

# Then What About Religion?

## Romans 2:1-11

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**Introduction:** Okay....the world is evil and we concur with God's description of its inhabitants in Romans one. Five minutes of nightly news will confirm God's opinion. One verse from chapter one will remind us of what God said about humanity. They are...

**Romans 1:29-32** <sup>29</sup> .....filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips, <sup>30</sup> slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup> without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; <sup>32</sup> and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

**BUT**, we protest, are not like that. We believe in God. We have the Scriptures and have read them or heard them preached. We believe that God loves us and that we enjoy a special relationship to Him. We gather to worship God and we practice certain religious activities. So we wholeheartedly agree with God's condemnation of all these wicked people and are certainly grateful that we are NOT sinners like the rest of men.... We love Romans Chapter One!

So says the voice of those who trust morality and religion. They range from Roman Catholics to Fundamental Baptists and every shade in between. They do not see themselves in this universal condemnation of humanity that opens the greatest explanation of the Gospel in the New Testament. They are Christians and not sinners. Most religious people resent being called a sinner and therefore resent the gospel....which is exclusively for sinners. No good or righteous need apply!

**Luke 5:31-32** <sup>31</sup> And Jesus answered and said to them, "*It is* not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. <sup>32</sup> "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

**Matthew 21:31-32** <sup>31</sup> Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you. <sup>32</sup> "For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him;

Countless church people in Bible believing churches are trusting in their standing and religious identification. When I ask evangelical Christians why they are going to heaven, many don't even mention Jesus at all. Other religions even less. They are comfortable with their membership, doctrine, sacraments, priesthood, ritual, and outward morality.

21<sup>st</sup> century men have not changed much since God gave us Romans. The wicked are still stubbornly and blatantly wicked and the religious are still confident that they are not like the wicked. In Romans Chapter Two, God addresses the Jews. The application to all self confident and self righteous people down through the ages is by His design.

**Romans 2:1-11** Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. <sup>2</sup> And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. <sup>3</sup> But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same *yourself*, that you will escape the judgment of God? <sup>4</sup> Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? <sup>5</sup> But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, <sup>6</sup> who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: <sup>7</sup> to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; <sup>8</sup> but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. <sup>9</sup> *There will be* tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, <sup>10</sup> but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. <sup>11</sup> For there is no partiality with God.

It is vital for you to see yourself as God sees you. Can you imagine a doctor who just greets you in the waiting room and says you look great? Or, after examination tells every patient they are NOT sick, no matter what the truth is. “As long as you are my patient,” he promises, “and come to see me you will be okay.” Friends....The Gospel says that we are not okay. Joining a church or even attending it does not.....IT CANNOT.....make you okay. Why? Because we also do or have already done these horrible things...these sins.....that we know make us worthy of condemnation by God. Being religious is lipstick on a pig. And this is what we want to learn from God’s Word today.

- Condemning the sin of others does not absolve your own [1-3]
- Condemning others actually shows contempt for God’s mercy [4-5]
- God judges your deeds and not your religion [6-8]
- God judges all men’s deeds by exactly the same standard [9-11]

### **Condemning the sin of others does not absolve your own [1-3]**

**Romans 2:1-3** Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. <sup>2</sup> And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. <sup>3</sup> But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same *yourself*, that you will escape the judgment of God?

**Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment [1a]:** In all likelihood this “therefore” goes back to 1:18 where God states that He is offended by all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Paul is now speaking to Jews, but if the message sounds pointed and personal it should. The Scripture uses a singular form of the word “you” in these next few verses. It is not “you Jews.” It is you individual human being who thinks you can hide within your group identity and excuse your personal sin. It is also clearly applicable to self righteous moralists and religionists in every age.

Passing judgment is a Greek word that gets double duty in English. It is also translated “condemn.” This is the tenuous line that all believers walk. The godless avoid this problem by excusing all sin in men...often with the trivial remark...”who am I to judge?”

**Romans 1:32** <sup>32</sup> and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

This is not an option for men who follow and love Christ, but neither are we to damn men or condemn them because we too have done the exact same things. You have lied and when you bluster and take such offense at liars or any other sinner, you are publicly condemning yourself. But this is not the main reason you should not condemn other men. The supreme reason is that we are assuming a role that belongs only to Christ. We are declaring ourselves fit to condemn when we are not. We are worthy of condemnation.

**John 5:22** <sup>22</sup> "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son,

It does not matter that you are not committing a particular sin right now. You have sinned. Your heart is a Petri dish for sin. Just look at the list again. I'll just pick the respectable sins:

Strife... Are there people you are constantly at odds with in your life  
Deceit...Actively trying to make people think something is true when it isn't.  
Slander...Trying to make someone....anyone.....look bad  
Gossip....secretly telling others things that make someone else look bad  
Unmerciful...Do you ever withhold good just because they just don't deserve it?  
Unloving....Do you ever withhold love from a spouse, a child, or friend because they have not been loving to you?  
Malice....Doing and saying things you know will inflict hurt.

**For in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things [1b]:** Our human tendency is to amplify the sins and shortcomings of others and diminish them or forget them altogether in ourselves. We hate being lied to, but we have lied to someone. We condemn someone who slanders or gossips about us, but we have or are doing the same?

**What Things?:** These are the things in Romans One, that most descent, religious folk eagerly condemn. The list condemns you, Scripture says and you cannot find cover by condemning the same sins in others or by being part of a religion that will absolve you. NOTHING WILL ABSOLVE YOUR SINS!

**And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things [2]:** Paul says that you [as an individual] know that God has a right to condemn you for this. We prove that we believe they are condemnable offences every time we condemn someone for doing one of them. This knowledge is part of God's general and universal revelation to humanity.

**Romans 1:19-20** <sup>19</sup> .....that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. <sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world His invisible

attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

**But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same *yourself*, that you will escape the judgment of God? [3]:** The Jews believed openly what many people in our day believe clandestinely. God will not judge us because we have special standing. We belong to the right church! We have been baptized! We take communion! We believe correct doctrine! We hate the right people and condemn what they do! Does any of this resonate with you at all?

A blast of wind from God's mouth is about to destroy this house of cards. In other words...YOU CANNOT DEFLECT JUDGMENT AWAY FROM YOURSELF BY FOCUSING ON AND CONDEMNING THE SINS OF OTHERS.

### **Condemning others actually shows contempt for God's mercy [4-5]**

**Romans 2:4-5** <sup>4</sup> Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? <sup>5</sup> But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

**Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience [4a]:** Paul goes on to argue that not only does this not excuse our sin...it actually makes it worse. Yes that is what the Scripture says.

**Think lightly:** I DON'T LIKE THIS TRANSLATION. It more accurately means "show contempt," "despise," "disdain," or "think little or nothing of." Scripture goes on to speak of three things about God that such behavior just belittles and nullifies. God is rich in each of them. He is overflowing with them.

**Kindness:** This is one of two words for moral goodness and excellence. One is 'agathos' and this one is 'chrestos.' William Barclay describes the difference this way, "The goodness of a man who is agathos may well issue in rebuke and discipline and punishment; but the goodness of a man who is chrestos is always essentially kind. Jesus was agathos when he drove the moneychangers and the sellers of doves from the Temple in the white heat of anger. He was chrestos when he treated with loving gentleness the sinning woman who anointed his feet and the woman taken in adultery."

Self righteousness despises the fact that God is not lowering the boom on evil men and giving them the condemnation they deserve. You are not like that are you?

**Tolerance:** Sometimes translated forbearance is the word for a truce. It means holding back or delaying the inevitable. It is a cessation of hostility but with a ticking timer moving inexorably toward war. "Do you think," Paul asks, "that you are okay because God has not judged you for your sins yet?" This is very common. The fact that Christ has not returned to judge the world is seen as evidence that He will not or cannot do so. Peter called it a sign of the last days, but it springs from human self assurance and arrogance.

**2 Peter 3:3-4** <sup>3</sup> Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, <sup>4</sup> and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."

**Patience:** A word that describes patience with people. Putting up with people! The Church Father Chrysostom defined it as the characteristic of the man who has it in his power to avenge himself and deliberately does not use it." The Jews actually believed that they would escape judgment for their sins because they were Jews. Many Christians believe it will be because they are Christian, were baptized, confirmed or prayed a prayer. Scripture says they are escaping judgment because God is patient and for no other reason. To think otherwise is to despise the kindness, tolerance and patience of God.

**Not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance [4b]:** This is what God is really doing when He delays judgment. He is providing the time necessary for Him to lead you to repentance. You ought to be glad that God has not returned to destroy evil. When he does finally judge all opportunity for repentance will be over.

**But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself [5a]:** God calls religious self sufficiency and self-righteousness, "stubbornness." This entire chapter is a shot across the bow of the religious. It does not matter what religion it is. The practice of it draws judgment like a magnet. It creates a huge cistern to hold our the wrath of God against our sin.

**In the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God [5b]:** This section began with the assertion that God is presently revealing His wrath from heaven against ungodliness and unrighteousness. Scripture looks to a future and final judgment here. Many men will die without paying for their sins. They think of death as a way to mock justice, but no one listening to these words should be so foolish. Jesus will...

**2 Thessalonians 1:7-10** *give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, <sup>8</sup> dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, <sup>10</sup> when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed--

So...Is Scripture saying that no religion or moralism will justify you before God? Yes...absolutely!! Paul now tells us why. Don't be content to just believe this...know why! It is because...

## **God judges your deeds and not your religion [6-8]**

When Christ comes in righteous judgment He ....

**WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS [6a]:** "Render" means "give back." He will give to each person exactly what he deserves based on what he or she has done. Here is the reason that all religion and self

righteousness is useless. It is worthless because God disregards every last shed of it. It vanishes in the roar of the elements melting with fervent heat.

**2 Peter 3:10** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

John saw the aftermath as clear as crystal. Men who stubbornly reject Christ alone will, at the final judgment be left standing before God while He consults a meticulous record of their sins. Every, single one of them.

**Revelation 20:11** Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.

**Revelation 20:12** <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

Now why on earth anyone would believe that lighting a candle, saying a prayer, being baptized or joining any religion on the earth is going to nullify this is bewildering. Perhaps because the truth of it is not spoken or preached, but more than likely it is human hubris. We just believe we can be good enough or that God will just not really actually settle accounts with us for all our sin. Scripture now tells what the criteria will be for judging out works.

**Those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life [7]:** “perseverance” means constant doing of good. Not doing bad does not qualify here. God calls for constant, incessant doing of good. No let down. No lapses when we allow ourselves that moment of weakness and sin! It has to be an unending quest for glory and honor and immortality. To such a person God will give eternal life in the final judgment.

**To those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation [8]:** Then there are those who actively work for their own interests. They pursue their own pleasures and look for ways to get what they want. They sin in other words, because God is standing in the way of their ambitions. They go around that roadblock and in the end will settle with God on His terms. They will get wrath and indignation.

BUT Surely our religious and moral efforts must be factored into this judgment right? I mean we tried to do good we just failed to be perfect. We tried to be moral and the heathen did not even try. They just jumped into the cesspool of sin with both feet. We at least tried to drag ourselves out of it. But that again...is not the basis of God’s judgment. God judges our works. Our deeds if you prefer. How we have treated one another. How you have treated your parents, your spouse your neighbor. He even judges the thoughts and intentions of your heart.

**Hebrews 4:12-13** <sup>12</sup> For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and

marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. <sup>13</sup> And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

## **God judges all men's deeds by exactly the same standard [9-11]**

***There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek [9]:*** If you sin and do evil it does not matter if you are a Jew, a catholic, a Baptist or a Mormon. You will pay for your sins with tribulation and distress. You cannot hide behind your religion whatever you wish to call it.

***But glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek [10]:*** If you do good you will enter into glory and honor and peace. It does not matter if you are a Congolese bushman, a Buddhist monk or a Bible Believing Christian. God will judge every human by exactly the same standard.

***For there is no partiality with God [11]:*** God judges every human being by the exact same criteria no matter who they are, what they believe or what religion they practice.

**CONCLUSION:** So what has God revealed so far in the book of Romans?

The heathen know who God is, but they try to deny Him and suppressed the truth about Him. They live like they really are... by nature. They are the poster children for fallen broken humanity.

**Romans 1:32 - 2:1** <sup>32</sup> and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

But there are other men and women who acknowledge God and condemn, in word and action, the deplorable behavior of men apart from God. They have created religions, rituals and standing they believe will set them apart from these men. They believe God will recognize their standing and their vocal condemnation of these sins and excuse their missteps and errors and okay...sins.

BUT all men are cut from the same cloth. They are broken at the cellular level and commit the same sins as other men, while condemning those sins in others. They want God to judge those who they condemn, but do not see that they themselves are worthy of condemnation. These are the poster children for religion in the world. It excuses itself from judgment while calling for the condemnation of those outside.

What this means is that no religious membership, sound doctrine or practice can take away your sin. God will not be dissuaded from judging you according to every sin you have ever committed. "Therefore you have no excuse" **Romans 2:1**

Paul is not done with his case but we are done with our time today. Paul will go on to decimate the idea that God will overlook your sin if you practice religion and moralism. In another chapter he will drive the argument to this conclusion.

**Romans 3:10-11** <sup>10</sup> ..... "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; <sup>11</sup> THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

**Romans 3:23** <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The people without the law sinned and denied God. The people with the law did the same while telling themselves that God would give them credit just for hearing the law and having the law. All this finally forced Paul to point out that ....

**Romans 3:20** <sup>20</sup> ..... by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

God is going to judge you according to your sinful deeds and not your religious or moral efforts. This means you are hopeless. You need righteousness and you have broken God's righteous law over and over and over. This is why YOU NEED THE GOSPEL!

**Romans 3:21-22** <sup>21</sup> But now... apart from the Law... *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup> even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

This is the gospel for heathen gentiles and religious Jews, Catholics, Baptists and Mormons and JW's. You cannot obtain the righteousness God requires. You failed before you even began to try. You are still failing right now and you cannot turn back time and erase your sin. But God sent His own Son into the world to live a perfectly righteous life on your behalf. God accepted Christ's righteousness in place of yours. Jesus then died the death for sin that you should died. God accepted Christ's death in place of yours. Jesus took sin that was not his and gave you righteousness that is not yours. Faith...SAVING FAITH is trusting Christ with your eternal soul. Giving yourself to Him unreservedly because you know He is your only hope of eternal life.

As physical life ebbs away, eternity looms larger and larger. Will you stand and be judged for your sins and then be lost or will you give your life to the one who was judged on the cross on your behalf? It must be one of those two options because.....

**Acts 4:12** <sup>12</sup> "..... there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."....and.....

**2 Corinthians 5:21** <sup>21</sup> He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.