



▶ *Coming Judgment* ◀

GOD WILL JUDGE EVERY PERSON ACCORDING
TO THEIR RESPONSE TO HIM.

ROMANS 2:1-13

Standing before a judge can be a sobering experience, even if it's only for the speeding ticket in your hand. When a police officer pulls you over and gives you a ticket, you set it aside and get back on the road. However, from that moment on, you know that one day you will be accountable to a judge. On that day, the ticket testifies to your accountability.



What does a speeding ticket teach us about accountability?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

ROMANS 2:1-3:20

In Romans 1:18-25, Paul described the guilt of the Gentile world. The Jews likely would have stood and applauded at Paul’s proclamation of the Gentiles’ guilt. But in chapter 2, Paul reminded the Jews they were no different from the Gentiles when it came to facing God’s judgment. Had they responded to the truth that God had given them in Christ? God’s judgment is based on truth and is impartial—both Jews and Gentiles will be judged in the same way. Mere knowledge of the law does not justify; obedience to God’s Word is what matters (Rom. 2:1-16).

In 2:17-29, Paul addressed those Jews who relied on the law and boasted in their Jewish heritage yet failed to obey God. External signs like circumcision were meaningless without inward obedience. True circumcision is of the heart, by the Spirit, not merely by the letter of the law.

In 3:1-8, the apostle acknowledged that Jews had an advantage—they had been entrusted with God’s Word, the Old Testament. Even though some Jews were unfaithful to God, He remained faithful and true. Human failure cannot nullify God’s promises. Paul also emphasized that God is always just in judging sin.

In 3:9-20, Paul concluded that all people—Jews and Gentiles—are guilty of sin. He cited multiple Old Testament passages to show that no one is righteous, no one seeks God, and all have turned away (Pss. 5:9; 10:7; 14:1-3; 36:1; 53:1-3; 140:3). The law cannot justify anyone; it only reveals sin and holds the world accountable to God. The whole world stands guilty before Him. Righteousness must come from God, not human effort.

 **Read Romans 2:1-13. Identify what these verses teach about God’s character. What do they teach about human accountability?**

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

NO EXCUSES (ROM. 2:1-5)

¹ Therefore, every 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 Now we know that God's judgment on those who do such things is based on the truth. ³ Do you 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 Because of your hardened and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment is revealed.

VERSES 1-3

Most Jewish people in Paul's day considered themselves to be spiritually superior to non-Jews. They viewed Gentiles as spiritually unclean. Here, Paul asserted that the Jews were *without excuse* in judging others. He had previously said this about the Gentiles (Rom. 1:20). He reminded them that all people are without excuse because all people are sinners before God. For that reason, they had no right to *judge another* person—they too had sinned. Those who were judging others were themselves under *God's judgment*, and God's judgment is *based on the truth*. God's judgment is always just, whereas the judgment of others is often prejudiced by self-righteousness and hypocrisy. Because God's judgment is truth-based, it is impartial and based on His character.

***All people are without excuse because
all people are sinners before God.***

Jesus Himself warned against judging others (Matt. 7:1). Some people find this confusing because we must make judgments about people almost daily. However, evaluation doesn't mean condemnation. When we condemn others, we pass judgment on their sin while we exhibit the same sinful behavior. If we don't think that we will face God's judgment when we condemn others, we have deceived ourselves. We will not *escape* God's verdict on our hypocrisy.

VERSES 4-5

Some presume upon God's **kindness** to believe that He would never judge sinners. Others believe God's kindness applies only to themselves. Paul already established the universality of sin and the fact that all people stand guilty before God apart from His grace. Now he explained that the kindness of God was to lead people to **repentance**. Realizing they are sinners and that God has thus far withheld His wrath against them should lead them to turn from their sin to Him. However, rather than seeing God's kindness as an opportunity to repent, many have a **hardened and unrepentant heart**. Paul warned that they are **storing up wrath** for themselves in **the day of wrath**. The day of accounting is coming.



Why do individuals tend to judge others while overlooking their own sin?



According to verse 4, what is the purpose of God's kindness, restraint, and patience? How does verse 5 challenge our view of accountability?

PERFECT STANDARD (ROM. 2:6-11)

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 anger to those who are self-seeking and disobey the truth while obeying unrighteousness. ⁹ There will be 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 For there is no favoritism with God.

VERSES 6-8

Paul supported the truth of His assertions by citing two Old Testament passages (Ps. 62:12; Prov. 24:12). Both of these passages drive home the same truth about God's righteous judgments.

The day is coming when the Lord will *repay each one according to his works*.

Paul asserted that all people will belong to one of two categories when they stand before Him in final judgment. One category consists of everyone who receives the gift of *eternal life*. They devote themselves to *doing good* in response to what God has done for them. They live to bring *glory* and *honor* to Him.

The second category consists of misguided people who have deceived themselves. They can count on facing a different outcome. Instead of being rewarded with eternal life, they will be paid the wages of their sinful lifestyles. Their wages would be counted out to them in the currency of God's *wrath*. Anyone who rejects Jesus will be faced with the humiliating reality that they embraced a lie of the worst order. They disobeyed *the truth* about their need to be made right with God through Christ.

VERSES 9-10

Paul had more to say about the coming day of God's judgment. *Affliction and distress* await anyone who demonstrates an eagerness to give their lives to *evil* practices. *The Jew* first as well as *the Greek*—or the Gentile—would be held to the same standard.

A completely different outcome awaited others who would come before Him in judgment one day. Instead of being cursed with a miserable existence of unending anguish, they could look forward to a choice blessing. They would be able to keep on glorifying God. The privilege to *honor* Him with their lives would be extended into eternity. Furthermore, they would enjoy the abiding sense of *peace* with God. Jewish people would be judged *first*. God's standard would not be different for them. He would judge them first because He had given His Word to them first. However, He would not use a different yardstick when He judged Gentiles. He would judge them by the same standard.

God judges all people in the very same way.

VERSE 11

Paul's description of God's judgment leads to an inevitable conclusion. God judges all people in the very same way. There is *no favoritism with God*. Such a conclusion may astonish those who consider themselves to be God's favorites. Like the Jews of the first

century, some individuals today may view themselves as uniquely special to God because of their heritage. They may believe that their connection with spiritual leaders in the past qualifies them for preferred status with God. Or they may think that God favors them because they have made huge donations to a variety of charities. Nothing could be further from the truth. No one can count on favoritism with God to give them a right relationship with Him.

 **What do these verses teach about God’s impartiality?**

 **Based on these verses, what is the key to a healthy relationship with God?**

 **KEY DOCTRINE:** *Man*

In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. (See Genesis 3; Psalm 51:5.)

ONE WAY (ROM. 2:12-13)

¹² **For all who sin without the law will also perish without the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.**

¹³ **For the hearers of the law are not righteous before God, but the doers of the law will be justified.**

VERSE 12

God does not play favorites. He applies the same perfect standard of judgment to each person. His judgment is based on how people respond to Him. Paul noted that Gentiles sinned against God just like Jews. However, they did not understand as much about **•sin**. They did not have the Scriptures. Jewish people had a deeper understanding of sin because God had given them **the law**. For example, God gave the Ten Commandments to Israel.

Each commandment identified a specific sin to be avoided. When God delivered the Israelites from Egyptian slavery centuries earlier, He gave the commandments to them at Mount Sinai (Ex. 20:1-17). Since that time, generations of Jewish people learned about avoiding sinful behavior. Gentiles lived ***without the law***. But God still held them accountable to Him.

Even though the Gentiles did not have the law, God made Himself known to them. When they rejected Him, He judged them for not responding to the truth He revealed to them. In turn, they would ***perish***. The Jews could not treat God's law as nothing more than a keepsake. The same truth applies to us: those who have God's Word cannot treat it as nothing more than a keepsake. The Jews possessed and knew the law, and they still transgressed it. Both the Jew and the Gentile were condemned apart from Christ, whether they knew the law or not. Jews were not safe from the wrath of God because they possessed the law, and Gentiles were not safe because they did not possess the law.

***Those who have God's Word cannot treat it
as nothing more than a keepsake.***

VERSE 13

Again, Paul divided his listeners in two categories: the ***hearers of the law*** and the ***doers of the law***. As Paul stated, merely hearing the words of the law would not make Jewish people right with God. For anyone to be ***•righteous*** before God, they would need to do more than just hear the words of Scripture. They had to be ***doers***. Being a doer does not suggest that people can work their way into being right with God. In chapter 3, Paul declared that “there is no one righteous, not even one” (v. 10). He also made the point that no one is saved “by works of the law” (3:20). Only one person who has ever lived was a righteous doer of the law—Jesus Christ. The doers of the law are those who put their faith in Him.

In verse 13 Paul used the word ***•justified*** for the first time in Romans. The word *justified* is derived from legal terminology. It describes a person who is declared innocent, upright, or righteous. The message of Romans is that it is only by the substitutionary death of Jesus and faith alone in Him that any person can be forgiven and declared right with God. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are justified freely by his grace

through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (3:23-24). “Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:1). “But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us . . . while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son” (5:8,10). Therefore, what Paul says in verse 13 sets the stage for a fuller explanation of the gospel in the following chapters.

 Why can't my good works make me right with God?

 In what ways might you be relying on knowledge rather than obedience in your own spiritual life? What practical steps can you take to move from hearing God's truth to actively doing it?



BIBLE SKILL: *Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a major doctrine.*

People have used Romans 2:13 and other passages to claim that salvation is achieved by works that are needed in addition to faith. Read the following passages and determine what the Bible teaches about salvation by faith: John 6:28-29; 11:26; Acts 16:31; Rom. 1:17; 4:6-8; 6:23; Eph. 2:8; Phil. 3:9. How do these verses relate to Paul's words to the Romans about the universality of judgment?

APPLY THE TEXT

- + We should focus on our own sin rather than judging others.
- + Our eternal destiny is based on our response to God in this life.
- + Unbelievers need to understand that good works will not justify them before God.

 **Discuss with your Bible study group some of the opinions you have heard about how people are justified before God. How can you use this week’s passage to give a biblical answer?**

 **As you apply this Bible study to your own life, think about your personal response to God. How have you responded to the gospel of Jesus Christ? How are you responding to the gospel message today—how is your life being changed?**



Memorize Romans 2:11.

Prayer Needs
