2) records the corruption and hypocrisy of the priesthood in Paul's day, proving that those who judged others were themselves guilty.

Romans 2:2

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

† God's judgment is impartial. Possession of the law does not shield Israel from judgment. Both Jew and Gentile fall under the same standard of truth.

† The Dead Sea Scrolls (Community Rule 1QS) show that the Qumran sect also believed in God's impartial judgment, expecting wrath on all lawbreakers. Paul confirms this truth but applies it universally, not only against outsiders.

Romans 2:3

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

† This strikes directly at the Jewish assumption of covenant immunity. Amos 3:2 says, "You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your wrongdoing." Covenant privilege meant greater accountability.

Romans 2:4

Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and restraint and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you

to repentance?

† Israel mistook God's patience for tolerance. His delay in judgment was mercy, intended to lead to repentance. Instead, they hardened themselves.

† Philo writes of God's long-suffering as proof of His goodness. Paul applies that concept directly to his audience, showing they had abused it.

Romans 2:5

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

† The "day of wrath" is not a far-off global judgment but the imminent covenant judgment coming upon Israel in that generation. Jesus warned of the same in Matthew 23:36, "all these things will come upon this generation."

† Josephus (Wars 6.2.1) testifies to the unparalleled wrath poured out in AD 70, fulfilling Paul's warning.

Romans 2:6-7

who will repay each person according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, He will give eternal life.

† This echoes Psalm 62:12, "For You reward a person according to his work." Paul shows continuity with the Hebrew Scriptures.

† Eternal life is not earned by deeds, but faith produces perseverance and good works as covenant fruit.

Romans 2:8-9

but to those who are self-serving and do not obey the truth, but

obey unrighteousness, He will give wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of mankind who does evil, for the Jew first and also for the Greek,

† Wrath was coming first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. Israel's covenant privilege brought covenant accountability.

† This corresponds to Luke 21:22, "these are days of vengeance, so that all things which have been written will be fulfilled."

Romans 2:10-11

but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who does what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.

† God is impartial. Jew and Gentile alike receive judgment or reward. Covenant privilege does not remove covenant responsibility.

† The Mishnah (Sanhedrin 10:1) claimed "All Israel has a share in the world to come." Paul contradicts this assumption, teaching that only those in Christ share in covenant life.

Romans 2:12

For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law.

† Gentiles without the Law will perish apart from it. Jews with the Law will be judged by it. Neither group escapes judgment. This establishes universal guilt.

Romans 2:13

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

† Hearing the Law is not enough. Doing it is required. Yet Israel failed. This anticipates Paul's conclusion that justification is by faith in Christ, since no one can keep the Law perfectly.

Romans 2:14-15

For when Gentiles who do not have the Law instinctively perform the requirements of the Law, these, though not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience testifying and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,

† Even Gentiles demonstrate awareness of God's standards through conscience. This anticipates Jeremiah 31:33, where the New Covenant law would be written on hearts.

Romans 2:16

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

† Paul declares judgment will come through Christ. This was not a distant future but part of the gospel he proclaimed as imminent. Acts 17:31 confirms God had "fixed a day" for judgment through Christ.

Romans 2:17-18

But if you call yourself a Jew and rely upon the Law and boast in God, and know His will and distinguish the things that matter, being instructed from the Law,

† Jews prided themselves in the Law. Yet reliance on it without obedience led only to judgment.

Romans 2:19-20

and if you are confident that you yourself are a guide to people who are blind, a light to those in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, possessing in the Law the

embodiment of knowledge and of the truth—

† Israel was meant to be a light to the nations (Isaiah 42:6). But instead of fulfilling this calling, they became hypocrites.

Romans 2:21-23

you, therefore, who teach someone else, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one is not to steal, do you steal? You who say that one is not to commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who loathe idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?

† Paul exposes their hypocrisy. Teaching the law without obeying it dishonors God. Jesus made the same charge in Matthew 23 against the Pharisees.

Romans 2:24

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

† This cites Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:20-23. Israel's unfaithfulness brought God's name into contempt among the nations.

Romans 2:25

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

† Physical circumcision is meaningless if the law is broken. Covenant signs without covenant faithfulness are empty.

Romans 2:26-27

So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will his uncircumcision not be regarded as circumcision? And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law,

will he not judge you who, though having the letter of the Law and circumcision, are a violator of the Law?

† This anticipates the inclusion of Gentiles. Covenant membership is not by flesh but by faith.

Romans 2:28-29

For one is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from people, but from God.

† True covenant identity is inward. This fulfills Deuteronomy 30:6, "The Lord your God will circumcise your heart."

† Early church fathers like Origen noted that Paul redefined Jewish identity around faith in Christ rather than physical descent.

How it applies to us today

† We must not rely on outward religion while neglecting inward faith. Hypocrisy brings reproach on God's name.

† Judgment is impartial. Neither heritage nor privilege grants exemption. Only faith in Christ counts.

† The gospel redefines covenant identity. Our standing is in Christ, not outward rituals or fleshly signs.

† Just as God's name was blasphemed because of Israel's hypocrisy, so too today the church must guard against hypocrisy that dishonors Christ before the world.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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- † Josephus, Wars of the Jews 6.2.1 – Wrath on Jerusalem in AD 70
- † Mishnah, Sanhedrin 10:1 – "All Israel has a share in the world to come"
- † Origen, Commentary on Romans – Circumcision of the heart as covenant identity

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