

Romans

September 13, 2009

Romans Chapter Two

This is the seventh lesson in our series on the Book of Romans.

Continuing from the last lesson

We did not complete our study in Romans 2:12-16

The universality of man's accountability to God.

Let's read 2:12-16 to refresh the text in our mind.

Picking up where we stopped last week:

vs 14 The heathen are not in possession of the written Law, yet their own judgments and actions are an acknowledgment of the moral law stamped upon their nature by the Creator.

See appendix for "Natural Law" by Ernest Reisinger.

Paul is not teaching that the partial and external obedience to this law is pleasing to God.

Robert Haldane observes: "That the pagans do many things that, as to the outward act, are agreeable to the law of God, it is obviously true, and should not be denied. That they do anything acceptable to God is not true, and is not here asserted."

vs 15 Conscience is that innate faculty to distinguish between right and wrong, which passes its independent judgment on man's thoughts and actions. We accuse or excuse.

Satan told half the truth in the Garden of Eden: "*For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you shall be like God, knowing good and evil.*" {Gen 3:5}

Romans

Adam and Eve, you will no longer need God to tell you right from wrong, you will decide for yourself. That much was the truth. The part that Satan did not tell our first parents was that while they would determine right and wrong {they would have a conscience}; that they would not have the power to do right nor the ability not to do wrong! Cf. Romans 7

vs 16 [All this will become clear] on the day when, according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge men's secrets.

Judgment will not be based on what others see you do, but what you do.

Jesus Christ is the Judge!

{Cf. John 5:27; Acts 17:31; 1 Cor 4:1-5; 2 Cor 5:10}

You must have realized by now, if Jesus is the Judge of all men, then He must be God indeed!

“... according to my Gospel.” Judgment is a part of the Gospel Message.

Once more I will remind you of what Henry Mahan said when he preached in this church. You can discern if man is preaching the Gospel if somewhere he includes these four facts. This is not a “formula” e.g. “The Four Spiritual Laws” which are deceptive and false. The first “law” is “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” Tell that to Judas.

Man the sinner. Jesus Christ **the** Savior.
Judgment is certain. Jesus is not a beggar.

All men will not hear the Gospel and be saved. But Paul has established the righteous judgment of God against all men; both the pagan and the Jew

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Now to take up Part 3 of: **The Wrath of God Upon the Jew {2:1-3:8}**

Part 3: 2:17-29 **The Jew fails to live up to his privileges**

Romans

Title: “Who Is a True Jew?”

The Theme of the Letter: Romans 1:16-17

“For I am not ashamed of the **gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ”

The very next thing the apostle says is: “For the wrath of God is **revealed** from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. {1:18}

When the wrath of God is not proclaimed you have no gospel! If we are to be true to those who know not the gospel of redeeming grace, we must proclaim the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. Let us be reminded that the wrath of God is not uncontrolled rage as wrath is with men. God’s wrath is the “settled indignation” of God against sin. God’s wrath is not an emotion!

The Jew could easily accept that the wrath of God rested upon the Gentiles, after all, God had not blessed the Gentiles with the law, and so the Gentiles were ignorant of the law and were therefore condemned.

But then in 2:11, Paul shocked the Jew by claiming that they too, the Jews, were guilty before a holy God because, “**...there is no partiality with God.**”

Besides that, **all men** are equally guilty because of the **universality of man’s accountability to God** {2:12-16}. We explained that, to the apostle, the term “the law” almost always refers to the law given by God to Israel through Moses. Yes, the Jews had the law, but the Gentiles also had the law, even though it was not written on stone and parchment. The law is written in the mind and conscience of every person, and therefore we all stand judged by the law that we **do** have. We discussed “the law,” and “nature,” as Paul uses the terms, and saw that God is fair and just in His judgment of the Jew under the law of Moses **and** of His judgement of the pagan under the law of conscience and nature.

The bad news to the Jew was that it is not the **hearers** of the law that are just but the **doers** of the law. A Gentile who obeyed the law had the same standing before God as did the Jew. And besides that, **the Jew fails to live up to his privileges.**

Romans

Part 3: The Jew fails to live up to his privileges 2:17-29.

The Jew says, “I should be acquitted on the grounds that I know the law and teach courses in religion.” And God says, “You don’t practice what you preach!”

This is the first time in this letter that the Jew is specifically named {17}, although almost anyone reading this letter knows that “those under the law,” are the Jews, and “those without the law” are Gentiles.

The Jew knew the Law.

They knew the truth and rejected it and therefore they stand condemned {2:1}.

The Jew boasted primarily in two things:

1. His possession of the Law {17-24};
2. The rite of circumcision {25-29}.

These two things point up the superior privileges of the Jew, but also compounds the guilt of the Jew.

It is these two things, the law and circumcision, that distinguish the Jew from all other peoples on the earth. These two things were given to Israel by God Himself. But remember the **key point** that the apostle has made thus far: The Jews, because they do “the same things,” as the Gentiles, are, like the Gentiles, subject to God’s wrath {2:1-5}.

Paul is not ignoring the privilege of the Jew, but insists that the blessings that God gave to His people did not, in themselves, rescue them from divine judgment. Those blessings must be responded to in obedience.

2:17-20 Paul uses a series of “if” clauses. Notice that the Jew is not boasting in what is not really theirs; the problem is that they are not living up to their claim.

Romans

Paul lists nine privileges:

1. The name “**Jew**.” First used of those of the tribe of Judah {let Him be praised}, but applied generally to Israelite people after the exile to Babylon. The name “Jew” set them apart from all other people.
2. They “**rely on the law**.” They rest in the law. As we learned, to Paul, “the law,” is the Torah, the law given by God to Israel through Moses. But they trusted in the possession of the law as protection against judgment.

Some six hundred years earlier the prophet Micah, after rebuking Israel for their sin, said, “Yet they lean upon the LORD and say, ‘Is not the LORD among us? No disaster will come upon us.’ ” {Micah 3:11}

They considered the law to be a kind of “St. Christopher’s” statue that you place on the dashboard of your car to keep you safe.

3. They “**boast**” about their relationship to God. The NIV translates it “brag,” a word which suggests an improper pride, but the word is “boast.”

Boasting is not always bad.

Cf. Jeremiah 9:23-24, which Paul quotes in 1 Corinthians 1:31 & 2 Corinthians 10:17 .

It is not wrong to boast in the Lord, for that is praise to Him.

4. They **know God’s will**. What a privilege it is to know God’s Word. How condemning it is to know His will and refuse to obey it.

5. They “**approve of what is superior**.” This can be translated, “They distinguish the things that really matter.” They can do this because they are “instructed in the law.”

The next four matters of Jewish pride flow from the first five.

They involve the Jews’ sense of superiority with respect to other peoples.

- 6 & 7. They are a “**guide for the blind**” and a “**light for those who are in the dark**.” This is two ways of saying the same thing. Having the law brought the responsibility to teach others. Cf. Isaiah 42:6-7

Romans

Jesus gave this an ironic twist when He called the Pharisees “blind guides.” Cf. Matthew 15:14

8 & 9. The Jews also thought they were “**instructors of the foolish**” and “**teachers of infants.**” The word “foolish” here is not the same as the “fool” in Proverbs, where it denotes the person who rebels against God. Here “foolish” refers to Gentiles who, without detailed knowledge of God, fall into wrong forms of worship and behavior. From the Jews’ point of view the Gentiles were “infants” in terms of religion.

They need to be taught the true knowledge of God.

In “natural revelation” the Gentiles have knowledge of God and are therefore without excuse {1:20}. The Jews have knowledge of God in “special revelation” of God’s law so they, likewise, “have no excuse,” {2:1} when they sin.

CONDEMNED?

“It could never happen to me.” That’s what the Jew thought.

And likewise so think many Baptists. “Once saved, always saved.”

But what is salvation?

If “salvation” is defined in terms of the **result** of something that you do it becomes works. The person who says that God saved them **because** they believed is trusting in his own faith and not in the righteousness of God. They are in the same position exactly as the Jew who felt safe **because** they had the law and the outward signs of true religion. Is “salvation” based on outward deeds? Decisions? A feeling? A psychologically induced profession of faith? An intellectual agreement to a proposition? Does having my name on the role of a church that I do not support with a single dollar of my income and that I rarely bother to meet with mean that I am “saved?”

Where is the wrath of God?

Where is repentance?

Where is conviction of sin?

Where is the soul that cries out for the mercy of Christ?

Romans

Vs 21-24 Do you practice what you preach?

In verses 21-23, Paul summarizes the privileges of the Jew and makes a pointed charge against the claim of the Jew and what is reality.

What Paul means by “robbing temples” is unclear. One interpretation is that they were holding back the temple taxes imposed for its upkeep, in effect, “robbing” the temple. The interpretation that seems to have the most validity is that the Jews actually took items of gold and silver from pagan temples and melted them down; so their feigned horror of idolatry was insincere. This idea seems to be more in keeping with the dissimulation or hypocrisy of the Jew.

Verse 23 asserts that by failure to obey the law that they boast in; while they profess to love the law, the Jew brings dishonor on God Himself.

In 24, Paul quotes Isaiah 52:5. In Isaiah, blaspheming God comes from the pagan oppression of Israel. Here, Paul, in an ironic twist, attributes blasphemy to Israel’s sinfulness in the midst of pagans. This charge is fair because Israel’s oppression by pagan nations is itself a result of her sin of idolatry.

v 25-29 Circumcision.

Circumcision was given to Abraham as a sign of God’s covenant; that through Abraham’s seed all the peoples of the earth would be blessed.

In Galatians 3:17, Paul explains that the promise was to his seed, singular, as in Christ!

Next to the law, circumcision was the most important distinguishing mark of the Jew. Paul continues to erode the Jews’ confidence in their inherited religious advantages.

Here, writes Haldane: Paul pursues the Jew into his last retreat” and strips him of the last refuge to which he usually resorted. There was a rabbinical saying to the effect that ‘Circumcision is equivalent to all the commandments of the law.’ Circumcision, Paul teaches, is only an outward seal of covenant relation with God. Circumcision of the heart is what matters.

How many people today believe that their baptism actually counts for something before God? Christian baptism only has value as an outward symbol of what God has done in the heart.

Romans

Then is baptism not important? Don't ever think that anything the Lord Jesus commanded is unimportant! But we must understand what baptism really is. The "Church of Christ," the denomination, teaches that baptism is necessary in order to be saved, thereby making baptism a work. The Roman Catholic is in error regarding baptism because they teach that baptism is that which removes the original sin of Adam: Baptismal Regeneration it is called. To my Presbyterian friends, and others who "baptize" unbelievers; baptism is most definitely not the New Testament equivalent of circumcision. Regeneration is the antitype of circumcision, not baptism.

[But I must stay with the exposition of this text.]

Circumcision only has value if you obey the law.
And baptism, likewise, only has value if rightly viewed as an outward sign of an inward work of the Holy Spirit of God.

How can anyone "obey the law?" No one except Jesus could possibly obey the law in perfection. Of course, Jesus kept the law as our sinless Substitute, but the best Jews, including Paul and Moses were sinners.

In the Sermon on the Mount, you will recall that Jesus established that breaking the commandment against murder, involves sinful anger. Adultery is looking with lust. Keeping the commandments involves a heartfelt, sincere desire to obey God, and a true sorrow for sin when we disobey. As Jesus taught, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled." {Matthew 5:6}

But Paul never mixes "doing the law," and "faith." Paul will state in 3:20 that no one is justified by keeping the law. So what Paul is saying here is that circumcision has no value to rescue the Jew from God's wrath because obedience to the law never reaches to the level required for salvation. Failing to obey the law annuls the value of circumcision.

So the Gentile Christian, though uncircumcised, who "obeys the law," can be saved.

And in 27, Paul shocks the Jew by saying that the uncircumcised Gentile who obeys the law will stand in judgement over the disobedient Jew.

Romans

v 28 -29, is an appendix to the argument. Being circumcised and possessing the law do not, by themselves, qualify a person to be part of God's true spiritual people.

"To be a real "Jew" is an inward matter of the heart. "The name 'Jew,' and the rite of 'circumcision,' were designed as outward symbols of a separation from the irreligious and ungodly world unto devotedness in heart and life to the God of salvation. Where this is realized, the signs are full of significance; but where it is not they are worse than useless."

{David Brown}

Paul's astonishing conclusion was the exact opposite of the Jew's own estimate of himself. Paul makes a play on the word "Jew" which means "praise"; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Now here in 2:28-29, Paul is clearly saying that only those who, though faith in Jesus Christ, and have received the Spirit of God, make up God's true people. This is a radical redefinition of "Jew" that Paul will continue to explain as we move through this great letter.

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The Second of Romans clearly reaches that the religion of the Jews provides no hope of salvation. If what the modern liberals teach is true, then Paul just made a terrible mistake and our understanding is flawed. Think about it. If Judaism, cannot save, what about any other religion?

Postmodernism teaches Pluralism, i.e. all religions are equally valid.

Those who teach that Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and yes, Judaism are all valid paths to God are denying the necessity of faith in the Son of God. Worse than that they are denying the claim of Jesus Himself when He said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through Me." {John 14:6}

And saving faith is the **result** of the revelation of the righteousness of God, not the **cause**.

In what do you place your hope for all eternity?

Next Sunday, by God's grace: **3: 1-8 The unbelief of the Jew.**

Romans

APPENDIX

The following line of thought was "stolen" from Ernest Reisinger's book, The Law and the Gospel.

Because men died before the law [Ten Commandments] was given to Moses [Romans 5:12-14], there must have been another law, the transgression of which was imputed to and cause the death of those who died before the law was given in the form of the "Ten Commandments."

In Romans 2:14-16, the concept of "natural law" is established, which says that even those who never heard of the Ten Commandments were justly condemned by **natural law**.

Romans 2:13-16

14 for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, 15 who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) 16 {all this will become clear} in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

Mr. Reisinger suggests the following parallels to the **Ten Commandments** from the moral principles found in the Genesis record: Exodus 20:1-17

20:1 And God spoke all these words, saying:

2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3 You shall have no other gods before Me.

4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

7 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

13 "You shall not murder.

14 "You shall not commit adultery.

15 "You shall not steal.

16 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

First Commandment: no other gods...

Romans

2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3 You shall have **no other gods** before Me.

Cf. Genesis 35:1-4

35:1 Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother." 2 And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. 3 Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone." 4 So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hands, and the earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem.

Second Commandment: no images of God...

4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

Cf. Genesis 31:17-20

17 Then Jacob rose and set his sons and his wives on camels. 18 And he carried away all his livestock and all his possessions which he had gained, his acquired livestock which he had gained in Padan Aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan. 19 Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel had stolen the household idols that were her father's.

Third Commandment: oaths...

7 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

Cf. Genesis 24:1-5

24:1 Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. 2 So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, "Please, put your hand under my thigh, 3 and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; 4 but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac."

Fourth Commandment: Sabbath keeping...

8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

Cf. Genesis 2:1-3

2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. 2 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Romans

Fifth Commandment: honor your father and mother...

12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

Cf. Genesis 27:41

So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

Sixth Commandment: murder...

13 "You shall not murder.

Cf. Genesis 4:8-10

8 Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. 9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" 10 And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground.

Seventh Commandment: adultery...

14 "You shall not commit adultery

Cf. Genesis 39:7-9

7 And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." 8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. 9 There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Eighth Commandment: stealing...

15 "You shall not steal.

Cf. Genesis 44:1-5

1 And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack. 2 Also put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his grain money." So he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken. 3 As soon as the morning dawned, the men were sent away, they and their donkeys. 4 And when they had gone out of the city, and were not yet far off, Joseph said to his steward, "Get up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid evil for good? 5 Is not this the one from which my lord drinks, and with which he indeed practices divination? You have done evil in so doing.'"

Ninth Commandment: lying...

16 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor

Cf. Genesis 39:10-18

10 So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her. 11 But it happened about this time, when Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the men

Romans

of the house was inside, 12 that she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside. 13 And so it was, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside, 14 that she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, "See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. 15 And it happened, when he heard that I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me, and fled and went outside." 16 So she kept his garment with her until his master came home. 17 Then she spoke to him with words like these, saying, "The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came in to me to mock me; 18 so it happened, as I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me and fled outside."

Tenth Commandment: covetousness...

17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

Cf. Genesis 12:14-20

14 So it was, when Abram came into Egypt, that the Egyptians saw the woman, that she was very beautiful. 15 The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken to Pharaoh's house. 16 He treated Abram well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys, and camels. 17 But the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. 18 And Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? 19 Why did you say, 'She is my sister'? I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife; take her and go your way." 20 So Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they sent him away, with his wife and all that he had.

Cf. Genesis 20:1-4

20:1 And Abraham journeyed from there to the South, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and stayed in Gerar. 2 Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. 3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, "Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife."

So to repeat the argument that Paul is making in Romans 2:14-16 and Romans 5:12-14; Because men died before the law [Ten Commandments] was given to Moses, there must have been another law, the transgression of which caused the death of those who died before the law was given in the Ten Commandments. That law is the "natural law".

This study does establish "natural law." While all of the above is true we must never lose sight that all men were represented in Adam and all men are condemned because of the one sin of the one man.

- **WHAT IS "THE LAW"?**
- **DO YOU AGREE WITH THE LAW?**
- **DO YOU HATE WHAT THE LAW CONDEMNS?**
- **IF YOU DO HATE WHAT THE LAW CONDEMNS, WHY THEN DO YOU BREAK THE LAW?**
- **DO YOU NEED SOMEONE TO KEEP THE LAW ON YOUR BEHALF?**