

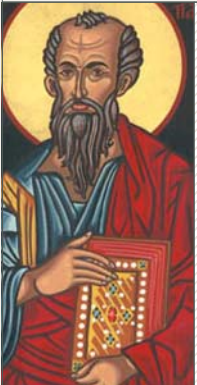


BE TRANSFORMED

THIS HANDOUT



BEING TRANSFORMED BY THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS CHAPTER TWO



FAST FACTS

ROMANS CHAPTER 2

- The self-righteous, who condemn wicked behavior in others but then engage in that same behavior, will themselves be condemned.
- God has spared people from destruction because He wants His goodness to lead them to repentance.
- God's judgment is fair because it examines the life of each person: those people who patiently do good will be rewarded with eternal life, while those who selfishly engage in wickedness will experience God's wrath.
- Jesus Christ will judge not only a person's outward behavior, but also his or her "secrets."

ON THE CD

- AM I A HYPOCRITE?
- CHRIST DISPLAYS DIVINE KINDNESS
- LONGSUFFERING
- JUSTICE
- INTERACTIVE QUIZ
- MUCH MORE!

ROMANS 2

In chapter two St. Paul shifts his focus from the Gentiles to the Jews. In the first chapter he criticizes the Gentile lack of regard for righteousness; in the second chapter he criticizes the Jews for their false self-righteousness.

Verse one presents a devastating distinction from 1:32. In 1:32 the Gentiles not only engage in wicked acts, but also encourage others to do the same; in 2:1, however, even the self-righteous who condemn such behavior engage in the same sinful activity. There is a single word that describes the self-righteous judge mentioned in Romans 2:1: a hypocrite.

St. Paul warns that the self-righteous hypocrites will not escape the judgment of God (Romans 2:3). God has not spared the hypocrites from destruction because of their special status or inherent goodness: He has spared them - so far - because He wants His goodness to lead them to repentance (2:4).

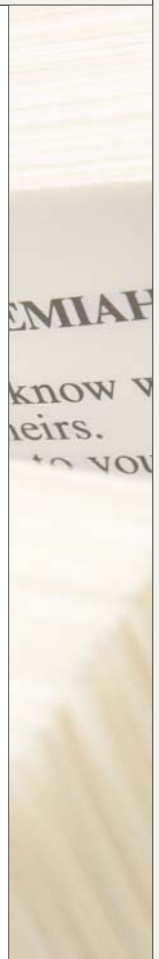
The hypocrites should know this about God, but they remain unrepentant (Romans 2:5). Their self-righteousness will therefore face the righteous judgment of God: they will then receive the wrath of God which they have earned. God's judgment is fair, because it examines the life of each person. Those people who patiently do good will be rewarded with eternal life, while those who selfishly engage in wickedness will experience God's wrath.

St. Paul continues his point by examining the standards by which a person's actions can be understood as good or wicked (Romans 2:12-16). Jews and Gentiles will be either justified or condemned based upon their performance of God's will (see also James 1:22): the Jew who has the Law will be condemned he or she fails to observe it, and the Gentile who does not have the Law will nonetheless be responsible for his or her sin. How can Gen-

KINDNESS IN THE BIBLE

The biblical Hebrew word translated as "kindness" is *hesed*. In our lesson on being longsuffering we learned that *hesed* can mean "steadfast love," and is often used in reference to God's great patience with His people. It is also used in reference to people when Holy Scripture exhorts us to be kind and loving with others. For example, Job claims that his friends have withheld pity (*hesed*) from him (Job 6:14), and King Solomon states that we should pursue mercy (*hesed*) along with righteousness and honor (Proverb 21:21). The Prophet Micah states that the Lord requires His people to do justly, love mercy (*hesed*), and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8). The Prophet Zechariah simply exhorts God's people to "execute justice, show mercy (*hesed*) and compassion everyone to his brother" (Zechariah 7:9).

The Greek word for "kindness" is *chrestos* means to be good through usefulness. An example of this form of goodness can be found in Ephesians 4:32, where St. Paul exhorts us to "be kind (*chresto*) to one another." A derivative of this word, *chrestotes*, is translated in Galatians 5:22 as "gentleness" or "kindness." It might be helpful for us to think of goodness as "virtue equipped for action," and kindness as "goodness in action."



CONTINUE

tiles, to whom the Law was not given, work what is good and be doers of the Law (Romans 2:10, 13)? St. Paul answers that Gentiles “are a law to themselves” (2:14), because the Law is written in their hearts, and their consciences approve their good works and condemn their sins (2:15).

Verse sixteen provides a very important point: St. Paul is not teaching that God is pleased with “empty” obedience to His will. Instead, Jesus Christ will judge not only a person’s outward behavior, but also his or her “secrets,” the feelings, thoughts, and motivations that only God can examine and judge. While good works are necessary, they must be performed for the right reason: as a healthy part of a faithful relationship with God.

St. Paul lists the acknowledged advantages of which the Jews were proud: they were God’s covenant people (Romans 2:17); they trusted that Law for their standing before God (2:17); they boasted of true - specifically non-idolatrous - worship of God, and their special relationship with Him (2:17); they knew God’s revealed will (2:18); they approved excellent things because they were instructed by the Law (2:18); they were guides and instructors to Gentiles who did not have the knowledge and truth provided in the Law (2:19-20). Unfortunately, however, far too many Jews betrayed these advantages by failing to live up to the ideals of the Law.

Just as he gives a list of the advantages given to the Jews, St. Paul lists some of the ways in which these advantages have been compromised: the teachers are themselves ignorant of the implications of the Law (Romans 2:21). For example, despite condemning theft, adultery, and idolatry, too many Jews nonetheless engaged in theft, adultery, and - instead of idolatry itself - robbing the temples in which idols were worshipped, believing that their status as Jews would protect them from God’s judgment (Romans 2:21-22).

Instead of such hypocrisy, the *true* Jew - whether or not the person is ethnically Jewish - is the person who is a Jew “inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit” (Romans 2:29).

PATIENCE IS NECESSARY

St. Cyprian of Carthage teaches:

And moreover, also, for the varied ills of the flesh, and the frequent and severe torments of the body, wherewith the human race is daily wearied and harassed, patience is necessary... And this struggle and encounter cannot be sustained but by the strength of patience. But as we are to be examined and searched out, diverse sufferings are introduced; and a manifold kind of temptations is inflicted by the losses of property, by the heats of fevers, by the torments of wounds, by the loss of those dear to us. Nor does anything distinguish between the unrighteous and the righteous more, than that in affliction the unrighteous man impatiently complains and blasphemes, while the righteous is proved by his patience.



Icon of St. Cyprian courtesy of Come and See Icons (www.comeandseeicons.com).

AM I JUDGMENTAL?

Judgmentalism is a form of sinful pride: you judge others because you think you are better than them. The solution to this problem, according to the saints, is to focus on your own failings instead of the failings of those around you. St. Ambrose of Optina, a nineteenth century Russian saint, tells us, “You need to pay such close attention to your own internal life, that you not focus on what is happening around you. Then you will not condemn.” Another nineteenth century Russian saint, Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, similarly says, “He who sufficiently knows and judges himself has no time to judge others.”



Lorenzo Scupoli, a sixteenth century Christian, sums up this approach to yourself and others:

Never allow yourself boldly to judge your neighbor; judge and condemn no one...rather have compassion and pity for him, but let his example be a lesson in humility to you; realizing that you too are extremely weak and as easily moved to sin as dust on the road, say to yourself: ‘He fell today, but tomorrow I shall fall.’



CONTINUE IN KINDNESS

St. Ambrose of Milan, in his teachings to clergy, gives advice that is applicable to all of us in our relationships with others:

We must strive also to win many by kindnesses and duties that we can do, and to preserve the favor already shown us. For they will with good reason forget the benefits of former times if they are now vexed at some great wrong. For it often enough happens that those one has shown favor to and allowed to rise step by step, are driven away, if one decides in some unworthy way to put another before them. But it is seemly for a priest to show such favor in his kindnesses and his decisions as to guard equity, and to show regard to the other clergy as to parents.