

Exegetical Notes - Romans 2:1-16

“Those Who Do Not Know the Law”

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Romans 2:1-16

(In these verses, Paul lays the foundation for what is to follow. He discusses the judgment of God which falls on everyone because all have sinned and fallen short. He establishes three basic points about God’s judgment: (1) God judges according to truth (verse 2); (2) God judges according to deeds (verses 6-11); and (3) God judges according to the “light” the judged person has received (verses 12-15).

Verses 1-4

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. ² Now we know that God’s judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. ³ So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment? ⁴ Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

- See Matthew 7:1-5. Paul and Jesus are in complete agreement.
- These verses are addressed to the Christians in Rome, those to whom the book was written.
- The point is that they cannot judge others without acknowledging that they, too, are sinners who have fallen short. This does not mean that they are incapable of distinguishing between what is right and what is wrong. They are! It simply means that they cannot be hypocritical, presenting themselves as perfect or better than others when they are not.

- The phrase, “we know” is a rhetorical device used by Paul to say that there can be no argument about what he is saying. The truth he is proclaiming is not disputable. He uses this device throughout the book of Romans.
- Paul says that we all know that God is capable of truthful judgment of all things and in all matters. He looks at the persons involved and circumstances faced with absolute insight, understanding, and comprehension. He is not fooled or biased. That is what is required to “judge in truth.”
- However, human judgment is often based on incomplete understanding and personal bias. Often those judging are guilty of the exact same sin or another sin. Often human judgment is used to deflect attention away from one’s own sin to the failure of another. Such an act defies God’s riches, kindness, tolerance, and patience.

Verses 5-11

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. ⁶ God “will repay each person according to what they have done.” ⁷ To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. ⁸ But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. ⁹ There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; ¹⁰ but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹¹ For God does not show favoritism.

- God judges each person according to what that person has done. If a person seeks to give God glory and honor and seeks eternal life through Jesus Christ, God’s Son, God will give that person eternal life. If a person is self-seeking (lives for self above all else), rejects the truth about God proclaimed in the Bible, and follows the evil teaching of the godless (see Romans 1:16-32), that will reap God’s wrath and anger.

- These things are true for those who are Jews and for those who are not. God shows no favoritism.

Verses 12- 16

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. 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. 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. ¹⁵ They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.) ¹⁶ This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

- If a person knows the law of God but does not keep the law of God, his actions will condemn him. It is not enough to know the law. One must keep the law.
- Conversely, if someone does not know the law of God as it is recorded in the Old Testament, but keeps the spirit of the law because he is intuitively moral, He will be found "righteous" by God because he is living the law without knowing the law.
- Paul says that these things will be made clear on the day of judgment when the hearts of men are laid open and things are made clear.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Those Who Do Not Know the Law*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Interim Senior/Lead Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship* & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)