

Romans 2:6-29—God’s Impartial Judgement Based On Law Or Conscience

Memory Verse:

Romans 12:1-2 NKJV

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Introduction/Revision

In Romans 1:18-32 Paul describes the sin of the worldly person (those living an outwardly morally depraved life). In chapter 2 Paul switches gears and describes how the self-righteous person who lives a relatively good life is actually just as guilty as the worldly person. Why? Because they are actually committing the same sins, just in a different or less obvious way.

Outline

1. How God will judge the self-righteous moralist: just like every other unbeliever—according to everything that they have ever thought, said, or done. There is no partiality with God (vs 6-11)
2. God will judge everybody based on Law or conscience: He has given every man a conscience to know the difference between right and wrong (vs 12-16)
3. The Jews are characterised as being self-righteous: boasting and comparing themselves to others (vs 17-24)
4. Circumcision (or any outward action) only means something if it reflects a genuine heart change (vs 25-29)

Romans 2:5-29 NKJV

But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶ who “will render to each one according to his deeds”: ⁷ eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honour, and immortality; ⁸ but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, ⁹ tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; ¹⁰ but glory, honour, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹ For there is no partiality with God.

¹² For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law ¹³ (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; ¹⁴ for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) ¹⁶ in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel. ¹⁷ Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, ¹⁸ and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed

out of the law, ¹⁹ and are confident 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 babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. ²¹ You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? ²² You who say, “Do not commit adultery,” do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonour God through breaking the law? ²⁴ For “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,” as it is written.

²⁵ For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. ²⁶ Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? ²⁷ And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? ²⁸ For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

1. How God will judge the self-righteous moralist

Romans 2:5-11 NKJV

But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶ who “will render to each one according to his deeds”: ⁷ eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honour, and immortality; ⁸ but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, ⁹ tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; ¹⁰ but glory, honour, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹ For there is no partiality with God.

v 6 “**Will render to each one according to his deeds**”: This quote is found in many other places in the Bible, including Psalm 62:12, Proverbs 24:12, Jeremiah 17:10, 2 Corinthians 5:10, and Revelation 20:12-13. Simply put, God will judge the self-righteous moralist according to everything they have done, said, and thought.

Paul is not saying that salvation comes by works, but that judgement will be according to works. There will come a day when all unbelievers will be held accountable for *all* the sins that they have committed. Of course this not only condemns the self-righteous sinner, but also the worldly sinner.

Revelation 20:12 NKJV

And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. *And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.*

v 7, 10 **Eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honour, and immortality ... but glory, honour, and peace to everyone who works what is good**: Here God is saying that if a person is perfect all of the time (**patient continuance in doing good**), then they will receive **eternal life**. Eternal life can be earned by living a perfect life (see Matthew 5-7: *Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect, 5:48 NKJV*).

Unfortunately, nobody but Jesus has ever lived a perfect life; that's the whole thrust of Jesus' sermon on the mount—when Jesus said that you have to be as perfect as God (your Father), He meant it. I don't think even the most prideful self-righteous person believes that they have been perfect all of their lives, that they have never said, thought or done anything wrong. If they do then they are very deluded—they just need to ask their friends and family if they think that they are perfect!

1 John 1:8 NKJV

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

v 8-9 **But to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation [rage, fury, intense desire] and wrath [an angry disposition towards someone],⁹ tribulation [trouble and suffering] and anguish [distress], on every soul of man who does evil:** As we will learn in Romans chapter 3:10-11, no one is righteous and no one seeks the truth. Therefore, without Jesus making it possible for all men to be saved, no person would have any hope. Indeed, all men—**every soul of man who does evil**—would only have **indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish** (eternity in hell) to look forward to.

v 9-11 **To the Jew first and also of the Greek... For there is no partiality with God:** God is always fair. God chose the Jews to be His special people so they get the gospel first (Romans 1:16), are the first in line for reward (Romans 2:10), but are also the first in line for judgement (Romans 2:9).

The principle here is that with privilege comes responsibility. The same applies to the church. *“For the time [has arrived] for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will [be] the end of those who do not respect or believe or obey the good news (the Gospel) of God?”* (1 Peter 4:17).

Similarly, elders in the church who rule well are given double honour, but are also held to a higher standard of accountability (see 1 Timothy 5:17 and James 3:1). Basically, the more God gives us, then the more He expects of us—**for there is no partiality with God—His judgement will be completely fair and deserved.**

Luke 12:47-48 NLT

“And a servant who knows what the master wants, but isn't prepared and doesn't carry out those instructions, will be severely punished.⁴⁸ But someone who does not know, and then does something wrong, will be punished only lightly. When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required.

v 11 **Partiality:** “The word translated **partiality** comes from two ancient Greek words put together—to *receive* and *face*. It means to judge things on the basis of externals or preconceived notions.” (David Guzik) This makes partiality the opposite of God's judgement which is *according to truth* (2:2)—God takes into account the hidden motives (see v 16 and 1 Corinthians 4:5).

v 11 **For there is no partiality with God:** The Jews believed that God was partial to them, that if you were born a Jew then you would automatically go to heaven, and that God would have a different (more lenient) standard by which He would judge them compared to the gentiles or non-Jewish people. Paul thoroughly debunks this lie.

Application: Today is the day of salvation

v 6 **“Will render to each one according to his deeds”**: This should put fear into any person who has not yet repented and believed in the Gospel and so received forgiveness for all their sins. For the unbeliever, the list of sins against them just keeps getting longer and longer the more they keep on despising God’s grace and mercy. In contrast, the sins of believers have been paid for, wiped away, and forgotten.

Colossians 2:14 NLT

He canceled [erased] the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.

Hebrews 10:15-18 NLT

And the Holy Spirit also testifies that this is so. For he says, ¹⁶ “This is the new covenant I will make with my people on that day, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.”

¹⁷ Then He says, “I will never again remember their sins and lawless deeds.”

¹⁸ And when sins have been forgiven, there is no need to offer any more sacrifices

1 John 2:2 AMP

And He [that same Jesus Himself] is the propitiation (the atoning sacrifice) for our sins, and not for ours alone but also for [the sins of] the whole world.

Acts 2:17, 21 NKJV

¹⁷ ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh ... ²¹ And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

1 Timothy 2:3-6 NLT

This is good and pleases God our Saviour, ⁴ who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth. ⁵ For, There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus. ⁶ He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone. This is the message God gave to the world at just the right time.

2. God will judge everybody, based on Law or conscience

Romans 2:12-16 NKJV

For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law ¹³ (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; ¹⁴ for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) ¹⁶ in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

This section has three main points:

1. **All men, the Jews with their law, and the gentiles with their conscience, have sinned and are accountable to God and will be judged by Jesus Christ—For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law ... in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel (vs 12, 16).**

Hebrews 9:27 NKJV

And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment

2. *It is not enough to only know something, we must also put it into practice: for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified* (v 13). Remember Jesus parable about the foolish and wise men who built their houses on the sand and rock respectively:

Matthew 7:24-27 NKJV

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

²⁶ “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ²⁷ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

“I believe one of the great hazards for those who love to study the Scriptures, and who take seriously the privilege of plowing through God’s Word, is that we can begin to think that hearing the Word automatically implies doing the Word. It’s a very subtle, but a very real danger.

How do you know if you’re obeying the Word? If you’re grumpy, you’re not obeying the Word because Jesus said, “Happy are you if you do these things” (see John 13:17). The word “happy” in Greek means “happy.” It means “elated.” It speaks of emotion. You will be happy if you’re obeying the Word. But if you’re just hearing about it, or being analytical of it, you will not be happy. So Paul would say to the self-righteous, to the Hebrew, to the biblical scholar, “It’s not what you hear or know, it’s what you *do* that will affect you.”” (Jon Courson)

3. *It gives the answer to the question the Jew may have, “How will God judge the gentile who has never heard the Law (which includes the 10 commandments)?”—All men are created with a conscience which understands right and wrong: for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves [obey their conscience], ¹⁵ who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them* (v 14-15)

Again, here we have the principle of there being no partiality with God. God will judge them based on how much they knew; the Jews with their greater knowledge have greater responsibility. The same applies for us in the church.

The conscience

There are several things which are important to know concerning our conscience:

- *The word conscience is made up of two words, con (with) and science (knowledge)*. This means that every ethical decision we make is made with the knowledge that it is either wrong or right. When we sin, we never sin in ignorance—we sin against our conscience.
- *Our conscience is God given but society shaped*: family, church, school, friends, and beliefs all influence what we consider to be right or wrong to a small degree. *However, the big ticket items like murder, adultery, and theft etc are common to all men*.

- Our conscience can be defiled or corrupted when we make the choice to consistently make the wrong choices: “Everything is pure to those whose hearts are pure. But nothing is pure to those who are corrupt and unbelieving, because their minds and consciences are corrupted. ¹⁶ Such people claim they know God, but they deny him by the way they live. They are detestable and disobedient, worthless for doing anything good.” (Titus 1:15-16 NLT)
- Our conscience can be seared or cauterised (made so it can't feel anything) by embracing false (demonic) teaching: “Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons. ² These people are hypocrites and liars, and their consciences are dead [seared or cauterised]. ³ They will say it is wrong to be married and wrong to eat certain foods. But God created those foods to be eaten with thanks by faithful people who know the truth. ⁴ Since everything God created is good, we should not reject any of it but receive it with thanks. ⁵ For we know it is made acceptable by the word of God and prayer.” (1 Timothy 4:1-4 NLT) This is called the great apostasy, and it is happening in the church today.
- Our conscience can be incorrectly programmed by any of the three above factors: how it is shaped, the bad decisions we make, and choosing to believe false doctrine. This means that we can think that something is wrong when it is actually right, or think that something is right when it is actually wrong; our conscience or hearts incorrectly condemn us. “For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.” (1 John 3:20 NKJV) “Even if we feel guilty, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything.” (1 John 3:20 NLT)

The solution here is to override our conscience, basically reprogramming it according to what is true according to the word of God. “Sometimes our heart condemns us, but, in doing so, it gives a wrong verdict, and then we have the satisfaction of being able to take the case into a higher court, for ‘God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.’” (Spurgeon)

This also applies to when we *feel* like we are not accepted by God. If we look at the way we are living, and see that it agrees with God's word, then we can be assured that we belong to God, and not be deceived by the enemy's condemnation (1 John 3:18-19). Also, if we have sinned but have asked God to forgive us, then we can also have confidence that we are accepted by Him (see 1 John 1:9 and 3:20), even if it doesn't feel like it.

3. The Jews are characterised as being self-righteous

Romans 2:17-24 NKJV

Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, ¹⁸ and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, ¹⁹ and are confident 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 babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. ²¹ You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? ²² You who say, “Do not commit adultery,” do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonour God through breaking the law? ²⁴ For “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,” as it is written.

v 17-18 **Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God,** ¹⁸ **and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law:** This reveals the self-righteous nature of the Jewish nation—they thought that they were better than anybody else because God had given them, and only them, the law (the word of God). They also thought that God chose them because they were better than the other nations. However, this was an ill founded notion.

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 NLT

For you are a holy people, who belong to the Lord your God. Of all the people on earth, the Lord your God has chosen you to be his own special treasure.

⁷ “The Lord did not set his heart on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other nations, ***for you were the smallest of all nations!*** ⁸ ***Rather, it was simply that the Lord loves you, and he was keeping the oath he had sworn to your ancestors.*** That is why the Lord rescued you with such a strong hand from your slavery and from the oppressive hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

What the nation of Israel should have felt instead of pride was *gratefulness*, instead of boasting they should have been humbly giving thanks. The fact is that every other nation would have been a better choice for God—Israel was the most stubborn and difficult nation to work with on the face of the earth. There are three things that both the nation of Israel and we ourselves are so prone to forget.

- Firstly, God chooses the smallest and the weakest so that when He achieves great things through them, He gets the glory.

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 NLT

Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world’s eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. ²⁷ Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. ²⁸ God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. ²⁹ As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.

³⁰ God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made Him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; He made us pure and holy, and He freed us from sin [notice that we could do none of this]. ³¹ Therefore, as the Scriptures say, “If you want to boast, boast only about the Lord.”

- Secondly, God does what He does for us only out of love and grace, not merit

Romans 5:8 NKJV

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- Thirdly, God is simply keeping His promises that He made previously. For the Jews this refers to the promises made to Abraham (see Genesis 12:1-3). For the gentiles, it’s the promise of the New Covenant and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon all men (see Acts 2:17, 21).

Summary: we have nothing to boast about, but everything to be grateful for.

1 Corinthians 4:7b NLT

What do you have that God hasn’t given you [nothing]? And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift [as though you earned it through your own goodness or effort]?

v 19-20 **And are confident 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 babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law:** The Jews thought that just because God had revealed Himself to them by the Scriptures—**having the form of knowledge and truth in the law**—that they were better and smarter than everybody else. However, we will see in the next verses that knowledge, if it is not applied, is not enough. Just having knowledge of the way of salvation does not save us, and it doesn't qualify us to teach others—we must also put it into practice.

v 21-24 **You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal?** ²² **You who say, “Do not commit adultery,” do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?** ²³ **You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonour God through breaking the law?** ²⁴ **For “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,” as it is written:** Simply put, because the Jews didn't practice what they preached, they caused God's name to be blasphemed. This is always the consequence of hypocrisy, when we pretend to be more spiritual or mature than we really are. Like the Pharisees, the hypocrite will turn people away from God and not to Him. Take the example of David when he played the hypocrite:

2 Samuel 12:9-10, 13–14 NKJV

Why have you *despised the commandment of the Lord*, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. ¹⁰ Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, *because you have despised Me*, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.” ...

¹³ So David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.”

And Nathan said to David, “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.

¹⁴ *However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme*, the child also who is born to you shall surely die.”

Application: we are to be “the light of the world” and “living epistles (letter or message)”

When we both know the truth and obey the truth we become lights in a dark world. We become examples of God's grace, mercy, power, and patience. When we obey Christ we glorify Him (make Jesus look good) and therefore attract people to Him. When we disobey Christ, we shame and dishonour Him (make Him look bad), and actively discourage people from coming to know Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:1-3 NLT

Are we beginning to praise ourselves again? Are we like others, who need to bring you letters of recommendation, or who ask you to write such letters on their behalf? Surely not! ²The only letter of recommendation we need is you yourselves. Your lives are a letter written in our hearts; everyone can read it and recognise our good work among you. ³ Clearly, you are a letter (message) from Christ showing the result of our ministry among you. This “letter” is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. It is carved not on tablets of stone, but on human hearts.

Matthew 5:14-16 NKJV

“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Also, the danger for us is the same as for the Jews—legalism. They interpreted the law in a way where they could keep it, where they could be fully justified or righteous before God. Again, this is called legalism. They focused on a few external rituals and forgot that God looks at the heart. Jesus in Matthew 5:19-48, the sermon on the mount, destroys any confidence that the self-righteous, and self-justified Jews had in their own righteousness. For example, Jesus says that if a man lusts after a woman in his heart, then he is guilty of committing adultery, and if a man hates his brother, then he is guilty of murder. May we keep our hearts soft and pure before God, confessing and dealing with any sin, including hidden sin, that separates us from God and others.

4. Circumcision (or any outward action) only means something if it reflects a genuine heart change

Romans 2:25-29 NKJV

For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. ²⁶ Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? ²⁷ And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? ²⁸ For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

v 25 **For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision:** The Jew falsely believed that he was saved or justified because he was a descendant of Abraham and he was circumcised. David Guzik comments:

“The Jew believed that his **circumcision** guaranteed his salvation. He might be *punished* in the world to come, but could never be *lost*.

In Paul’s day, some Rabbis taught that Abraham sat at the entrance of hell and made certain that none of his circumcised descendants went there. Some Rabbis also taught “God will judge the Gentiles with one measure and the Jews with another” and “All Israelites will have part in the world to come.” (Barclay)

Circumcision and baptism do about the same thing that a label on a can does. If the outer label doesn’t match with what is on the inside, something is wrong! If there are carrots inside the can, you can put a label that says “Peas” but it doesn’t change what is inside the can. Being born again changes what is inside the can, and then you can put the appropriate label on the outside.

Examples of how circumcision doesn’t save anyone is the practices of the ancient Egyptians who would circumcise their boys—but they were obviously not followers of the true God. Also Ishmael was circumcised by Abraham, but he wasn’t a son of the covenant—he was not a part of God’s chosen people.

Today in the church age, Christians are baptised, but if that baptism doesn’t reflect an inward change, then it doesn’t mean anything. Other people go through confirmation, take or receive communion, or are christened or baptised as an infant. But again, if there has been no heart change, if the person is not born again, then these external rituals mean nothing to God. Jesus says, “You must be born again” (see John 3:3).

The kind of circumcision that God desires is described in:

- Exodus 6:12—the circumcision of the lips, to speak with kindness
- Jeremiah 6:10—the circumcision of the ears, to listen with sensitivity
- Ezekiel 44 and Deuteronomy 10—the circumcision of the heart: *Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer* (Deuteronomy 10:16 NKJV)

v 26 **Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?**: The gentile could obey the main tenants of the law (mercy, love, purity etc) by obeying his conscience (see Romans 2:15). Even if he had never been taught that “God says that you should love other people”, if he obeys his conscience then he is in effect obeying the law.

v 27 **And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law?**: This statement would shock the Jew—how dare a uncircumcised gentile dog be allowed to judge me!!! But Jesus spoke the same thing regarding the Jews of His day.

Luke 11:31-32 NLT

“The queen of Sheba will stand up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, for she came from a distant land to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Now someone greater than Solomon is here [Jesus, God Himself]—but you refuse to listen.
³² The people of Nineveh will also stand up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, for they repented of their sins at the preaching of Jonah. Now someone greater than Jonah is here [Jesus, God Himself]—but you refuse to repent.

v 28-29 **For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God:** “All the outward signs of religion may earn us praise **from men**, but they will not earn us praise **from God**. The evidence of our rightness with God is not contained in outward signs or works, and it is not assured because of our parentage. The evidence is found in the work of God in our heart which shows itself in fruit.” (David Guzik)

Summary and conclusion

1. We have learnt seven things about **God’s judgement** in Romans chapter 2

- It is **according to truth** (Romans 2:2)
- It is according to accumulated guilt (storing up wrath—Romans 2:5)
- It is based on what we have done (Romans 2:6)
- It is without partiality (Romans 2:11)
- It is according to obedience, not knowledge (Romans 2:13)
- It exposes the secrets of the heart (Romans 2:16)
- God’s judgment is according to reality, not religious profession (Romans 2:17–29)

2. The take-home message concerning circumcision is the same as for baptism

In Joshua 5 God commands that the Israelites going into the promised land must first be circumcised. Why? *The believer must do away with their sin nature before they can have victory in the Spirit (the promised land is a picture of walking by faith or resting in Christ); they cease from human effort and trust in God’s strength instead.*

Colossians 2:11-12 NLT

When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised,” but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature. ¹² For you were buried with Christ when you were baptised. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.