

**God without partiality judges according to truth.** Truth! Jesus stated to Pilate, “**For this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.**” Pilate responded, “**What is truth?**” Jesus in **Jn. 8:31-32**, “**If you continue in My word (logos), then you are truly disciples of Mine; & you will know the truth, & the truth will make you free.**”

Jesus is truth (**Jn. 14:6**). God’s Word is truth (**Jn. 17:17**). The Holy Spirit of truth lives in Christians (**Jn. 14:17, 15:26, 16:13**). The belt of truth is part of the Christian’s spiritual armor (**Eph. 6:14**). *Truth is a growing knowledge and understanding of Jesus and the Word and how He works in our daily lives.*

1<sup>st</sup> case (**1:18-32**): ‘suppressing God’s known truth’, individuals and societies suffer the effects—given over to idolatry, sexual impurity, degrading passions, and depraved minds. Verdict? Guilty! Sentence? Wrath of God—now!

In **2:1-16**, we begin a second case: God versus the ‘moral’ unbeliever. **Read.** Charge? Judging others you consider worse than yourself! “I’m not **1:18-32!**” **2:1-16** THE BASIS FOR GOD’S JUDGMENT ON ALL PEOPLE. God without partiality judges according to truth (**:2-5**), works (**:6-11**), opportunity (**:12-15**), and a person’s secrets (**:16**). By any standard, each person will be found guilty.

**:1 Therefore you have no excuse/defense** [same word as **1:20**], **every one of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.** Still addressing the persons who’ve suppressed God’s truth. “**Therefore YOU are without excuse.** This clearly reveals God’s Good News is needed by all. ‘Judge’ = pronounce judgment. We each have the tendency to disapprove of the conduct of those who don’t live on ‘our’ level. Idolatry? Sexual sins? Injustice? No, I’ve never actually practiced those! We tend to pick out the sins we’re not outwardly guilty of and point the finger at others. *When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these same things.* “God, he’s worse than I am; concentrate on him, not me!” Some people won’t listen to any discussion of what they have done to their mate or children or fellow-worker because their thinking is focused on the sins of another and underestimating the depth of their own sinfulness. If one has enough knowledge to judge others, he/she is self-condemned. But, everyone’s sin is the same: suppressing the truth of God. “The unbeliever’s human heart has a capacity to tolerate perverse evil within itself while harshly condemning even the smallest offense in others.” When we feel resentment toward God for not eradicating evil in the world, we forget that eliminating ALL evil would mean the end of ourselves too!

“The self-righteous make two grave errors: (1) They underestimate the height of God’s standard of righteousness, which encompasses the inner as well as the outer life, and, (2) they underestimate the depth of their own sin.” Remember the rich young ruler (**Mk. 10:17-22**). Mankind has the tendency to be blind to its own sins—worry, fear, lust, jealousy, hatred, pride, selfishness, unforgiveness. When we demean people or are unfair in our business practices or are arrogant toward someone or not loving when we could be, when we’re stubborn—God sees all this. People too often don’t!

“Many,” as Joe Wright prayed before the Kansas Senate, “have rewarded laziness and called it welfare, have killed our unborn and called it choice, have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem, have abused power and called it politics, have coveted our neighbor’s possessions and called it ambition, have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression, have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers & called it enlightenment.” He was condemned for this prayer!

Condemn=to judge down. By judging others, the ‘moral’ person is admitting there are standards. “That’s not fair! He can’t do that without consequence!” That accuser is guilty (not only because he/she has suppressed God’s truth **1:18**, but also) because he/she sins against whatever truth he/she knows.

**2:2 And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things** [We know that God, in His justice, will deal with anyone who does such things]. It’s God who sees us as we really are and reveals our sins in the Bible and convicts of sin by the Holy Spirit. We absolutely know that all of God’s judgments are according to truth. (By the way, judging when God has judged is right! Speak clearly on God-revealed, Biblical sin.)

**: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** [Since you judge others for doing these things, why do you think you can avoid God’s judgment when you do the same things]? Barnhouse: “You dummy—do you really figure that you have doped out an angle that will let you go up against God and get away with it? You don’t have a ghost of a chance!” There is no escape, there will be no legal loopholes, there will be no excuses. We may question God, asking, “How can a just God permit the injustice and wickedness that is taking place in this world? Why doesn’t He judge? Why didn’t He stop this from happening?” He’ll deal with all the people involved!

**:4 Or do you think lightly (down on, underestimate) of the riches of His kindness** [the benefits God gives] **and tolerance** [the judgment He withholds] **and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?** Don’t you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can’t you see that His kindness is intended to turn you from your sin? The purpose of the kindness of God is not to excuse men of their sin but to convict them of it and lead them to repentance. Just because God doesn’t deal with a person immediately, the moralist concludes that God must overlook sin. No!! This is God’s kindness and patience. God does not tolerate sin; it’s His vast abundance of patience that causes Him to wait. And the point is to lead us to repentance. God asks, “Why are you acting this way? You are treating with defiance the opportunities I’m giving you to repent! Do you think I won’t judge you too?!”

**: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.** But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself. For a day of anger is coming, when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed. This is

“one of the most terrifying verses in all the apostolic writings!” When a person refuses to repent of the sinful areas of his/her own life that God allows them to see, that person is making deposits in a bank account which he/she will on the day of God’s wrath collect. This is God’s settled anger against the destructive forces of sin. Wrath is as much a part of the character of God as is love. The day of wrath refers to God’s final judgment of sinful mankind. This day is coming for you if you haven’t by faith received Jesus as Lord. “From the beginning, all sin was a capital offense” (**Gen. 2:16-17**).

If a person is an unbelieving-in-Jesus ‘moralist’, he/she needs to see his/her life on the basis of God’s future judgment. God’s judgment will be according to truth (and as we’ll see in **2:6-16**, according to works and opportunity and secrets). These principles of judgment are not the basis of salvation; they are the basis of God’s judgment in every person’s life without Jesus Christ. Indictment? You practice the same things! Verdict? Guilty! Sentence? Wrath of God—future! These verses are given, not to torment someone, but that he/she might give serious consideration to God’s only way of escape, the Lord Jesus. The same Jesus who will impartially judge on the day of wrath is the same One who gave up His life for us as sinners and our sins on the cross. Our only hope is in Him. Jesus can change people: the outright rotten sinner of **1:18-32** and the ‘moral’ sinner of **2:1-16**, even you and me! Let us place our faith in Him alone! Let’s keep in mind: God is the source of truth. He does not alter it according to the spirit of the times. It was truth in 57 A.D. It is His truth this year. It’ll be His truth in 3000 A.D. As Christians, let’s rejoice together because we know Him & His truth. We are not under His wrath (**5:9**)!

**Reflecting on Romans 2:1-5:** Even as a Christian, in what ways do I tend to ‘look down on’ others, especially those described in **1:18-32**? In what areas do I tend to be blind to my own sins? In what areas am I especially critical of others—at home, with friends, at work? Who are the people I’ve been judging that I should be helping? How am I abusing or misunderstanding the kindness, tolerance, and patience of God? What are two lessons I learned and what are a couple of ways I will apply the truths of these verses?

Let’s continue on with **Rom. 2:6-16**. **:6-11** EACH PERSON WILL BE JUDGED BY HIS/HER DEEDS, NOT SAVED BY THEM. From **Ex. 34:6-7**, we learn about the Biblical God: He’s (1) compassionate, (2) gracious, (3) slow to anger, (4) abundant in lovingkindness, (5) abundant in truth, (6) forgiving, and (7) just. In **Rom. 2:1-16**, we’re learning more about God’s justice. In **2:1-5** we began a 2<sup>nd</sup> case: God versus the ‘moral’ unbeliever. Charge? Judging others you consider worse than yourself! “I’m certainly not **1:18-32**!” With the ‘moral’ unbeliever, Paul focuses on a future day of wrath (the Great White Throne Judgment for all unbelievers revealed in **Rev. 20:11-15**).

**Read 2:1-16. 2:1-5** GOD WILL JUDGE ACCORDING TO TRUTH. **:6-11** GOD WILL JUDGE EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS/HER WORKS. **:6** **who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.** Quoting **Prov. 24:12**, the attorney Paul continues to hammer home his points on the basis of God’s judgment—

according to works! We know God punishes evil and rewards good. The deeds of the redeemed are not the basis of their salvation but the evidence of it. This unbeliever emphasizes externals, ‘performance’! Yet while we know the unbeliever looks at the outward, the Lord looks at the heart (**1 Sam. 16:7**).

See **2 Cor. 5:10, Gal. 6:7-9**. Although the Scriptures teach judgment is by works, they nowhere teach that justification is by works. In these verses, Paul is not talking about the basis for salvation but the basis for judgment.

**:7 ... to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life.** This verse teaches that if a person lives a perfect life, eternal life is his/hers. **God will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality that He offers.** See **Heb. 11:6**. If you want to work for eternal life, it requires long-term *perfection*. The problem is, no one can possibly live like this without Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Nothing is truly good that is done from any motive other than God’s glory and done in any power but the Spirit’s. Eternal life is not a reward for effort; it is a gift to those who repent, receive, and trust Jesus as Lord. This isn’t talking simply about duration, but also about quality. Eternal life is defined in **1 Jn. 5:20** and **Jn. 17:3**.

**:8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious** [working without regard for the issues or any harm he may be doing] **and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath** [the strong kind of anger, same as God’s in **1:18**] **and indignation** [“a vehement anger that rushes along relentlessly”]. So, for those who are prideful, who aren’t persuaded by the truth, and who obey injustice, the reimbursement will be wrath and indignation.

**:9-11** GOD WILL JUDGE WITHOUT PARTIALITY. **:9** **There will be tribulation (extreme pressure) and distress (a narrow place, confinement) for every soul of man who does evil** [if one does evil, there will be extreme pressure and narrowness of place], **of the Jew first and also of the Greek, :10 but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. :11 For there is no partiality with God.** On the other hand, glory and honor and peace for every person on the side of good, for the Jew first, then the Greek. Phillips adds, “There is no preferential treatment with God.” Partiality = to receive face. God doesn’t receive anyone’s FACE. No matter whether pagan, moralist, or religious, Jew or Gentile, there are no exceptions. Just as the Jews were given the first opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel (**1:16**), they will be first to receive God’s judgment if they refuse.

The reason Paul mentions the Jews and Greeks is because the Jews expected God to show favoritism because they were His *chosen* people. “God chose us. He gave us His Word. He has blessed us.” Yes, a Jew did have great advantages, but instead of being treated as God’s favorite, he/she’ll be justly judged for his use of them. Advantages don’t make anyone exempt or a favorite!

**Read :12-15. GOD WILL JUDGE ACCORDING TO OPPORTUNITY. :12 For all who have sinned without the Law** [don’t know the Law, Gentiles] **will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law** [if one sins and has

the Law] **will be judged by the Law.** God won't hold someone accountable for something he/she doesn't have! Each person will be judged according to the light/truth he/she has. "God judges people, not according to what they do not know, but according to what they DO know." The Gentile wouldn't perish because he lacked the Law which the Jew possessed. If the Gentile perished, it was because he/she had suppressed God's truth. People are not saved by the light they have; they are judged by the light they have. Perish: it's not annihilation but ruin, no longer usable for its intended use. **Mt. 11:20, Heb. 10:26-31.**

**:13 for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.** It's not the educated in the Law; it's the doers of the Law that will be justified. Some Jews thought because they had been given God's Law, they would inherit God's kingdom, regardless of how they lived. Wrong! Knowledge without action is worthless. Obedience, not familiarity, is the key. And the only way he/she can truly obey in a way that pleases God is by the Spirit, who the unbeliever does not have!

**:14-15 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, :15 in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience (with knowledge) bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.** No one can claim ignorance. Even Gentiles, who don't have God's written law, show that they know His law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard/seen it. They at least know the basic truth of God's eternal power and divine nature through natural revelation (**1:20**). They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right. If the possession of knowledge saved a person, everyone would be saved because all have some truth about God. Their consciences verify this, telling them they ought to do right or that's not fair or "something ought to be done about this!" Their thoughts accuse them or defend them. Yet they suppress His truth and end up with their own standards of right and wrong. And that's what we see: unbelieving-in-Jesus moral people making their own rules, setting their own standards, comparing themselves with others (not God or His standards). Without God, they do what is right in their own eyes. If we admit there is a divine standard by which all of us will be judged, we are all going to find ourselves in need of a Savior and Lord.

Every man/woman bears the image of God. Part of that image includes an innate sense that some actions are good and some are bad. Yet their rejection of their knowledge of God available through His creation condemns them. Also, their conduct based on the knowledge of the Law written in their hearts condemns them. Their conscience: "They have an instinctive, built-in sense of right and wrong that activates guilt and often shame." Their thoughts alternatively accusing or else defending them. **Read Acts 17:24-31.**

**:16 GOD WILL JUDGE ACCORDING TO THE SECRETS OF MEN THROUGH CHRIST JESUS. ...on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of**

**men through Christ Jesus.** And this is the gospel I proclaim—that the day is coming when God, through Christ Jesus, will judge everyone's secret life. This is the unbeliever's (secret) life! As an unbeliever, what would your secrets reveal? If you're counting on your works or favoritism or knowledge, do you want the secrets of your heart brought out? God's court is able to reveal and assess thoughts, motives, secrets. This is The Great White Throne Judgment talked about in **Rev. 20:11-15**. It is only for unbelievers. Remember, we're dealing with non-Christians here, with 'moral' unbelievers. Forgiveness and new life won't be based on the amount of truth they have or the works they've done or how many opportunities they've had or how they look on the outside, but on what they have done with God-revealed truth.

Let's conclude. God without partiality judges according to truth, works, opportunities, and the secrets of each person. What 'moral' person stands innocent before such a Judge? Obviously no one. Verdict? Guilty! Sentence? Wrath of God, now and in the future! If you are not a Christian and you try to maintain your life as a moral person, there is no more hope for you than for the obvious sinner described in **1:18-32**. This unbelieving suppressor of truth person too is in desperate need for Jesus and His forgiveness and a new heart and the Holy Spirit. We can rightly say that if God's wrath was the last word, strict justice would be satisfied. BUT, no one would be saved! God's Good News: Jesus on the cross dealt with all the sin issues: All sinners by heredity (IN Adam) and nature (sinners by nature), your sins, my sins, others' sins, Jesus died for them all. That is the Good News of God. If we by faith turn to Him, believing in who Jesus is and what He did on the Cross, by faith receiving Him as Lord and Savior, we are forgiven of our sins, we start life over again spiritually with a new nature, and Jesus becomes our Type/Representative as well as Lord and Savior and Life. What have you done with the truth He has revealed, through Jesus, His Word, in your inner man, through creation?

**Reflecting on Romans 2:6-16:** As you read through the passage and study notes, how does knowing and understanding these verses impact you? As a Christian, what are two Biblical truths you know and understand better? What are a couple of ways your thinking, speech, actions, and/or choices should change? Write down your answers. Share your answers with another.

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**:8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious** [working without regard for the issues or any harm he may be doing] **and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath** [the strong kind of anger, same as God's in **1:18**] **and indignation** ["a vehement anger that rushes along relentlessly"]. So, for those who are prideful, who aren't persuaded by the truth, and who obey injustice, the reimbursement will be wrath and indignation.

**:9-11 GOD WILL JUDGE WITHOUT PARTIALITY. :9 There will be tribulation (extreme pressure) and distress (a narrow place, confinement) for every soul of man who does evil** [if one does evil, there will be extreme pressure and narrowness of place], **of the Jew first and also of the Greek, :10 but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. :11 For there is no partiality with God.** On the other hand, glory and honor and peace for every person on the side of good, for the Jew first, then the Greek. Phillips adds, "There is no preferential treatment with God." Partiality = to receive face. God doesn't receive anyone's FACE. No matter whether pagan, moralist, or religious, Jew or Gentile, there are no exceptions. Just as the Jews were given the first opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel (**1:16**), they will be first to receive God's judgment if they refuse.

The reason Paul mentions the Jews and Greeks is because the Jews expected God to show favoritism because they were His *chosen* people. "God chose us. He gave us His Word. He has blessed us." Yes, a Jew did have great advantages, but instead of being treated as God's favorite, he/she'll be justly judged for his use of them. Advantages don't make anyone exempt or a favorite!

**Read :12-15. GOD WILL JUDGE ACCORDING TO OPPORTUNITY. :12 For all who have sinned without the Law** [don't know the Law, Gentiles] **will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law** [if one sins and has

the Law] **will be judged by the Law.** God won't hold someone accountable for something he/she doesn't have! Each person will be judged according to the light/truth he/she has. "God judges people, not according to what they do not know, but according to what they DO know." The Gentile wouldn't perish because he lacked the Law which the Jew possessed. If the Gentile perished, it was because he/she had suppressed God's truth. People are not saved by the light they have; they are judged by the light they have. Perish: it's not annihilation but ruin, no longer usable for its intended use. **Mt. 11:20, Heb. 10:26-31.**

**:13 for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.** It's not the educated in the Law; it's the doers of the Law that will be justified. Some Jews thought because they had been given God's Law, they would inherit God's kingdom, regardless of how they lived. Wrong! Knowledge without action is worthless. Obedience, not familiarity, is the key. And the only way he/she can truly obey in a way that pleases God is by the Spirit, who the unbeliever does not have!

**:14-15 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, :15 in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience (with knowledge) bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.** No one can claim ignorance. Even Gentiles, who don't have God's written law, show that they know His law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard/seen it. They at least know the basic truth of God's eternal power and divine nature through natural revelation (**1:20**). They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right. If the possession of knowledge saved a person, everyone would be saved because all have some truth about God. Their consciences verify this, telling them they ought to do right or that's not fair or "something ought to be done about this!" Their thoughts accuse them or defend them. Yet they suppress His truth and end up with their own standards of right and wrong. And that's what we see: unbelieving-in-Jesus moral people making their own rules, setting their own standards, comparing themselves with others (not God or His standards). Without God, they do what is right in their own eyes. If we admit there is a divine standard by which all of us will be judged, we are all going to find ourselves in need of a Savior and Lord.

Every man/woman bears the image of God. Part of that image includes an innate sense that some actions are good and some are bad. Yet their rejection of their knowledge of God available through His creation condemns them. Also, their conduct based on the knowledge of the Law written in their hearts condemns them. Their conscience: "They have an instinctive, built-in sense of right and wrong that activates guilt and often shame." Their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them. **Read Acts 17:24-31.**

**:16 GOD WILL JUDGE ACCORDING TO THE SECRETS OF MEN THROUGH CHRIST JESUS. ...on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of**

**men through Christ Jesus.** And this is the gospel I proclaim—that the day is coming when God, through Christ Jesus, will judge everyone's secret life. This is the unbeliever's (secret) life! As an unbeliever, what would your secrets reveal? If you're counting on your works or favoritism or knowledge, do you want the secrets of your heart brought out? God's court is able to reveal and assess thoughts, motives, secrets. This is The Great White Throne Judgment talked about in **Rev. 20:11-15**. It is only for unbelievers. Remember, we're dealing with non-Christians here, with 'moral' unbelievers. Forgiveness and new life won't be based on the amount of truth they have or the works they've done or how many opportunities they've had or how they look on the outside, but on what they have done with God-revealed truth.

Let's conclude. God without partiality judges according to truth, works, opportunities, and the secrets of each person. What 'moral' person stands innocent before such a Judge? Obviously no one. Verdict? Guilty! Sentence? Wrath of God, now and in the future! If you are not a Christian and you try to maintain your life as a moral person, there is no more hope for you than for the obvious sinner described in **1:18-32**. This unbelieving suppressor of truth person too is in desperate need for Jesus and His forgiveness and a new heart and the Holy Spirit. We can rightly say that if God's wrath was the last word, strict justice would be satisfied. BUT, no one would be saved! God's Good News: Jesus on the cross dealt with all the sin issues: All sinners by heredity (IN Adam) and nature (sinners by nature), your sins, my sins, others' sins, Jesus died for them all. That is the Good News of God. If we by faith turn to Him, believing in who Jesus is and what He did on the Cross, by faith receiving Him as Lord and Savior, we are forgiven of our sins, we start life over again spiritually with a new nature, and Jesus becomes our Type/Representative as well as Lord and Savior and Life. What have you done with the truth He has revealed, through Jesus, His Word, in your inner man, through creation?

**Reflecting on Romans 2:6-16:** As you read through the passage and study notes, how does knowing and understanding these verses impact you? As a Christian, what are two Biblical truths you know and understand better? What are a couple of ways your thinking, speech, actions, and/or choices should change? Write down your answers. Share your answers with another.