

**Romans 2:1-11**  
**January 25, 2015**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

It's no secret that I am a big fan of Andy Stanley who is the son of Charles Stanley, both of whom are effective communicators of God Word. Andy has been doing a series lately in which he's teaching "Devotion needs motion."

His premise is that we can spend time in our prayer closets, pray, read the Word, worship and bask in His love and grace, but if we are not moved to be other-centered as an expression of our devotion, then we've missed it. We can call ourselves Christians all day long; we can know the Word of God forwards and backwards; but if our devotion doesn't lead us to be in motion for His name's sake, then it's empty. Many of us already know many of God's teachings and commands, but are we doing them?

**Transition:** Paul is still laying a foundation for his Jewish readers. He understands full well how they think. The Jews felt very secure as God's chosen people. They were circumcised as a sign of the covenant, and they had possession of the Law. They were so secure in their knowledge of the Law that they didn't mind judging others who fell short of it. Paul is going to set the record straight on the issue of judging others!

But Paul's ultimate message to the Jews is that God is looking for is devotion with motion. As much as the Jews felt they were privileged because they were a chosen people, what pleases God is obedience. He is looking for works that flow out of our salvation, which will be judged on Judgment Day. After we study today's Scripture, I believe *all of us CAN live a life of obedience more meaningfully BY evaluating our MOTIVATIONS on a daily basis. We need to evaluate whether our devotion is in motion. Are we resting on our salvation, without any evidence of works that flow from our love relationship to God?* Let's begin.

**BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Rom 2:1-4]**

V.1:

- You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.

V.2:

- Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth.

V.3:

- So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment?

V.4:

- Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

**Process Observations/Questions:**

- **Q V.1:** If you were a Jew, how do you think you would feel if Paul just announced “you have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself?” [Shock? Confusion?]
- **Q V.1:** If you’re taken by surprise, then why do you think this takes you aback? [Perhaps you thought that when Paul was talking about all of those “sinners” in chapter 1, he was referring to the pagan world around them, especially the “Gentile dogs.” The last thing you’re thinking is “he’s referring to me.”]
- **Q V.1:** Have you heard the saying, “When you point your finger at someone else, there are three fingers pointing back at you?” So what were the Jews guilty of when they judged the Gentiles around them? [They were acting like moralists, who were self-righteous and above others. Yet they were sinners too, but were blinded to this notion. Every time they judged their Gentile neighbor, they were bringing condemnation on themselves.]
- **Observation:** Paul knows full well that the concept of the Jews needing the gospel will be controversial to them. The Jews believe they have escaped judgment because of their privileged position of being God’s Chosen People. So Paul has to lay the groundwork as to why the Jews need the gospel as a result of failing to follow God’s laws. So the way he transitioned was by introducing God’s divine standards as a fair way to judge His creation.
- **Q V.2** – What is the first divine standard by which God judges the human race? [Truth – God’s judgment is based on truth because He is truth! X-ref Ps 31:5; Isa 65:16]
- **Q V.3** – Have you ever been on the receiving end of someone’s judgment about you? How do you feel when someone decides they can be your judge? [Angry? Do you ever wonder, “Since when did you become my judge? Who are you to be judging me?!”]
- **Observation:** Paul is with you! He is telling the Jew that he is a “mere man” and that he will not escape God’s judgment either! X-Ref Matt 7:1 “Judge not, lest you be judged.”
- **Q V.4** – Paul reveals to his Jewish readers how God operates to lead people toward repentance. What is it? [God purposely shows kindness, tolerance and patience toward those who are missing the mark.]
- **Q to Ponder:** Have you ever considered the motivation(s) behind why we have a tendency to judge others? What need does it meet within ourselves to judge another person?
- **Application Q:** So how can *we live a life of obedience more meaningfully based on these four verses?* [Punt judging others because we’re condemning ourselves when we do it. We are not asked to be moralists. We are just as sinful as the next person, so we need to get out of the business of judging others.]

### **Read Romans 2:5-11**

V.5:

- 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.

V.6:

- God “will give to each person according to what he has done.”

V.7:

- To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.

V.8:

- But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.

V.9:

- There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile;

V.10:

- but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

V.11:

- For God does not show favoritism.

### **Process Observations/Questions:**

- **Q V.5** – Why are people ignorant of God’s intention to be kind? Why do they despise it? [Because of their stubbornness and their unrepentant heart.]
- **Q V.5** - When a person is unrepentant, what is he storing up? [God’s wrath against him]
- **Q V.6** – How will God choose to deal with those who have unrepentant hearts? [He will righteously judge them and will give to each person according to what he has done. **X-Ref I Cor 3:12-15**]
- **Observation:** It appears in V.7-10 that Paul is contradicting himself when he describes those who will receive eternal life vs those who don’t. The issue in this section of verses is not salvation. Salvation is by grace, not by works. However, judgment is the issue in these verses, and God will judge each of us based on our works that are expressed out of our salvation.
- **Q V.11** – There is another divine standard by which God will judge us. What do you see? [He is impartial; He shows no favoritism. He doesn’t have one set of standards for the Jews and a different standard for all others.]
- **Application Q:** So how can *we live a life of obedience more meaningfully based on verses 5-11? What should motivate us?* [We should find joy in doing good works as an expression of our faith in God and our gratitude for His salvation.]

### **LOOK:**

We have looked at how *all of us can live a life of obedience more meaningfully by evaluating our motivations on a daily basis*. Are we professing our faith in Jesus without works to support it? Is our devotion in motion? Salvation is a free gift, but if our relationship to God stops there, we won’t be much different from the Jewish people who had the Law, knew it, but didn’t obey it.

Rhetorical Q: What motivates you to obey God?

### **Close in Prayer**

### **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, pp. 519–520). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

### **The Jewish World Is Guilty! (Rom. 2:1–3:8)**

Bible scholars do not agree on whom Paul was addressing in Romans 2:1–16. Some think he was dealing with the moral pagan who did not commit the sins named in Romans 1:18–32, but who sought to live a moral life. But it seems to me that Paul was addressing his Jewish readers in this section. To begin with, his discussion of the Law in Romans 2:12–16 would have been more meaningful to a Jew than to a Gentile. And in Romans 2:17, he openly addressed his reader as “a Jew.” This would be a strange form of address if in the first half of the chapter he were addressing Gentiles.

It would not be an easy task to find the Jews guilty, since disobedience to God was one sin they did not want to confess. The Old Testament prophets were persecuted for indicting Israel for her sins, and Jesus was crucified for the same reason. Paul summoned four witnesses to prove the guilt of the Jewish nation.

***The Gentiles (vv. 1–3).*** Certainly the Jews would applaud Paul’s condemnation of the Gentiles in Romans 1:18–32. In fact, Jewish national and religious pride encouraged them to despise the “Gentile dogs” and have nothing to do with them. Paul used this judgmental attitude to prove the guilt of the Jews; *for the very things they condemned in the Gentiles, they themselves were practicing!* They thought that they were free from judgment because they were God’s chosen people. But Paul affirmed that God’s election of the Jews made their responsibility and accountability even greater.

God’s judgment is according to truth. He does not have one standard for the Jews and another for the Gentiles. One who reads the list of sins in Romans 1:29–32 cannot escape the fact that each person is guilty of at least one of them. There are “sins of the flesh and of the spirit” (2 Cor. 7:1); there are “prodigal sons” and “elder brothers” (Luke 15:11–32). In condemning the Gentiles for their sins, the Jews were really condemning themselves. As the old saying puts it, “When you point your finger at somebody else, the other three are pointing at you.”

***God’s blessing (vv. 4–11).*** Instead of giving the Jews special treatment from God, the blessings they received from Him gave them greater responsibility to obey Him and glorify Him. In His goodness, God had given Israel great material and spiritual riches: a wonderful land, a righteous Law, a temple and priesthood, God’s providential care, and many more blessings. God had patiently endured Israel’s many sins and rebellions, and had even sent them His Son to be their Messiah. Even after Israel crucified Christ, God gave the nation nearly forty more years of grace and withheld His judgment. It is not the *judgment* of God that leads men to repentance, but the *goodness* of God; but Israel did not repent.

In Romans 2:6–11, Paul was not teaching salvation by character or good deeds. He was explaining another basic principle of God’s judgment: God judges according to deeds, just as He judges according to truth. Paul was dealing here with the consistent actions of a person’s life, the total impact of his character and conduct. For example, David committed some terrible sins; but the total emphasis of his life was obedience to God. Judas confessed his sin and supplied the money for buying a cemetery for strangers; yet the total emphasis of his life was disobedience and unbelief.

True saving faith results in obedience and godly living, even though there may be occasional falls. When God measured the deeds of the Jews, He found them to be as wicked as those of the

Gentiles. The fact that the Jews occasionally celebrated a feast or even regularly honored the Sabbath Day did not change the fact that their consistent daily life was one of disobedience to God. God's blessings did not lead them to repentance.

**Witmer, J. A. (1985). Romans. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 444–448). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

*B. Condemnation according to divine standards (2:1–16).*

1. TRUTHFULNESS (2:1–4).

2:1. In any generalization such as the preceding blanket indictment of pagan humanity (1:18–32) exceptions to the rule always exist. Obviously some pagans had high ethical standards and moral lifestyles and condemned the widespread moral corruption of their contemporaries. In addition the Jews morally stood in sharp contrast with the pagan world around them and freely condemned the Gentiles. Both groups of moralists might conclude that God's condemnation did not apply to them because of their higher planes of living. But Paul insisted that they also stood condemned because they were doing **the same things** for which they judged others.

**Therefore**, Paul declared, **at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself**. Everyone in the entire human race has turned away from God and commits sins even though there are differences of frequency, extent, and degree. In addition the entire human race, especially moral pagans and the Jews, stood condemned before God (and **have no excuse** [cf. 1:20]) because God's judgment is based on three divine standards—truth (2:2–4), impartiality (vv. 5–11), and Jesus Christ Himself (vv. 12–16)—which are absolute and infinite, condemning every person.

2:2–3. The first divine standard of judgment is **truth**. Nowhere in Scripture is God identified as "Truth" as He is as "Spirit" (John 4:24), "Light" (1 John 1:5) and "Love" (1 John 4:8, 16), though Jesus did call Himself "the Truth" (John 14:6). But God is called "the God of truth" (Ps. 31:5; Isa. 65:16). Truth—absolute, infinite truth—is unquestionably one of God's essential attributes. As a result when **God's judgment** of people is declared to be **based on** (lit. "according to") "truth," no **escape** from that **judgment** is possible for anyone. All are without "excuse" (Rom. 2:1) and without "escape." One may be moral and he may even judge his contemporaries as totally enmeshed in a depraved lifestyle, but yet he is judged by God because he does **the same things** (cf. v. 1).

2:4. By not exacting His divine penalty on sinful humanity immediately, God is displaying **the riches of His kindness** (*chrēstotētos*, "benevolence in action," also used of God in 11:22; Eph. 2:7; Titus 3:4), **tolerance, and patience** (cf. Acts 14:16; 17:30; Rom. 3:25). God's purpose is to lead people **toward repentance**—a return to Him—through His **kindness**. (This word for "kindness" is *chrēstos*, a synonym of *chrēstotētos*, also trans. "kindness," used earlier in the verse.) Both words mean "what is suitable or fitting to a need." *Chrēstos* is used of God in Luke 6:35 and 1 Peter 2:3 and of people in Ephesians 4:32. **Not realizing** (lit., "being ignorant of") **God's purpose**, people showed **contempt for** (*kataphroneis*, "you thought down on") God's attributes and actions (cf. "suppress the truth," Rom. 1:18). People knew of God's Being through natural revelation (1:19–21, 28), but did not know the purpose of His kindness.

2. IMPARTIALITY (2:5–11).

2:5–6. Why are people ignorant of God’s intention to be kind? (v. 4) And why do they despise it? It is **because of their stubbornness** (lit., “hardness”; *sklērotēta*, whence the Eng. “sclerosis”) **and their unrepentant heart** (s). So **God’s wrath** against people’s sins is being stored **up** like a great reservoir until **the day** when it will all be poured forth in **His righteous judgment**. On that day **God will give to each person according to what He has done** (quotation of Ps. 62:12 and Prov. 24:12). God’s judging will be based on the standard of truth (Rom. 2:2) and it will be impartial (v. 11).

2:7–11. God **will bestow eternal life on those who by persistence in doing good seek** (pres. tense, “keep on seeking”) **glory, honor, and immortality**. On the other hand **wrath and anger** will be the portion of **the self-seeking ... who reject** (lit., “keep on disobeying”) **the truth and follow** (pres. tense, “keep on obeying”) **evil** (*adikia*, “unrighteousness”; cf. 1:18). Each one **who does** (“keeps on producing”) **evil** will receive **trouble and distress**, whereas each one **who does** (“keeps on working”) **good** will have **glory, honor** (cf. “glory and honor” in 2:7), **and peace**. This just recompense by God is without regard to ethnic background or any other consideration except what each person has done.

A person’s habitual conduct, whether good or evil, reveals the condition of his heart. Eternal life is not rewarded for good living; that would contradict many other Scriptures which clearly state that salvation is not by works, but is all of God’s grace to those who believe (e.g., Rom. 6:23; 10:9–10; 11:6; Eph. 2:8–9; Titus 3:5). A person’s doing good *shows* that his heart is regenerate. Such a person, redeemed by God, has eternal life. Conversely a person who continually does evil and rejects the truth *shows* that he is unregenerate, and therefore will be an object of God’s wrath.

The statement **first for the Jew, then for the Gentile** (lit. “Greek”) does not imply special consideration for Jews. Instead, in the light of the divine standard of impartiality (**God does not show favoritism**), it emphasizes that the entire human race is dealt with by God.

The phrase “the day of God’s ... judgment” (Rom. 2:5) taken by itself may seem to lend support to the idea of a single general judgment of all humanity. However, the Scriptures do not support such a concept. This phrase must be interpreted in conjunction with passages which clearly indicate that several judgments of different groups occur at different times (cf. judgment of Israel at Christ’s Second Advent, Ezek. 20:32–38; the judgment of Gentiles at Christ’s Second Advent, Matt. 25:31–46; the great white throne judgment, Rev. 20:11–15). The focus of this passage is on the *fact* that God will judge all peoples, not on the details of who will be judged when.

**Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith (p. 1682). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.**

**2:6** God’s judgment is not based on people’s action toward others but on how people act toward Him. Those who do good in relation to God obtain eternal life (vv. 7, 10, 13), while those who do evil toward God receive God’s wrath (vv. 8, 9, 12). Since justification comes by faith, not works (3:21–24) and because “there is no one righteous, not even one” (3:10), Paul could not mean that people secure salvation by self-effort. Rather he appealed to the principle: “Actions reveal a person’s heart.” Jesus noted that righteous actions will emerge from within (Mt 12:35).