

Comments on Romans 2

In this chapter, Paul states that God is impartial with respect to lineage (i.e., Jew vs. Gentile) and only interested in righteousness versus wickedness (v. 1-16). Being Jewish in and of itself is meaningless, and being circumcised in and of itself is meaningless, unless the person is genuinely spiritual (v. 17-29).

There are no significant changes in the IV/JST for [this chapter](#).

¹ Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. ² But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. ³ And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

⁵ But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; ⁶ who will render to every man according to his deeds:

⁷ To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

⁸ But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

⁹ Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

¹⁰ But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: ¹¹ For there is no respect of persons with God.

v1-11 Those who judge others are at risk of hypocrisy (v. 1). Only God judges with Truth, without hypocrisy (v. 2). Those who judge hypocritically will be judged by God (v. 3). God's extraordinary patience and longsuffering with mankind is an opportunity to repent (v. 4).

The self-righteous and rebellious will be condemned by God to wrath, tribulation and anguish (v. 5-6, 8-9), where those who do good works will receive immortality and eternal life, glory, honor and peace (v. 7, 10), regardless of whether they are Israelite or Gentile.

This is Paul's broadside against self-righteous Jews (cf. v. 17) among the ecclesia who are trying to force Gentiles to observe the Law of Moses, and who think they are more righteous

for observing the Law than the Gentiles who are not observing the Law. Paul makes it clear that in the end, at the point of Judgement, the lineage of the individual is irrelevant, as all God cares about is their deeds.

Does lineage matter at all? Yes, in mortality those who are of the natural lineage of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob enjoy the privilege of the Lord's promise that they would not be entirely destroyed, as discussed extensively in the Book of Mormon. But, in a post-mortal context, there is no privilege anymore.

v1-4 The man who condemns another because of their apparent sinfulness is forgetting they themselves are sinful. The particular sin is irrelevant, as all of us commit some sin or another. Finding a sin in others that we do not commit ourselves is irrelevant, because we still are commit some other sin. And, the rush to judgement is not God's plan. God's plan is to give people an opportunity in mortality to repent and improve and abandon sin.

The rush to condemn others is counterproductive to God's purpose as it discourages people from repenting.

v3-4 These are the first two rhetorical questions of over eighty Paul uses throughout the text. Seventy-nine of the eighty-three occur in ch. 2-11, and then four appear in ch. 13-14. His use of rhetorical questions is intended to provoke thought in the reader, but also to warn the reader that they will have to respond to these same questions to Paul himself when he arrives in Rome if they do not self-correct.

v5-11 These verses present an alternating A-B-A-B contrast between the unrighteous and the righteous, regardless of lineage.

The primary theme is the impartiality of God. The covenant with Abraham suggests God was "playing favorites" by making them His Chosen People. And, naturally, some would adopt a self-righteous view over their being natural Israel. However, Paul emphasizes that God's judgement favors the righteous individual over the wicked individual regardless of their lineage. The result is that in the end, at the Judgement, lineage is irrelevant (hence v. 7). Only in mortality does lineage matter, with respect to the covenant with Abraham.

v6 A quotation of Ps. 62:12. Paul's intent is to bring in the entire context of this psalm, as it emphasizes the individual's reliance on the Lord alone, and how the individual cannot be a

hypocrite, or seek wealth, and in the end all people go into the Lord's judgement fairly where earthly status means nothing.

v7-8 The KJV on these two verses is obtuse. I've added some text to make the intended meaning more clear:

⁷ To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, [they shall receive] eternal life: ⁸ But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, [they shall receive] indignation and wrath.

Paul is presenting a dichotomy following the quote of Psalm 62:12 in v. 6. The Lord will render to every man according to his deeds (v. 6), those who do good receive eternal life (v. 7) and those who do evil will receive the Lord's anger.

¹² For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; ¹³ (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. ¹⁴ For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: ¹⁵ which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) ¹⁶ In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

v12-16 Paul argues the observance of the Law of Moses, in and of itself, is not God's purpose or standard of Judgement.

Those without the Law of Moses will not be judged by it, but those with the Law will be judged by it (v. 12). Those who listen and hear the Law, but do not live it's precepts will not be justified, but those who do hear and do what it teaches will be justified (v. 13). Gentiles who have never heard the Law of Moses, but who live the same principles (v. 14) show that the spiritual intent of the Law of Moses is their desire. Their consciences and thoughts will either accuse or excuse them (v. 15) when they are Judged by the Lord (v. 16).

v13 When read superficially, this verse seems to be an internal contradiction for Paul's premise that the Law of Moses does not result in justification, cf. 3:20. However, note in this and the preceding verse the subject is the person and not the Law. This and the preceding verse are contrasting the hearer versus

the doer. The issue is the condition of the person, not the power of the Law.

This is similar to Nephi's statement "we are saved by grace after all we can do" (cf. 2 Ne. 25:23). The individual who does what the Law of Moses teaches will be Justified, or have their sins forgiven, by the Grace and Mercy of Christ.

v14-16 The wording of these verses is difficult, regardless of the translation. What Paul is saying is the Gentiles who have never heard of the Law of Moses will still be judged by their desires, thoughts and deeds at the Day of Judgement, the same as anyone else. They will not be judged against the Law of Moses in specific, because they have never heard of the Law of Moses, but they will be Judged against the spiritual precepts of the Gospel.

v15 Some of the better translations on this verse are paraphrases, as opposed to strict translations:

Their conduct shows that what the Law commands is written in their hearts. Their consciences also show that this is true, since their thoughts sometimes accuse them and sometimes defend them. (GNT)

When the Gentiles, who have no knowledge of the Law, act in accordance with it by the light of nature, they show that they have a law in themselves, for they demonstrate the effect of a law operating in their own hearts. Their own consciences endorse the existence of such a law, for there is something which condemns or commends their actions. (Phillips)

For their lives show that the conduct the Torah dictates is written in their hearts. Their consciences also bear witness to this, for their conflicting thoughts sometimes accuse them and sometimes defend them. (CJB)

They show that the essential requirements of the Law are written in their hearts *and* are operating there, with which their consciences (sense of right and wrong) also bear witness; and their [moral] decisions (their arguments of reason, their condemning or approving thoughts) will accuse or perhaps defend *and* excuse [them]. (AMPC)

Paul is arguing that the Gentiles, who have never heard of the Law of Moses, still do have a sense of what is right and wrong,

called their "conscience". This "conscience" is evident when they are reasoning out what is right and what is wrong, independent of any guidance from the Law of Moses.

v16 "according to my gospel", the JST/IV changes the "my" to "the", avoiding the potential confusion over whether Paul is referring to the gospel as something of his, as opposed to the Lord's.

¹⁷ Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, ¹⁸ And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; ¹⁹ And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, ²⁰ An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

²¹ Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? ²² Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? ²³ Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? ²⁴ For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

v17-24 Paul directly addresses the Jews among the ecclesia, who consider themselves smarter and better than the Gentiles who do not know the Law of Moses (v. 17-20). He then tells them they should be more concerned about their own behavior (v. 21-23), because their own bad example is resulting in the Gentiles badmouthing the Lord because of them (v. 24).

v21-23 We would have to assume the list presented here is Paul parroting back to them what they are known to be accusing the Gentiles of, and are therefore likely hypocritically guilty of themselves.

v22 "commit sacrilege", the [Greek term](#) used here is unique to the New Testament, although there is a [related appearance](#) in Acts 19:37. Modern translations are split between "commit sacrilege" and "rob the Temple". The sense seems to be more along the lines of "desecrate" or "profane".

Some see this as an accusation that they hate idols, but are willing to profit from their sales. This seems unlikely, given the contrasting pairs being used in the surrounding verses. It seems more likely the "commit sacrilege" is more accurate, in that Paul is saying "You detest idols, but do you profane what you should hold sacred?"

v24 A quote of Isa. 52:5. Paul's quote of this passage is a blistering accusation.

²⁵ For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. ²⁶ Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? ²⁷ And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? ²⁸ For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: ²⁹ But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

v25-29 Paul then states the symbolic value of the circumcision is meaningless if the one who is circumcised does not keep the Law of Moses (v. 25). If an uncircumcised Gentile keeps the Law of Moses, that makes his uncircumcised condition irrelevant (v. 26). And the behavior of the uncircumcised Gentile who keeps the Law of Moses condemns the behavior of the circumcised Jew who breaks the Law of Moses (v. 27). Jewishness isn't determined by the outside appearance, like that of circumcision (v. 28), but is determined by the inward condition of the heart. It is not a matter of the letter of the Law, but the spirit of the Law. Not the praise of man, but the praise of God (v. 29).

Another blistering accusation from Paul. The covenant of circumcision is a pivotal act in the Hebraic religion, owing to it's connection to the covenant with Abraham. The symbolism is that of eliminating sexuality from the religious realm, unlike their Gentile neighbors. In building the culture of Israel, the Lord separated out sexual matters from religious worship, and the promise for doing so was to be given many children across many generations, and to ultimately inherit all of the nations.

For Paul to tell them their circumcision was useless, because they were spiritually no different from the Gentiles around them, and some of the Gentiles were actually spiritually in a better place, is to accuse them of entirely corrupting the covenant with Abraham by becoming as sexually immoral as the Gentiles around them.

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