



Romans 2:1-11 (ESV)

¹ Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. ² We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. ³ Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? ⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.

⁶ He will render to each one according to his works: ⁷ to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. ⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹ For God shows no partiality.

Romans 2:1-11 (HCSB)

¹ Therefore, any one of you who judges is without excuse. For when you judge another, you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the same things. ² We know that God’s judgment on those who do such things is based on the truth. ³ Do you really think—anyone of you who judges those who do such things yet do the same—that you will escape God’s judgment? ⁴ Or do you despise the riches of His kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? ⁵ But because of your hardness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath, when God’s righteous judgment is revealed.

⁶ He will repay each one according to his works: ⁷ eternal life to those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality; ⁸ but wrath and indignation to those who are self-seeking and disobey the truth but are obeying unrighteousness; ⁹ affliction and distress for every human being who does evil, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek; ¹⁰ but glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does what is good, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. ¹¹ There is no favoritism with God.

English Standard Version Bible - *Study Bible*¹

Romans 2:1-11

2:1-3:8 *The Unrighteousness of the Jews.* The Jews are not exempt from God's judgment.

2:1-29 Most interpreters argue that Paul focuses on the sin of the Jews throughout this chapter. Another view is that the sin of the moralist, whether Jewish or Gentile, is condemned in [vv. 1-16](#), with the Jews coming into special prominence in [vv. 17-29](#).

2:1 God does not condemn them merely because they judged others but because they practiced the same sins they condemned in others (**the very same things**, esp. those mentioned in [1:29-31](#)). All people are without excuse because all, without exception, have sinned against God.

2:4 **Do you presume** is probably directed against Jews who thought that their covenant relationship with God would shield them from final judgment. After all, they had often experienced **his kindness and forbearance and patience**. They thought such blessings showed that they were right with God and had no need to trust in Christ, but Paul says the opposite is true: God's blessings should have led them to repent of their sins.

2:5 A soft and repentant heart is needed to avert God's wrath on the **day of wrath**, the final judgment. Such repentance would express itself in trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Paul disagrees with much of the Jewish teaching of his day, according to which the Jews were not **storing up wrath** but were in good standing with God through their covenant relationship, not needing to meet God's standard of perfect obedience but needing only an intention to obey God.

2:6-11 Paul establishes the principle that judgment is **according to... works**. The structure of the passage is clear. [Verse 6](#) enunciates the principle. [Verses 7-10](#) work it out more specifically with an ABBA pattern (a chiasm). [Verse 11](#) then explains why God judges according to works (because he is impartial). When Paul speaks of those who are rewarded for doing good works ([vv. 7, 10](#)), is he speaking hypothetically or of real obedience? The hypothetical view fits with the theme of the section as a whole ([1:18-3:20](#)), where all are condemned for sin, and righteousness does not come by works of law. It seems more likely, however, that Paul is speaking here of real obedience that is rewarded on the last day—such obedience being the result of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, as Paul explains at the conclusion of the chapter ([2:26-29](#)). Impartiality in judgment ([v. 11](#)) is a regular requirement in the OT (see [Deut. 1:17](#); [16:18-20](#)), reflecting the righteousness of God's judgment ([Deut. 10:17](#)).

1. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Romans 2".

Romans 2:1-11

2:1 Some interpreters think Paul is speaking about Gentile moralists in [verses 1-16](#), and then Jews beginning at [verse 17](#). The majority of scholars, however, see the Jew as the subject throughout chapter 2. Judgment and condemnation follow sin as night follows day. Not all people commit the same sins, but all show by their judging and criticism that they do not live up to the moral law they know. No one is without excuse.

2:2 The coming **judgment** will be based on God's **truth**, which no amount of human opinion or protest can alter.

2:3 There will be no **escape** from God's coming **judgment**. Human systems of justice often break down. Stalin killed more than 20 million people and yet died in his own bed at age 74. And yet death offered him no escape from God's justice. All humans, great and small, will be raised to stand before God's judgment ([14:10](#); [Rev 20:11-15](#)). The wise course is to settle your case with God before the judgment ([Mt 5:25-26](#)).

prasso

Greek Pronunciation	[PRAHSS oh]
HCSB Translation	do
Uses in Romans	10
Uses in the NT	39
Focus passage	Romans 2:1-3

In ancient Greek, the verb *prasso* had a variety of meanings, such as *to practice, effect, transact, negotiate, manage, achieve, accomplish, and make*. The term could also mean *to mind one's own affairs or business*. In general, *prasso* meant *to do* or *to act* and could refer to almost any action. The corresponding noun *praxis* means *deed, action, or practice*; the plural form of this term is the first word of the Greek name for the book of Acts (*Praxeis Apostolon*, literally, "Actions of [the] Apostles").

Prasso in the NT ordinarily follows standard Greek usage. The term commonly emphasizes the experience in an action rather than just the action itself. It can refer to *doing good* ([Ac 26:20](#); [Rm 2:25](#); [Php 4:9](#); [1Th 4:11](#)), but most often it refers to habitual evil actions ([Lk 22:23](#); [23:15,41](#); [Jn 3:20](#); [Ac 3:17](#); [19:19,36](#); [2Co 12:21](#); [Gal 5:21](#)), especially in Romans ([1:32](#); [2:1-3](#); [7:15,19](#); [13:4](#)).

2:4 Grace should lead people to repent of their sin ([2Pe 3:7-13](#)).

2. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., HCSB Study Bible, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Romans 2".

[2:5](#) Like water pooling up behind a dam, people accumulate a debt of **wrath** as they continue to reject God's grace. One day the dam will break, and the flood of divine wrath will sweep up individuals and entire societies.

[2:6-10](#) Cranfield (*Romans*, I:151) outlines 10 different interpretations of this controversial passage. The most likely one is that **works** are the outcome of a person's faith. Christians are declared righteous by faith. At the moment of that declaration, the person is joined to Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit, becoming a new creation ([2Co 5:17](#)) created for good works ([Eph 2:10](#)). As Paul wrote, "What matters is faith working through love" ([Gal 5:6](#)). Thus the person of faith who seeks glory, honor, and immortality and continues to do good demonstrates that he is truly regenerate and thus is assured of eternal life. To the person who obeys **unrighteousness** and disobeys **truth**, however, wrath is his destiny.

[2:11](#) No one should think that God's judgment is tainted with **favoritism**. He is a just Judge of both Jews and Gentiles.

NLT Life Application Study Bible³

Romans 2:1-11

[2:1](#) Whenever we find ourselves feeling justifiably angry about someone's sin, we should be careful. We need to speak out against sin, but we must do so in a spirit of humility. Often the sins we notice most clearly in others are the ones that have taken root in us. If we look closely at ourselves, we may find that we are committing the same sins in more socially acceptable forms. For example, a person who gossips may be very critical of others who gossip about him or her.

[2:1ff](#) When Paul's letter was read in the Roman church, no doubt many heads nodded as he condemned idol worshipers, homosexual practices, and violent people. But what surprise his listeners must have felt when he turned on them and said in effect, "You are just as bad, and you have no excuse!" Paul was emphatically stressing that we have all sinned repeatedly, and there is no way apart from Christ to be saved from sin's consequences.

[2:4](#) In his kindness, God holds back his judgment, giving people time to turn from their sin. It is easy to mistake God's patience for approval of the wrong way we are living. Self-evaluation is difficult, and it is even more difficult to bring ourselves to God and let him tell us where we need to change. But as Christians we must ask God to point out our sins, so that he can heal them. Unfortunately, we are more likely to be amazed at God's patience with others than humbled at his patience with us.

[2:5-11](#) Although God does not usually punish us immediately for sin, his eventual judgment is certain. We don't know exactly when it will happen, but we know that no one will escape that final encounter with the Creator. For more on judgment, see [John 12:48](#) and [Revelation 20:11-15](#).

[2:7](#) Paul says that those who patiently and persistently *do* God's will find eternal life. He is not contradicting his previous statement that salvation comes by faith alone ([1:16, 17](#)). We are not saved by

3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1896-97.

good deeds, but when we commit our life fully to God, we want to please him and do his will. As such, our good deeds are a grateful *response* to what God has done, not a prerequisite to earning his favor.

Salvation's Freeway	
Verses in Romans that describe the way to salvation.	
Romans 3:23	Everyone has sinned.
Romans 6:23	The penalty for our sin is death.
Romans 5:8	Jesus Christ died for sin.
Romans 10:8-10	To be forgiven for our sin, we must believe and confess that Jesus is Lord. Salvation comes through Jesus Christ.

Life Application Concise New Testament Commentary⁴

Romans 2:1-11

God's Judgment of Sin / [2:1-16](#)

Having painted in large strokes the fate of humankind apart from God, Paul abruptly switches his attention to a new audience. He shapes his next thoughts in a style used widely at that time, called the diatribe. In a diatribe, the writer verbally attacks and attempts to destroy the ideas of the opposition. The anticipated questions or objections of the opposition are expressed or noted and then answered or refuted. Paul probably did not have an individual, but a character type in mind as he began his diatribe.

2:1 The critic here is Jewish, for Paul is focusing primarily on Jews. Paul had criticized the horrible evil of the Gentiles, their sins of idolatry and homosexuality and their general lifestyle. This Jewish critic nodded in agreement and assumed that he was free from such vices. Many Jews believed that their national heritage would save them; they thought their privilege of birth ensured entrance into God's Kingdom ([Matthew 3:8-9](#)). They went to great lengths to separate themselves from "unclean" Gentiles. So when Paul finished his list of characteristics of those whom God will judge ([chapter 2](#)), Paul knew that his Jewish listeners would agree that such people are **terrible** and deserve to **be punished**. But then Paul says that the Jews have no right to pass judgment, because they are **just as bad**. They are not guiltless and therefore have **no excuse**. Their attitude freely condemned others' sins but somehow overlooked those sins in themselves (see [Matthew 7:2-3](#)).

2:2 Paul assumes that all his readers will agree with him regarding God's judgment. Human judgment is based on prejudice and partial perception; God's judgment is based on the truth—he judges on the basis of the facts about what we do. And there is no doubt that God **will punish** sinners.

4. Barton B. Bruce et al., *Life Application New Testament Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2001), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 585-587.

[2:3](#) Seven times in the first three verses, Paul used various forms of the Greek word for judgment (*krima*). Though human beings pass judgments, their judgments are judged by God. When we stand condemned before God, we have no higher court of appeal.

Paul ridicules the idea that a person might escape God's judgment by correctly analyzing the wrong in others. Those Jews, who were guilty of the same sins for which God would **judge and condemn** the Gentiles, would not escape God's judgment. All people, Jews and Gentiles, have sinned, and all stand condemned before God. Paul repeats this theme over and over.

[2:4](#) God is **kind** in giving us life and its fullness to enjoy; he is **tolerant** and **patient** as he bears our ingratitude and sin. He postpones punishment in order to give people **time to turn from their sin** (see [2 Peter 3:15](#)). But Paul was concerned that these Jews, overconfident in their special status with God and unwilling to repent of sin, were showing contempt for God's blessings. So Paul reminds them that God's kindness is also meant to lead them to repentance, because all people need to repent!

[2:5-6](#) This kind of person has sat in self-righteous judgment of others for too long and has lived as described in [verse 4](#)—by showing contempt for all God has given (see also [Deuteronomy 10:16](#) and [Jeremiah 4:4](#)). People receive blessings but stubbornly continue in sin, refusing to repent. It is difficult for self-righteous people to repent. Paul's readers who boasted of their faith yet refused **to turn from their sin** were **storing up terrible punishment** when God's wrath would be poured out upon them.

Though we do not know exactly when that will occur, we do know that no one will escape that **day of judgment when God, the just judge of all the world, will judge all people according to what they have done**. In the end, what matters most is not exactly when in history the day of God's wrath arrives, but that the clock is ticking. "It is destined that each person dies only once and after that comes judgment" ([Hebrews 9:27](#)). We do not know the day of the Lord, nor the day of our own death. We will treat both days with more respect if we call them "near."

God's judgment will be impartial, and it will be according to what people have done. Final judgment will be based upon character. All people will be held accountable for the truth that was available to them and what they did with it. (See also [Job 34:11](#); [Psalm 62:12](#); [Proverbs 24:12](#); [Jeremiah 17:10](#); [32:19](#); [Matthew 16:27](#); [2 Corinthians 5:10](#); [Revelation 20:12](#); [22:12](#).)

[2:7](#) This **doing what is good** is a result of new life in Christ. Real faith generates good works in a believer's life. To **persist** in this is a characteristic of the growing and progressing Christian (see [Luke 8:15](#); [Hebrews 12:1](#); [James 1:3](#)). Again Paul is emphasizing God's impartial treatment of all people ([Ephesians 2:8-10](#)).

Persistence and hope in God are rewarded by meeting the goal—**glory, honor, and immortality in eternal life**. In the end, people will receive what they really want. If we desire to be with God, he will gladly fulfill our wish; but if our inmost desire is to keep God at arm's length, the distance will be preserved forever. Many people want it both ways: They think that eternal life might be nice as long as God doesn't interfere with their present life. But we must choose. Will we persist in wanting our own way, or in wanting God's way?

2:8 Paul still has in mind the self-confident, self-righteous person, who through his own self-seeking has actually turned away from the truth and resisted the gospel, and is following his own evil path. God's **anger and wrath** are promised to those who have turned from him, yet are claiming to have a special place with him. They will receive the wrath and anger that they thought would fall on others.

2:9 God's impartiality and our behavior ensure the final results. There will be **trouble and calamity** for those who reject God. In simple terms, Jews or Gentiles who do evil, even if they don't perceive it that way, will receive the consequences of final judgment. Just as the gospel and salvation came first for the Jew and then for the Gentile (**1:16**), so will judgment by God. Those self-righteous Jews who thought they were somehow protected from judgment because of their heritage will not only find that they will be judged; they will be first in line!

2:10 In contrast to **verse 9**, Jews or Gentiles **who do good** (those who fulfill the law in Christ), no matter how incomplete they may feel that goodness to be, will receive a reward. As with the consequences of evil, there may be immediate benefits of a right relationship with God, but the full measure of **glory, honor, and peace** is for the future. Paul's main point is that God's judgment is based on truth and results, not on who we are, where we came from, our upbringing, or our intentions. The final question will be, What did you do with what you knew?

2:11 **God does not show favoritism** for Jew over Gentile when it comes to judgment for sin, no matter what the Jews had come to assume or expect. This personally addresses those who adopt Israel's mindset that religious heritage guarantees salvation. This verse answers the most common perception on how God will judge. God is usually pictured as the deity who grades on the curve. Those holding this idea almost always express the hope that they are somehow just above the passing line, but they have no way of really knowing. They blatantly hope that God will show favoritism. This verse obliterates that hope. There is no passing line. Instead, sin has created a moral chasm over which no one can leap. The gospel gives us a way to reach the other side. God offers us something far better than favoritism. He offers grace. Having Christian parents or attending the church of our ancestors does not guarantee one's salvation. Salvation is given to individuals on the basis of personal faith in Jesus Christ.

Study and Discussion Questions



God's Righteous Judgment - [Romans 2:1-16](#)

Topics: [Judging Others](#), [Judgment](#), [Repentance](#), [Witnessing](#)

Open It

1. How does a critical review of a movie or concert affect your decision about attending it?
2. *On what basis do people often judge other people?
3. What does it take to judge disputes fairly?

Explore It

4. When we judge others, what do we do to ourselves? ([2:1](#))
5. *If God is judging others for their sins, what will He do to us? ([2:2-3](#))
6. For what reason is God kind, tolerant, and patient? ([2:4](#))
7. What keeps us from acknowledging and repenting of our sins? ([2:4-5](#))
8. What is God's reaction to our stubbornness? ([2:5-6](#))
9. *On what basis will God render His judgments? ([2:5-8](#))
10. What are the qualities of those who gain eternal life? ([2:7](#))
11. What characteristics do condemned people display? ([2:8](#))
12. How can Jews expect to be treated by God? ([2:9-11](#))
13. How can Gentiles expect to be treated by God? ([2:9-11](#))
14. *How will those who know God's law be treated compared to those who never heard God's law? ([2:12-15](#))
15. How will God judge people? ([2:12-16](#))
16. When will the Law judge people? ([2:16](#))

Get It

17. In what circumstances do you find yourself passing judgment on other people?
18. *When have you ever judged someone else and realized you were guilty of the same offense?
19. When has God's patience, tolerance, and kindness brought you to repentance?
20. *How should your anticipation of a coming judgment day affect your daily behavior?
21. How much exposure have you had to God's law during your life?
22. How you have responded to your exposure to God's law?
23. How will God deal with people who have never heard His law?

Apply It

24. What do you need to do today to get ready for judgment day?
25. *Whom have you judged in a manner not pleasing to God? How can you seek forgiveness?
26. Who in your life is not ready for their day of judgment before God and needs your prayers this week?