

## ROMANS 2

### *God's Wrath upon Moral and Religious Sinners*

#### *Moral Sinners Condemned*

1 Therefore you are (pres.) without excuse (ἀναπολόγητος), O man, every one of you who judges (κρίνω, pres.).<sup>1</sup> For in passing judgment (κρίνω, pres.) on another you condemn (κατακρίνω, pres.)<sup>2</sup> yourself, because you, the judge (ὁ κρίνων), practice the very same things. 2 We know that the judgment of God is according to truth on those who practice such things. 3 Now consider (λογίζομαι, pres.) this, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—will you escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you have little regard for (καταφρονέω, pres.)<sup>3</sup> the riches of his kindness (χρηστότης), forbearance (ἀνοχή), and patience (μακροθυμία), not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to a change of mind (μετάνοια)? 5 But because of your hard and impenitent heart<sup>4</sup> you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath<sup>5</sup> when God's righteous judgment<sup>6</sup> will be revealed.<sup>7</sup>

6 He will repay (ἀποδίδωμι, fut.) to each one according to his works: 7 to those on one hand who by patient endurance in good works seek (ζητέω, pres.) glory, honor, and immortality, eternal life (ζωὴν αἰώνιον), 8 but for those on the other hand who are self-seeking (ἐριθεία) and do not obey (ἀπειθέω, pres.) the truth, but obey (πείθω, pres.) the unrighteousness (τῆ ἀδικία), wrath (ὀργή) and fury (θυμός). 9 There will be tribulation (θλίψις) and distress (στενοχωρία) upon every soul of man who commits (κατεργάζομαι, pres.) the evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, 10 but glory, honor, and peace for everyone who works (ἐργάζομαι, pres.) the good (τὸ ἀγαθόν), the Jew first and also the Greek. 11 For there is no partiality (προσωποληψία) with God.

#### *All Gentiles and Jews Are Lawbreakers*

12 For all who have sinned without the [Mosaic] law [Gentile sinners] will also perish without the [Mosaic] law, and all who have sinned under the [Mosaic] law [Jewish sinners] will be judged by the [Mosaic] law. 13 For [in the case of both Gentiles and Jews] it is not the

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<sup>1</sup> This includes self-righteous atheists who sit in judgment on Christians. We all have musts, oughts, and shoulds that we impose on others.

<sup>2</sup> See *Condemnation*.

<sup>3</sup> “[T]o look down on someone or someth. with contempt or aversion, with implication that one considers the object of little value, *look down on, despise, scorn, treat with contempt*” (BDAG, 529).

<sup>4</sup> Moral sinners almost always develop hard and impenitent hearts. This describes so many older New Zealanders.

<sup>5</sup> See *The Wrath of God*.

<sup>6</sup> See *Final Judgment*.

<sup>7</sup> Here Paul brings up future wrath. For the immoral sinner, present wrath is already happening. For the moral sinner, future wrath takes center stage.

hearers of the law [whether natural or Mosaic] who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.<sup>8</sup> 14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the [Mosaic] law, by nature do what the [natural] law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the [Mosaic] law. 15 They show that the work of the [natural] law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also testifies (συμμαρτυρέω, pres.), and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them 16 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of people (τὰ κρυπτὰ<sup>9</sup> τῶν ἀνθρώπων) by Messiah Jesus.

### *Religious Sinners Condemned*

17 But if you<sup>10</sup> call yourself a Jew, rely on the [Mosaic] law, boast in God, 18 know his desire (θέλημα), and approve what is excellent because you are instructed from the [Mosaic] law; 19 and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the [Mosaic] law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— 21 you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? 22 You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?<sup>11</sup> 23 You who boast in the [Mosaic] law dishonor God by breaking the [Mosaic] law. 24 For, as it is written,

The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you [Jewish sinners].

25 For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the [Mosaic] law, but if you break the [Mosaic] law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. 26 So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the [natural] law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? 27 Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the [natural] law will condemn you who have the written code [Mosaic law] and circumcision but break the [natural] law.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Here we see that “righteousness before God” and “justification” are synonyms for the same concept. **Jas 1:22-25** 22 Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself, goes away, and at once forgets what he was like. 25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

<sup>9</sup> “[A] hidden entity, *something hidden*, subst. τὸ κρυπτόν...*a hidden thing...someone’s secret thoughts, plans, purposes...the secret thoughts of the person’s (unbeliever’s) heart...the things that are hidden out of a sense of shame*” (BDAG, 571).

<sup>10</sup> Paul is describing his former worldview as a Pharisaic Jew.

<sup>11</sup> The answer of all moral and religious sinners, especially Jews, must be “Yes! I am guilty of these things.”

<sup>12</sup> **Ma 5:17-20** 17 Do not think that I have come to abolish (καταλύω) the law (νόμος) or the prophets (προφήτας). I have come not to abolish (καταλύω) but to fulfill (πληρώω). 18 For amen I tell you, until the sky (οὐρανός) and the earth (γῆ) pass away (παρέρχομαι), not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all things happen (γίνομαι). 19 Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called insignificant (ελάχιστος) in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does them and teaches them will be called great (μέγας) in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For (γάρ) I tell you, unless your righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) exceeds (περισσεύω) that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will certainly not enter (εἰσερχομαι) the kingdom of heaven.

28 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. 29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

## *Biblical Worldview*

1. Secret sinners are as guilty before God as obvious sinners.
  - a. Outwardly dirty people are condemned, but so are inwardly dirty people.
  - b. “In chapter 2, St. Paul extends his rebuke to those who appear outwardly pious or who sin secretly. Such were the Jews, and such are all hypocrites still, who live virtuous lives but without eagerness and love; in their heart they are enemies of God’s law and like to judge other people. That’s the way with hypocrites: they think that they are pure but are actually full of greed, hate, pride and all sorts of filth (cf. Matthew 23).”<sup>13</sup>
  - c. We’re all dirty. We’ve all got blood on our hands.
  - d. Moral atheists. Moral churchgoers who don’t believe in the Bible.
  - e. “There’s nothing wrong with me. I’m a good person.”
  - f. Why is it people so often stay anonymous on the internet?
2. Religious sinners are just as guilty before God as obvious and secret sinners. They’re secret sinners, too.
  - a. The main point of Ro 2:1-3:20 is that the Jew, who thinks himself entitles to sit in judgment on the Gentiles, himself does the very same things he condemns in them (Cranfield, *ICC*, 105).
  - b. The obvious sinfulness of the heathen describes the base sinfulness of fallen man and is the inner reality of the life of Israel no less than that of the Gentiles (Cranfield, *ICC*, 105).
  - c. “Unrighteous” Gentiles have no defense before God, but neither do “righteous” Jews.
  - d. Muslims, Sikhs, etc.
3. We’re all in the same boat. We’re all idolators with dirty, sinful hearts.
  - a. Paul lays bear not only the idolatry of ancient and modern paganism but also the idolatry in Israel, in the Church, and in the life of each believer (Cranfield, *ICC*, 106).
4. We can’t hide from God, and there is no partiality with him.
5. Gentiles and Jews are alike guilty before God, and we all need the gospel of grace.

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<sup>13</sup> Martin Luther, “Preface to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans.”

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