

## Romans 2A

- About to transition
  - Away from why all men are without excuse and in need of God's righteousness
    - And we're moving toward a more specific issue
    - If you remember, we said that as hard as it might be men in general to admit they are not good and in need of salvation
    - It was even harder for a devout Jew to see their vulnerability before God
      - For the Jewish nation had come to believe that their road to heaven had been assured the moment God had selected Abraham
  - So as Paul finishes his introduction on unrighteousness, he will open a can of worms
    - Does being a Gentile or being a Jew give someone an advantage in the question of who is righteous?

[Rom. 2:1](#) ¶ Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

[Rom. 2:2](#) And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.

[Rom. 2:3](#) But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same *yourself*, that you will escape the judgment of God?

[Rom. 2:4](#) Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

- Men have no excuse for their sin before God
  - Paul says we who pass judgment on others condemn ourselves
    - When we say other men deserve God's wrath for what they do, we pronounce our own sentence
      - Because we all do the same things
      - There is no one good except God alone

- If one man is due judgment for sin, then all men are due it because we share the same patterns
- The judgment of God rightly falls on men who practice such things because God judges on the basis of is really true
  - Not what we would like to think
  - Therefore, all who practice sin are equally guilty without respect to the form that sin takes
- Now what do men often say when someone tells them they might face God's wrath for their sin?
  - Some would say, as Paul repeats in verse 3, that somehow it won't apply to me
    - I know I've done some bad things in the past
      - I haven't lived the perfect life
      - But I've improved a lot
        - And besides I know people a lot worse than me
      - God will understand
      - He'll see me for who I tried to be, and He'll overlook my failures
        - Hell might exist, but I won't be there
  - To that reasoning, Paul says do you consider (or think) that you can acknowledge some men deserve God's wrath
    - And at the same time remain confident that you're not that person
    - Especially when you know you've done many of the same things the worse people have done
      - What do you mean Paul? I'm no Hitler?
        - Did Hitler lie? Have you ever lied?
        - Did Hitler ever speak a curse or hateful thought?
        - Have you?

- Hitler stole and deceived and coveted and betrayed and did many other things
- Have you never done those things even once?
- And yes Hitler murdered, and maybe you never committed murder
  - But are you resting on that difference? Only murderers go to Hell?
- As Paul says, do you suppose that you will escape God's judgment?
- Perhaps you assume everything will work out because so far, so good
  - No signs of hell and judgment...in fact, life's pretty good
  - Another foolish assumption
    - Paul says you are thinking lightly of God's kindness, tolerance and patience
      - Kindness is *chestotes* - goodness, excellence
      - Tolerance is *anochē* – a delaying
      - Patience is *makrothumia* – long-suffering
    - Do you get the picture?
      - You've been taking something for granted
      - The fact that you are not already in hell is nothing more than God's goodness
      - As He intentionally delays (puts off) your judgment
      - And as you go on sinning, God is long suffering over your sin – but not eternally suffering
  - And this window of opportunity has been extended to you and I so we might have opportunity to repent of our sin

[2Pet. 3:8](#) ¶ But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

[2Pet. 3:9](#) The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

[2Pet. 3:10](#) But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

- Peter echoes Paul's words
  - The long passing of time while the world waits for God's judgment to fall as promised hasn't diminished God's intention to carry that plan through
    - Don't call God slow because the world's judgment day hasn't arrived yet
    - No more than you should take some comfort from the fact that you haven't faced your own personal reckoning
      - Both are coming just as assuredly as God has promised them both
  - God's apparent delay is patience and kindness toward sinners

[Rom. 2:5](#) But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

[Rom. 2:6](#) who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS:  
[Rom. 2:7](#) to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;

[Rom. 2:8](#) but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. All men are guilty and we are all under the same sentence of condemnation

- Unfortunately, as you remain unrepentant, you store up God's wrath for that fateful day
  - How ironic
    - The time God gives for you to repent of your disobedience and rebellion actually becomes your opportunity to increase God's anger against you
    - Instead of the delay bringing you closer to God, it brings greater judgment because you continue to use the time you have to sin even more
- Paul then says that there is a rule by which we can anticipate God's judgment as it plays out

- God renders to each according to their deeds (Ps 62:12)
  - Paul is really drawing a contrast between to ends of a spectrum
    - God doesn't play favorites and He doesn't change the rules
      - Each person gets what they deserve, in a sense
  - To the person who perseveres in doing good and seeking glory and honor and immortality – they receive eternal life
  - To those who are seek for self rather than obeying God's truth
    - Those who obey unrighteousness receive God's wrath
- This moment is described in the book of Revelation

[Rev. 20:11](#) ¶ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

[Rev. 20:12](#) And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

[Rev. 20:13](#) And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds.

[Rev. 20:14](#) Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

[Rev. 20:15](#) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

- You see there's actually a catch in Paul's statement
  - Verse 8, Paul says that all men are guilty and are under the same sentence of condemnation
    - Didn't Paul just say that God deals with people according to their deeds
      - Some will be judged to be good and others bad
    - But now he says all are guilty and due condemnation
  - Well the answer is found in those verses I read from Revelation

- Everyone who stands for the test of their deeds fails
  - Rev 20:15 says all those who were not found in the book of Life were thrown into the Lake of Fire – eternal punishment
- It didn't say that all those who had good deeds survived
  - It says those who were in the book of life survived
- But the book of life wasn't the book that contained their deeds
  - That was a different book
  - It's called the Lamb's book of life in Rev 21, and it's a book of those who have trusted in the Jesus for salvation
- So Paul says God is fair to judge men according to their deeds, and this He does
  - But all men have evil deeds, and so all men fail the test
    - Only one man can pass this test, the man Jesus
  - The rest are under condemnation, as Paul says in verse 8
- Now Paul is ready to introduce the issue of Gentile vs. Jew

[Rom. 2:9](#) *There will be* tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek,

[Rom. 2:10](#) but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

[Rom. 2:11](#) For there is no partiality with God.

[Rom. 2:12](#) ¶ For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law;

[Rom. 2:13](#) for *it is* not the hearers of the Law *who* are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

- Paul says the judgment falls equally for the Jew as the Gentile
  - And to those who do good, honor follows for both equally
  - For there is no partiality with God
    - God doesn't play favorites

- Now we tend to see this phrase from the positive perspective
  - God is an equal opportunity savior – and that He is
  - But Paul is speaking from the negative point of view
    - God is an equal opportunity punisher
- He mentions the opportunity for glory, but Paul has already said that all men deserve condemnation
  - So the point is still the same
    - If it were possible for a man to live perfectly, then he would receive his proper reward regardless of whether he was Gentile or Jew
  - But the opposite is also true
    - Both Jew and Gentile receive the same punishment
- Then Paul begins a series of comparisons between what the Jew knew and received from God in terms of knowledge
  - As compared to the Gentile and what he received and knew
    - The issue here is what impact does our understanding of God's expectations play in our guilt
      - For example, the Jews had received a very clear and specific set of instructions directly from God called the Law
      - But the Gentiles had received no such instructions
  - Did these instructions make the Jews more guilty and the Gentiles less guilty?
  - Or perhaps it worked the opposite way
    - Perhaps their opportunity to know and follow God's law, however imperfectly, gave them an edge
    - While the Gentiles ignorance of God's expectations left them without hope and doomed to judgment
- So Paul explores those possibilities
  - He begins with the Gentiles

- He says that all who have sinned without the Law also perish without the Law
  - So, those without the Law are...Gentiles
    - They will perish though they never received the Law
    - Their ignorance of God's law doesn't exonerate them
      - Why? Because it obviously doesn't help
  - Because those under the Law will find themselves judged by it...
    - Meaning they will be held accountable for their inability to keep the law
    - Because merely hearing the Law isn't an advantage if you never actually do what it says
      - And here again is the fundamental problem of all humanity
        - We can't live a life that's good enough to meet God's standard
  - What about the claim of ignorance?
    - Why is God so quick to condemn men who never knew the things that Israel was privileged to know?

[Rom. 2:14](#) For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, [Rom. 2:15](#) in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, [Rom. 2:16](#) on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

- Because our conscience betrays us
  - As Gentiles, we still have a sense of right and wrong
    - Gentiles have laws of their own, and men understand there is right and wrong instinctively

- Paul suggests something interesting here
  - When we see a Gentile doing the work of the Law, then they show evidence that God's expectations have been revealed to them at some level
  - And they are showing obedience to God in their actions
  - Even though they were not given the specific revelation given to the Jews
- Paul's saying that God is more than capable of revealing Himself to men apart from the Law given through Moses
  - Therefore, the Law in itself didn't define who could know and understand God's expectations
    - So when Gentiles feel a sense of guilt over their mistakes, they are bearing witness to the fact that they knew better
    - And when they chose to act differently in other circumstances, they are showing evidence that they knew what was right
- Now up to this point, Paul has established two central truths
  - First, all mankind did engage in and continues to engage in rebellion and depravity
    - And this rebellion left mankind subject to God's wrath
  - Secondly, Gentiles specifically are guilty of disobeying the truth
    - Though they lack God's specific revelation found in the Mosaic Law, nevertheless they are punishable by God
    - Because they received a less specific kind of revelation in their conscience that bears witness against them
      - Which is why they are without excuse at the judgment
  - But who is Paul's key audience?
    - The Jewish leaders of this church must begin to see themselves under the same condemnation of sin as the Gentiles

- Note the letter began talking about humanity in the third person (they)
  - Then it moved to second person briefly at the beginning of the second chapter
    - Paul includes his audience in the condemnation of chapter 1
  - Then he returns to third person when talking about Gentiles
    - Now he returns to the second person to talk to his audience again
      - And notice which group he addresses in the second person

[Rom. 2:17](#) ¶ But if you bear the name "Jew" and rely upon the Law and boast in God,

[Rom. 2:18](#) and know *His* will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law,

[Rom. 2:19](#) and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,

[Rom. 2:20](#) a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth,

[Rom. 2:21](#) you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal?

[Rom. 2:22](#) You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

[Rom. 2:23](#) You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?

[Rom. 2:24](#) For "THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU," just as it is written.

- Now, remember not all members of this church are Jew, but certainly there remains a Jewish element in the church
  - And likely a leadership element
- Now Paul very carefully attacks the key elements of Jewish self-righteousness
  - He attacks all the sacred cows of Judaism
    - We will cover only the first one tonight
  - First, Paul begins with the patriarchal issues

- Paul says if you bear the name Jew
  - He's not say if you are Jew
    - As if to distinguish them from Gentile
    - It's a deeper issue
    - It's an issue of decendency
- Top get a sense of how what Paul's dealing with here, we need to drop into a discussion between Jesus and Pharisees in John's gospel
  - The Pharisees were evil, unbelieving men
    - They thought themselves very righteous men
    - In reality, they were the condemned men Paul describes in chapter 2 – condemned by the very Law they thought they represented
  - They clung to their heritage as their basis for salvation
    - They would be saved simply because they were Jew, descended from Abraham

[John 8:31](#) ¶ So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine;

[John 8:32](#) and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

[John 8:33](#) They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?"

[John 8:34](#) ¶ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.

[John 8:35](#) "The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever.

[John 8:36](#) "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

[John 8:37](#) "I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.

[John 8:38](#) "I speak the things which I have seen with *My* Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from *your* father."

[John 8:39](#) ¶ They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham.

[John 8:40](#) "But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.

[John 8:41](#) "You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God."

[John 8:42](#) Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.

[John 8:43](#) "Why do you not understand what I am saying? *It is* because you cannot hear My word.

[John 8:44](#) " You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

- This conversation is like two ships passing in the night
  - Jesus is telling them they are not who they think they are
    - They are not God's children
    - They are slaves of sin, and condemned by their sin
  - Jesus calls them out repeatedly for their hypocrisy, even as they declare their innocence
    - And Jesus says their hatred for Jesus stems from the age old battle between God and Satan
      - Men are either aligned with God or with the Enemy – there is no neutral ground
    - And their persistent hateful, sinful hearts betrayed them as followers of the enemy, sons of the devil Jesus calls them
  - Meanwhile, the Pharisees are aghast at Jesus' accusation, since they see themselves as the height of righteousness
    - More over, they are born of Abraham
      - They bear the name Jew, as Paul says in Romans
      - They have nothing to worry about
        - They are not enslaved to anyone
        - They are children of Abraham, and as such, they are saved and automatically going to Heaven
- Jesus clearly refutes that logic, saying that their physical birth gives them no automatic place in Heaven

- And in fact, the clearest and simplest proof that we are God's children is that we would love God's Son
  - Jesus makes clear that these two always go together
- And so Paul says that if you bear the name Jew, you better not rest on that alone
  - We still do this today, a Christian version of this same error