

(Romans) Romans 2:1-3:18

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the guilt of the religious sinner and the importance of living according to conscience, highlighting God's kindness and mercy as the means of leading people to repentance.

Duration: 48:51

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 2:29, Romans 3:9, 2 Corinthians 7:1-8

Topics: "Judgment And Repentance", "Salvation Through Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that God knows everything we have ever done, as it is all recorded in our memory. On the final day, God will play back our memories and judge us according to our deeds. The preacher also highlights the importance of repentance, turning away from sinful ways and believing in Jesus Christ's sacrifice for our sins. The sermon emphasizes that true understanding of God can only come through Jesus Christ, who revealed God's nature through His word, the Bible. The preacher also emphasizes that concealed sin is just as serious as open sin, and that everyone is guilty before God and in need of salvation.

Transcript

Today we turn to Romans chapter 2. I mentioned in an earlier study that in the first chapter of Romans, from verse 18 onwards till the end of the chapter, Paul is trying to establish the guilt of the godless, immoral sinner. And I mentioned there were two types of sinners in the world, non-religious sinners and religious sinners. Irreligious or non-religious sinners are those who are openly evil and sin and don't make any pretense to be religious or God-fearing or go to any place of worship, nothing.

But there is another category of sinner. Now those non-religious, worldly, immoral people are openly identified as sinners and religious people find great delight in calling them sinners. You know, in the story of the woman caught in adultery in John chapter 8, where the Pharisees wanted to stone her to death, you see three people there.

The woman, who is a picture of a godless, immoral person, the Pharisee, who is a picture of a religious sinner, and Jesus, who is a godly person. The three different people there. And we need to see the difference between the Pharisee and Jesus, the difference between a religious person and a spiritual person.

A lot of people don't understand that difference. They think religious people are spiritual people. No.

Religious people, like the Pharisee, are most times worse than women caught in adultery. Because in that story also you find the Pharisees went away condemned, but the woman went away justified, forgiven. The Pharisees went away unforgiven and the woman went away forgiven, just like the prodigal son.

He sits at the father's right hand at the end of the story, and the older boy, who was a religious boy, he's outside the house. So, we find that Jesus brought out that distinction very clearly during His ministry, that those who acknowledge their sin, there was hope for them, but religious people, who did not acknowledge their sinful condition, the state of their hearts, they would be lost. So, in Romans chapter 2, Paul is trying to establish the guilt of the religious sinner.

And he's speaking to Jews in those days, and we could apply these verses to Christians today, who look down on others and saying, we're holy and you fellows are not. Romans 2, verse 1, he says, you are without excuse, every man of you who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself, because you who judge practice the same things. You remember what Jesus told the Pharisees, who wanted to stone the woman caught in adultery? He said, he who is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone.

So, you want to throw stones at this woman? Okay, that's what you feel that the Old Testament law teaches, go right ahead, but let it be the one who has no sin in his life, whose conscience does not convict him about any sin, let him throw the first stone. And in the company of other people, perhaps those Pharisees may have pretended that there was no sin in their life and said, okay, there's no sin in my life, I'm going to throw a stone. But in the presence of Jesus, they could not pretend.

And they all had to go away. Let me tell you something, that God is not in the business of throwing stones at other people. And godly people who are like God also do not throw stones at others.

Stones are thrown by religious people. Those who criticize and condemn others are all religious sinners. So that's what he's saying here.

You pass judgment on others, you want to throw stones at them. But you condemn yourself, because even though you may not have externally committed adultery like that woman, in your thoughts, haven't you done it? And we read in John chapter 8, starting with the oldest, they all went away. The oldest Pharisee realized what a lot he had lusted in his mind, how much of adultery he had committed in his mind.

So before you condemn the adulterer, think of how much adultery you've committed in your thoughts. Before you condemn the murderer, think of how much anger you've had against other people in your mind. Anger is murder.

What about hatred? Hatred is murder, we read in 1 John chapter 3. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer. You may look down at people who have killed thousands of people and say, Oh, what godless people. But do you know that if you hate one human being, you're in the same category? Maybe it hasn't come forth, but you are guilty of the same thing in God's eyes.

Because you've got the same seed, which is sown in his heart. What's the difference between a seed and a tree? It's just a matter of time. That's all.

Just a matter of time. Inside that seed is everything that you finally see in the full grown tree. And so, in the seed of hatred is the tree of murder.

In the seed of lusting with your heart is the tree of adultery. So he says, you practice the same things yourself. And we know that the judgment of God, Romans 2 verse 2, rightly falls on those who practice such things.

See, God's judgment is absolutely right. He makes, there's no partiality with him. He doesn't make a tree.

You're guilty. Jesus said, if you lust after a woman in your heart, you've committed adultery. It's not as bad as physical adultery in the sense that you've not harmed another person.

In that way, it's better. But you're still guilty. You're still guilty of adultery, of adultery stage one, even if you didn't get up to stage two.

So the judgment of God rightly falls on these things. And he says in verse three, Did you suppose this, oh man, that when you pass judgment on others for their external sins, and you practice such the same things in your thought life, you think you're going to escape the judgment of God? No. You're going to get it more because you're condemning the other person.

Now that fellow is not condemning you. The woman caught in adultery didn't condemn the Pharisees. So in God's eyes, she was not as bad as those Pharisees were, because they were committing the same things in their mind.

And on top of that, they were condemning the other person who did it. And that's very often how Christians are. You do the same things in your mind, and you look down on another sinner and condemn him instead of being merciful.

Jesus was merciful. Jesus did not condone sin. He did not tell that woman caught in adultery, Oh, well, that's okay.

We fall always. It's okay. Go away.

No. He said, Go and don't do this again. Don't do it even once.

God hates sin. And God doesn't condone sin. He told that woman, Don't sin anymore.

So the fact that Jesus did not condemn her does not mean that He condoned what she did. So we're not saying that sin is not serious. Sin is very serious, but it's just as serious in the thoughts that destroys our body as it is on the outside.

It's something like if you keep leprosy in your skin covered up with long-sleeved shirts, that doesn't make the leprosy any better than the other man who does not wear a long-sleeved shirt, but whose leprosy is visible. The disease is still working in both people. So concealed sin is no better than open sin.

So He says, God's been good to you. Verse four, Don't think lightly of the riches of the kindness and forbearance and patience of God, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance. Why has God been kind to you that He's not judged you so far? The purpose is that you might come to repentance.

You know, God wants you to repent and to come to Him. And that's why He's been long suffering with you and allowed you to live so long, doing wrong things, and He's not yet punished you. You haven't died.

God has been merciful to you. And the purpose of God's kindness is to lead you to repentance. And that teaches us something also in our preaching the gospel to other people.

We're not to lead people to repentance by condemning them. How does God lead people to repentance? In verse four, by His kindness. Have you ever thought of leading people to repentance through being kind to them? By being kind to sinners and godless people? Jesus was kind to that woman caught in adultery, and I'm sure she never did it again.

Kindness leads people to repentance. But if you're not kind, then we, and if you don't respond to God's kindness, then of course one day we do receive judgment, as it says in verse five, with our unrepentant heart. We're storing up wrath for the judgment of God.

But today God gives us the opportunity to repent. He hasn't punished us yet. He hasn't punished you yet.

He invites you to turn to Him in repentance for your failures and your sins, and He'll forgive you. We were considering in our last study Romans chapter 2 and verse 4. Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness, of God's kindness and forbearance, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? I mentioned that God's method of leading people to repentance is by being kind to them and not by being hard on them. Man's method of trying to lead people to repentance is by being hard on them, but God's method is by being kind.

But when people take advantage of the kindness of God, that means just because God hasn't punished them yet. For example, you may be a gossip, a slanderer who's gone around speaking evil about a lot of people, maybe even spoken against God's servants, and God hasn't punished you yet. Maybe you've done harm to others, and God hasn't punished you yet.

Maybe you've been lusting and indulging in all types of bad habits, and God hasn't punished you yet. Well, that doesn't mean He's never going to punish you. Everything is being recorded, and one day it will all be opened up, and the books will be opened, and you'll be judged according to everything you did in your whole life.

So if we continue in stubbornness, it says in verse 5, and without repentance, you're storing up wrath. Storing up means, you know, like you put more and more grain into a barrel, and it gets higher and higher and higher, more and more and more and more. We are storing up wrath for ourselves in the day of the wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

See, we can look at the judgment of God like storing something in a barrel. Okay, you commit one sin, and God doesn't judge you. It's like putting one grain into that barrel.

And then you commit another sin, and God doesn't judge you. You put another grain. And over a period of years, that barrel is becoming higher and higher, and all that is judgment.

It's judgment. Judgment for the thousands and thousands of sins that you've committed from the day you were born. Think of the number of things that are in that barrel.

There's a list. You're just storing it up. The list is so long.

It's getting higher and higher and higher, and you're storing up wrath and judgment, which will all come together in the final day. In the final day, God will just open that barrel or unfold that list, and judgment for

every single sin from the day you were born till the day you died, all comes in one massive dose. That's the day of judgment.

It's going to be horrible for everybody. So the mere fact that God doesn't judge now doesn't mean He's never going to judge every sin you ever committed, every bad thought, every wrong attitude, every slander, every gossip that you ever did, every wrong deed where you harmed another person, every place where you murmured and complained and grumbled against God and did not put God first. All those things are accumulating a certain judgment against you.

And one day, it'll be revealed. And that day, it says here in verse six, God will render to every man according to his deeds. God knows every single thing that you've ever done.

It's all being videotaped in your memory, every word, every deed. God will just rewind that tape in the final day and play back your own memory, which will show the whole world on a screen everything you ever did, and you'll be judged according to your deeds. And all your religious whitewash will be of no use in that day, because God will show everyone that you were such a sinner.

And on the other hand, verse seven, if people repent, that means they turn from that sinful way of life because they heard the gospel, they hear that God hates sin, and they want to give up their sin, and they believe that Jesus Christ died for their sins. He goes on to explain that later on. But when a person turns from his sinful life, he seeks for glory, and honor, and immortality, and eternal life.

You see, people in the world are not seeking for God's glory, or honor, or immortality, or eternal life. They're seeking for money, and pleasure, and earthly honor, and to indulge themselves, etc. And such people are just going to be judged.

But those who say, Lord, I'm an eternal being, and I must seek for eternal life and immortality, they will be rewarded in that day with eternal life. God will give them eternal life, because they persevere in doing good, seeking for glory. That means they say, Lord, I want to give up my sinful life.

Maybe they slip now and then, but they are sincerely seeking to live for God. They've turned right round from their old sinful life, and they seek to please God. That's one category of people.

The other category, verse 8, are those who are selfishly ambitious, self-centered, seek their own gain, and they don't obey the truth which God speaks to them, but they obey unrighteousness. To them, God gives wrath and indignation. That means they continue stubbornly in sin, ignoring the warnings of God.

And he says very clearly, there'll be tribulation means God's judgment and distress for every soul of man, irrespective of who he is, if he does evil. To the Jew first and to the Greek means that the more--the Jew was the fellow who had the gospel, he was the man who had the--heard the gospel first, who had the Bible. To that person, more judgment, because he had more understanding.

And then you go to those people who didn't have so much understanding, they will also be punished, but not to that extent. Punishment is according to how much we know of God, because there is no partiality with God, it says in verse 11. There is no partiality with God.

All are exactly the same to Him. The man whose sins will be punished with eternal death, his sins will be revealed to him in the final day, and the whole world will acknowledge that this man deserves hell, and the man will acknowledge it himself. So, there is no partiality.

God does not show partiality to religious people who just go through a form of going to a church or reading the Bible or say, I was born in a good Christian family. These things mean nothing. How are you living? Are you persevering, seeking for glory and honor in your immortality? Or are you a hypocrite, pretending to be holy when there's sin in your private life? Then he says here, verse 12, all who have sinned without the law will perish without the law.

That means those who did not know the truth and lived in sin, they will be punished with a lesser standard. And those who have sinned under the law, that means they knew the truth of God and still continued in sin, they'll be judged by the standards which they claim to know. So, those of us who have the Bible and who understand the Bible, do you know that we're going to be judged by God by a much higher standard than those other people who don't have a Bible, who don't know these things? God's going to judge us by a much higher standard.

Then he goes on to say in verse 13, it's not just a matter of hearing the law, but doing it. You know, this is the big problem with a lot of Christians. They go to a church or a meeting and listen to the Word of God, they understand it, and they think they've become spiritual because they heard and understood.

God says, no, it's those who do it who are blessed, not just those who understand it or hear it. And then he says, what about all those other heathen people? You despise them? You think, well, they don't know the truth like we know? See, this is a very sad thing among Christians. Christians look down on non-Christians, and this is a word for such Christians.

Don't ever look down on someone. They may not have the truth like you have, but if they live according to their conscience, their conscience is like a law within them. And that shows that the work of the law is written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts either accusing them or defending them.

That means they're telling them that you've violated your conscience here, or you've done according to your conscience here. And in the day when God judges the secrets of men, verse 16. Verse 16 is an interesting verse.

It says in the day when God judges, He's going to judge the secrets of men, the things that are hidden through Christ Jesus according to my gospel. And He explains the gospel. See, He's not saying that those who live according to their conscience will be saved.

That's not the point. He's trying to say that those people, they go according to their conscience, may be better off than you people, who have much more light and don't go according to your conscience. And how God judges those people who've never heard the gospel, we can't fully explain.

We know that salvation is through Christ, but a lot of people who have been, let's say, turned away from Christ by the hypocrisy of Christians, how is God going to judge them? God's not going to judge them because they turned away from hypocritical Christians. We have to leave that with God. One day God, according to this gospel, will judge all men.

But one thing we can be sure, there's no partiality and He will never punish a person for what that person didn't do. So let's leave that matter to God and let's see ourselves whether we have repented and turned to God and responded to the good news of the gospel that we have heard. Amen.

Today we turn to Romans and chapter 2 and verse 16. Here Paul says that in the final day when God judges all men, it's going to be judged, people are going to be judged according to the gospel that he preaches here in Romans. And what God is going to judge here, it says, is the secrets of men.

The secrets are those things in our lives which other people don't know anything about. Motives, thoughts, attitudes, these are going to be more important in the final day than what other people know. The hidden things, the actions and words that your friends and others who know you publicly know nothing about.

It's very important for you to remember that, that these are the things which are going to matter in the day when God judges all people. It's a sad thing that many, many Christians don't think of this. If you really took this seriously, you would be delivered from living before the face of men.

You wouldn't care anymore for what people thought about you. You'd be much more concerned to know what God thinks about your private life, your motives, your attitudes, your thoughts, your financial dealings which other people know nothing about and the hidden things in your life. And then in verse 17 onwards up to verse 29, Paul is, through the Holy Spirit, describing the guilt of the religious sinner.

It's more difficult for religious people to recognize that they are sinners than for out and out immoral, ungodly people. And here he is talking about Jews because they were the religious people of that time. But we could apply this passage to Christians today who are the religious people of our time, who hold the Bible, go to church, sing songs, pray fast, give money for God's work, have missionary activity, and all the other trappings of religion.

And he says here, if you bear the name Jew, and we could say if you bear the name Christian, and rely upon the law, that means you rely upon the Bible as God's word, and you boast in God, that means you claim to know God personally, you claim to know His will. Verse 18, you claim to approve the things that are essential being instructed out of the law or God's word, and you are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature. Now these are phrases that express the attitude of many preachers today.

Many Christian preachers feel they are a guide to the blind, a light to those in darkness, and a corrector to the foolish, a teacher of the immature, all of which is true if a man is upright, sincere, and if his life backs up his message, the words that he preaches. But here Paul is speaking to those who boast about these external things, but don't have a life that backs up what they preach. And he speaks here about those who teach others, and he says in verse 21, you who teach another, don't you teach yourself? You who preach that one should not steal, do you steal? See, stealing is not just major things like robbing a bank or things like that.

You could steal a paper or a pen from your office. You could steal medicines from your hospital, small little things which are called pilfering. And what Paul is saying is, don't just think of these big robbers who steal big things.

Do you steal small things? What about stealing a person's reputation when you speak evil about someone? Do you know that you're doing something worse than stealing a hundred rupees from his pocket? You're stealing something more valuable to him than a hundred rupees. You're destroying his reputation. You're stealing it.

And so he says, you who preach that one should not steal, do you steal? You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? Jesus said that if you lusted after a woman in your mind, you are committing adultery. So when you look down with horror at some person who has fallen into sin externally in this area, he says, what about you? How's your thought life? Do you commit adultery? He's trying to point out to these religious people that you are just as bad sinners as these others and just as guilty as anybody else. You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? See, idolatry is not just external.

It's not just bowing down before an idol of wood or stone. Anything that takes the place of God in your life, it could be money, it could be your job, it could be your house, that's idolatry. And he says, you who claim to abhor idols, is there idolatry in your life? In other words, to sum it all up, you who boast in the law or in God's word, are you breaking that word in areas where perhaps other people don't know? Do you dishonor God by the way you live? And you have these very sad words, a quotation from the Old Testament, here in verse 24, for the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you, just as it is written.

One of the prophets told Israel that the name of God is blasphemed among all the heathen nations because the way you fellows are living. And I believe that is true around the world, that the name of Jesus Christ is so dishonored in many, many lands today, because of the way those who take the name of Christ and who claim to be Christians live. And I believe that if you're a Christian, this should bring great sorrow in your heart, that your life does not back up your claim to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Do people in your office, in your home, your neighbors, your relatives, see a difference in your attitude? What about when it comes to property matters? Do they find a freedom from covetousness and the love of money and earthly things in you if you claim to be a disciple of Jesus? The name of God, the name of Jesus Christ is greatly dishonored in many lands today because of the way Christians live. And then he goes on to speak about circumcision. Today we could say baptism or breaking of bread or any ritual.

These things are of value if you obey God's word. I mean, what he says here about circumcision in verse 25 could be applied to baptism or the Lord's table or any other activity, religious activity or ritual. It's a value only if you obey God's word.

But if you transgress God's word, then your being baptized is as good as not being baptized. Your breaking bread is as good as not breaking bread. Your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

And then you look at another man who's not being baptized or not circumcised. If he keeps the, verse 26, the requirements of God's word, God will consider his unbaptized state as good as baptism because even though he didn't go through the ritual of baptism, he actually obeyed God's word. See, circumcision was a way in which people testified, I belong to God.

I'm not part of the heathen. And baptism is a way by which we profess that we've broken off with the world and belong to Christ. But it's a mere ritual if we don't follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

And in that case, it says here, if a man's physically uncircumcised and keeps the law, verse 27, will he not judge you? Won't he condemn you who outwardly has gone through the ritual, but you don't keep the word? Then he says, he's not a Jew who's one outwardly, neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh, but he's a Jew who's one inwardly, and circumcision is that which is of the heart. We could apply the same to baptism. Baptism is a reality for those who have actually put off the old man and decided to walk in newness of life by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Not just a matter of going into the water and coming out, but one whose heart has been circumcised and by the Spirit, not the letter. And for such a man, it says here, his praise is not from men, but from God. And that's because he seeks, not the praise of men, but the praise of God.

So ultimately it boils down to whose honor are you seeking? Are you seeking praise from men? Then you will just be a religious sinner. The way to be free from it is to seek the praise of God. Today we turn to Romans chapter 3. We were considering in our last studies the guilt of the godless, immoral sinner described in Romans chapter 1, and the guilt of the religious sinner described in Romans chapter 2. And in chapter 3, the first few words are the concluding words of his address to the religious sinner.

He says here, then what advantage has the Jew, or we can say what advantage is the man who's born into a Christian family, who goes to church, and who has a Christian name? What is the benefit of circumcision? Today we could say, what's the benefit of baptism? Well, great in every respect. There's certainly a lot of advantages of being born in a Christian family, of hearing the word of God from childhood. First of all, because to the Jews were entrusted the oracles of God.

And today, God's word is in the hands of Christians, the Bible. What then? If some Christians did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? Everything that's applied here to the Jew could be applied to Christians who are Christians only in name, who don't live according to the teachings of God's word, which unfortunately is very often the vast majority. But does the unbelief of some who claim to be Christians, but don't live according to the teachings of God's word, does that nullify the faithfulness of God? No, may it never be.

Rather, let God be found true, even though every man be found a liar. You see, God's word is not affected by the fact that some people don't obey it. It doesn't make a difference.

If some people don't obey it, well, some people don't believe it, well, it's their loss. It just proves that they are hypocrites. But that doesn't change the fact of God's word.

And the standards of God's word are not affected by the fact that multitudes of Christians don't live by those standards, or don't believe in them. So their unbelief does not nullify the faithfulness of God. God is true, even if every man on earth is a liar.

See, that's the position we must take if we want to be true disciples of Jesus Christ. Because there are many promises in the New Testament. Let's just take the matter of promises.

And many, many Christians may not be experiencing those promises. That doesn't make a difference. The promises are still true, whether people experience them or don't experience them, it doesn't make the slightest difference.

The promises are true. In other words, even if there's not a single human being on earth who has experienced those promises in life, the promises are still true. You can experience them.

You can look around at Christians around you, perhaps in your church, in your locality, and they don't seem to be living in the good of the wonderful promises given in God's word. So what? It doesn't make a difference. You can still live according to them and be an overcomer and glorify God by fulfilling those promises.

God is still true, even if everybody is a liar. Even if everybody's a hypocrite, there's no need for you to be one. You can still be a true Christian because God's word is true.

And again, he quotes this Old Testament quotation, that thou mightest be justified in thy words, might prevail when thou are judged. In other words, everything that God has said is ultimately going to be found to be totally true. And if you want to order your life according to the truth, live by what is taught in the word of God, you can bank on that for all eternity.

It's like building your life on a rock in time and eternity. Your life will never shake. And now, having described how we are all sinners, he says, if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not righteous.

He's not unrighteous, is he? I'm speaking in human terms. In other words, if people are saying, listen, our breaking faith with God is good because our sins serve a good purpose in highlighting how good God is when they see how bad we are, he says, that's a crazy argument. No, that's the way some people talk.

But God forbid. Otherwise, how will God judge the world if he can overlook sin? He's trying to point out that sin cannot be overlooked under any circumstances. God is going to judge the world.

But, verse 7, if through my lie the truth of God abounded to his glory, then why am I still being judged as a sinner? You see, these are foolish arguments that Paul is saying human beings sometimes use, saying, well, I'm a sinner. Okay, well, that highlights the fact that God is so glorious. And why not say, verse 8, as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say, let us do evil that good may come.

Their condemnation is just. You know, there are people even today who take advantage of the grace of God and say, well, we're sinners and Jesus came to call sinners and not righteous people. So we're not among the righteous.

We're sinners. And they continue in their sin, saying that Jesus came to call righteous people. They are taking advantage of God's grace and goodness and almost glorying in their sin when they should be ashamed of their sin and when they should turn from their sin.

And because Paul was preaching this message, he says, some people are twisting what we say. Throughout history, it's always been the case that there have been people who have twisted what godly men have said. Twisted it just a little bit and given a wrong emphasis and misquoting.

It's happened in all these 2,000 years. And that's why even Paul in the first century had to correct that wrong impression people were getting because people were misquoting him and slandering him, saying, Paul is saying it doesn't matter if we sin. Paul never said that.

Let us do evil that good may come. Paul says that. Paul never said that.

That means the worse we are, the better God likes it. Is that right? No. He says the damnation of those who say such things is just.

And yet some people claim that's what I preach. No, that's not what he preached. It's true that Jesus came to save sinners, but he didn't come to encourage people to live in their sin.

When the woman caught in adultery was forgiven by Jesus, Jesus said to him, I don't condemn you. But he went and also told her, go and sin no more. God hates sin.

He loves the sinner, but he hates sin. What then, Paul says, verse 9 of Romans 3, are we better than them? In other words, is the religious sinner better than the irreligious, immoral person? Is the Jew better than the Greek or Gentile? No, not at all. We have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin.

As I've been saying, these words, these verses right from chapter 2 onwards could be applied today to Christians and non-Christians and to say that in God's eyes, they're all the same. See, very often Christians feel we are superior in God's eyes to the others. Are we? If we live in sin, our judgment will be more, because to whom more is given, more to be committed.

The fact is that we were both, whichever group or religion we're born into, we are sinners. We are all sinners. Every baby born into the world in every religion, and even if they have no religion, there's sin in their nature.

And that sin comes forth as they come, as they grow up. And Paul's aim here is to prove that every single human being is in exactly the same category in God's eyes. He is a sinner.

All are under sin. And he quotes this Old Testament passage there to prove that. There's none righteous, not even one.

There's not a single human being anywhere in the world who's righteous in God's eyes. Now, according to our own standards of comparison, we may think one is righteous and one is not. But it's not true.

It's like the person who gets 5% in a class examination feeling he's better than the other student who got 1%. Maybe he is better than that person. But according to God's standard, which is 100%, they've both failed miserably.

So there's none righteous. No, not one. It's very essential, if we are to understand the Gospel clearly, that we get this foundation absolutely clear.

That there is absolutely no difference between the immoral person and the religious person who goes to church in God's eyes. Both are sinners. In our last study, we stopped at Romans chapter 3 and verse 10.

He had just, Paul says here in verse 9, all are under sin. This is the conclusion to which he was building up in chapters 1 and 2. Both groups of sinners, the godless, immoral, worldly, wicked person and the religious person who goes to his place of worship and prays and fasts and indulges in a lot of religious activity, both of them are equally guilty before God. One is not better than the other.

And he goes on to say, there is not a single person, verse 10, in the whole world who is righteous before God. And he emphasizes it by saying, not even one. There is a verse in the Old Testament, Isaiah 64 and verse 6, which says that our righteousness are like filthy rags before God.

All our righteousnesses are like filthy rags in God's eyes. That means our good deeds are, may appear good before men, but in God's eyes, they are far, far below His standard. God's standard of purity is one hundred percent, and the best among us don't even reach up to one percent.

Everything is filthy in God's eyes. We compare ourselves with one another and think we are righteous. We talk about good people and bad people.

But in God's eyes, no one is good. There's no one who does good. Look at these words.

There's no one who understands God. Verse 11. A lot of people claim to understand God, but it's their own human ideas.

The only way man can understand God is if God comes down to earth and reveals Himself to us. Otherwise, we're left with our own ideas. Ten people who have never seen an elephant, for example, would never be able to describe an elephant.

If they've never seen a picture or an elephant itself, they'd never be able to describe one. They'd all have ideas, but they'd all be wrong because none of them has seen a picture of an elephant or seen an elephant. It's the same way with multitudes of people through the ages who've tried to imagine what God is like and what God wants.

All are wrong. It's only when Christ, Jesus Christ, came down from heaven to earth that we got an understanding of what God was like. And through His Word now, the Bible, we understand what God is like.

Otherwise, we just don't know. There's no one who understands. And there's no one who seeks for God.

That's a very strong statement, but I believe scripture. There is no one who seeks for God. There are a lot of people who appear to seek for God, but there's actually no one.

They've all turned aside. They've all become useless. There's no one who does good.

There's not even one. These are all absolute statements. There are a lot of people who seek for religion and a lot of people who seek for benefits from God, but there's no one who seeks God for who He is in Himself, unless the Holy Spirit gives that desire to a man.

Otherwise, apart from the help of the Holy Spirit, there's no one who seeks after God. Every single person, verse 12, has turned aside. Every single person, without exception.

They have all become useless. These are strong words. Every single person in the world is corrupt and useless.

Whatever their religion, including Christians, including religious people, every single one. There's no one who does good. Now, when we compare ourselves with each other, we may say one person is doing good.

There's a lot of apparent good, but good in its deepest sense is that which is done with the purest motive, for the glory of God, where no personal gain or anything is there. In that sense, there is no one who does good. Not even one.

And then, he goes on to speak about speech. Our speech is a pretty good way by which we can find out our spiritual state. And he uses four words here.

Throat, tongues, lips, and mouth, in verses 13 to 14, all of which refer to our speech. He says that throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving, the poison of asps is under their lips, their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. In all these words, I find a strong expression on the corrupt nature of human speech.

We say things to hurt people, we say things to exalt ourselves, we say things to give a wrong impression, we say things evil about others, we say things to deceive people, and the words used here, the poison of snakes, deception, death, and a grave, and cursing, and bitterness, are very, very strong words, showing that God takes our speech very seriously. Our sinful condition is perhaps manifested most in the way we speak. The way we use our tongues in our conversation, particularly when we are under pressure, when people impose something upon us, or irritate us, or trouble us, or take advantage of us, the way we speak is an indication of how much we know God.

The man who knows God is restrained in his speech. Verse 15, their feet are swift to shed blood. None of us may be murderers, but we shed blood with our tongue again.

We go from house to house and talk evil about somebody. That is shedding blood. Destruction and misery, verse 16, are in their parts.

It's sad that so many people go around slandering, backbiting, evil speaking, gossiping, and the path of peace, have they not known? It's an attitude of belligerence and hatred, jealousy, strife, that's characteristic of the entire human race. There's hardly a home in the world where there is no domestic strife, where husband and wife live peacefully. The path of peace is not known, unfortunately, even in many Christian homes, and even in many Christian churches, or between Christian churches.

What do these things indicate? All these things together indicate that what it says in verse 18, that there is no fear of God before the eyes of most people, all people. Some appear to have a little fear of God, but it's only because they're afraid of judgment or sin, or punishment for sin. But to fear God in this sense, that we never want to hurt Him, that we reverence Him, and out of respect, the word here is referring to respect, not a fear that God will punish us.

It's not a fear of God's punishment, but a reverence for God Himself is almost unknown among even those who claim to know the Lord. This is one of the fundamental requirements for a godly life, the fear of God. The Bible says in 2nd Corinthians, in chapter 7, in verse 1, that we can perfect holiness only if we fear God, if we reverence Him.

And the reason why many people are careless with their speech, the reason why many people have wrong attitudes towards others, even towards other Christians, or people of other Christian groups, is because there is no fear of God, there's no reverence for God in their personal life. When a man lacks reverence for God, he is very loose in his speech and the way he speaks about others. He doesn't think whether he's hurting others or not.

He doesn't think whether he's deceiving people or not. And there's destruction and misery in his path, and there's no peace wherever he goes. This is the sad condition of people.

So describing religious people, he says, if religious people are like this, and the homes of religious people are like this, in what way are they better than all those other ungodly people who actually kill and steal and murder and things like that? He says, you also have the same lack of peace. His conclusion is, everybody is guilty. Verse 19, the whole world is accountable to God, guilty, and their mouth is shut.

If we acknowledge that, then we have taken the first step to salvation.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/9/SID9081.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/romans-romans-21-318/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net