

## Study 3 – The epistle to the Romans by Neville Clark, 2016

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Reading: Romans Ch 2

### The Righteousness of God

Well, we've returned to Romans this evening, this marvellous epistle written by the Apostle Paul on the subject of the righteousness of God. As we explained, a fortnight ago, because of the universal failure of mankind to attain any form of righteousness, it would require God to enter into the arena of human affairs and do for man what man could not do for himself. The whole purpose, therefore, in the Apostle writing this epistle was to explain to Jews and Gentiles together just how that might occur, just how the process of God making an unrighteous man righteous would occur. And I say that he had to tell Jews and Gentiles together because of course, there was a certain feeling in the Roman ecclesias between Jews and Gentiles on this issue, that is, on just how much saving a man or a woman might need before God. The Jews, you see, for their part, believed that they were a special race of people. They were the children of Abraham and therefore, in some manner, righteousness coursed through their veins as an inherited characteristic.

### How the Jews felt about the Gentiles

Paul sums up the Jewish feeling for the Gentiles extremely well in Gal 2:15. This is what he says, speaking on behalf of the Jews, not his opinion, this is what the Jews thought. Gal 2:15, he says, "We who are Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles," you see, that was the Jewish feeling about the Gentiles, they were not just "Gentiles," they were "sinners of the Gentiles." Well, of course, the Gentiles for their part mocked that idea completely; they could point to any number of examples of failure in the nation's history to prove their point, so much so, that by Rom 11, even Gentiles in the Truth were questioning whether God still had a purpose with natural Israel. I mean, the Jews were in possession of the Law of Moses for 1400-1500 years up until the first century, and they hadn't even scratched the surface of righteousness, so of course, the Gentiles had a point, didn't they?

### The Structure of the book of Romans

And this was the structure, as we found, of the epistle. We have an introduction as we have considered and we have a conclusion, which we have considered, and then in between the introduction and the conclusion, six major sections, all dealing with the righteousness of God in one form or another. Both of these classes, Jew and Gentile, had a point to prove, and into that debate steps the Apostle, and this is where we got to at the end of our last class. We are currently in the 2nd major section of the Epistle, from Ch 1:18 through to Ch 3:20, "Man's failure to attain righteousness," and when I say "man," I mean Jew and Gentile, and when I say "failure," I mean absolute and universal failure, unmitigated failure, by both Jews and Gentiles to attain any form of righteousness. As we considered last class, Rom 1 is "the failure of the Gentile world." Rom 2 will be "the failure of the Jewish world." Rom 3, at least up until v 20, is "the failure of all humanity," that's the story of this section, man's universal failure to attain righteousness. And of course, as I say, because of that, God has to act, man couldn't do it, and man is in a desperate situation because of sin, he can't do it, so God would have to do it. How will God do it? He'd do it through a son, that son would be both the son of David and the son of God, I mean; these are the basic principles of the atonement aren't they? That son would be the son of David and the son of God, that's what it tells you in Ch 1:3-4. Concerning his son, Jesus Christ, our lord," at least, concerning his son, seed of David v 3, son of God v 4. He would be proven to be the son of God in three ways, toward the end of 1:4, 1. By his power, the miracles he did, 2. By his holy lifestyle, and 3, by his resurrection from the dead, that would prove to all mankind that he was surely the son of God. And of course, in God doing that, God could meet sin in its own domain. He could meet sin in a sinless man, couldn't he? And destroy sin, thereby paving the way for the rest of mankind to be reconciled back to God and delivered from the impossible situation they had got themselves into because of sin. The name the Apostle gives to that intervention, to that work of God, is contained in the 1st verse of Ch 1; it is called "the gospel of God." The good news that God would step into the arena of mankind through a son to do for man what man couldn't do for himself, and you remember the phrase that we gave in our last class, in doing that, God would create a process by which He would be able to make an unrighteous man righteous without compromising His own righteousness. Not an easy task, you would appreciate. God, clearly, could not just overlook sin, in that sense.

## How to make an unrighteous man righteous before God

So it wasn't a simple thing to make an unrighteous man righteous without compromising His own righteous character; that would be the Gospel of God, that's what the Apostle's going to explain. Since of course all men had this problem, salvation would be available to all men, Ch 1:16, "I'm not ashamed," the Apostle says, "of the Gospel – delete "of Christ," the Gospel "of Christ" in v 16 should be "the Gospel of God," of v 1. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of God because it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes, Jew first, and also to the Greek". That's what the Gospel of God could achieve, salvation for all mankind, but even though God did the major work, man wasn't entirely free from responsibility. Jesus Christ would be our representative; he would not be our substitute. What that would mean is that we would have to learn from him and we would have to copy his example. The Apostle summarises all of that in one verse, in v 17 of Chapter 1. Now read along with me, I'm going to paraphrase Ch 1:17, because this is just a recapitulation; this is what 1:17 means. "For therein," that is "in the Gospel of God," of v 1, "therein is God's process of making man righteous revealed, when a simple faith becomes a mature faith, as it is written, the Just," that is the man who is pronounced righteous, "shall live," that is, have eternal life, "through faith," or "by faith," that is by a mature faith demonstrated by works. You see, it is really very simple, that is what that verse is saying. Having got to that point of the argument, the Apostle from v 18 through to Ch 3:20 is now going to explain how supremely powerful and how desperately essential that Gospel is, to Jew, to Gentile and to mankind in general, that's the story of this evening. Ch 1, as we found, the Gentiles present a picture of immoral misery, don't they, immersed in debauchery, violating even nature itself, yet God is going to elevate them. In contrast, when you come to Ch 2, we are going to find that the Jews stand aloof from that, in their pride, in their arrogance, the cream of humanity as they regarded themselves, yet God is able to level them, so that by Chapter 3, the Apostle brings both groups together, demonstrates their common failure, exposes their common need, and lands upon them with the righteousness of God. That's going to be the story of this As we explained last time, when you come to Ch 1, it's not immediately obvious that Ch 1 is dealing with the Gentiles. Now we've explained that Ch 1, at least from v 18, is speaking of the Gentiles, Ch 2, the Jews, Ch 3, all mankind, when you start looking at Ch 1 a little more closely, as we see it, it's not automatically clear that it is speaking about the Gentiles. For example, Ch 1:18, this group of people whoever they are hold the truth in unrighteousness, V 21 of Chapter 1, they knew God, in v 25, they changed the truth, in v 32, they know the judgment of God. It all sounds a little bit like the group in Ch 1 are believers? or are they perhaps Jews, certainly not just unbelieving Gentiles? We are saying that they are unbelieving Gentiles.

Now how do we establish that? Well come across to Chapter 3:9, we are almost at the end of the section we have described by the time you get to Ch 3:9 and the Apostle summarises where he's got to in his argument and what he says in this verse is this, "What then," he says, "Are we better than they? No, in no wise, for we have proved both Jews and Gentiles, they are all under sin." By Ch 3:9 he has condemned Jews, and he has condemned Gentiles, he has done it by this point here. Look across the page at Ch 2:17, "Behold thou art called a Jew and rest in the Law." You can see that Ch 2 fundamentally is dealing with the Jews, when, then we might say, does he condemn the Gentiles? The answer is, by implication, Ch 1. What that means, however, is that when you come back to Ch 1:18 and you read about "men holding the truth in unrighteousness," it's not The Truth, capital T, as we might understand it, but a simple understanding of the existence of God. When you read in Ch 1:21, that this group of people had the knowledge of God, it is the simple knowledge of God's power and design as evidenced from creation, in v 20. It is not the detailed knowledge of God's character or of God's purpose. These people of Ch 1 aren't "in the Truth," they are aware of the existence of God and therefore the truth of that statement. They do not know "The Truth," capital T, as we understand it. All we are saying, you see, in Ch 1, is that you have got a group of people, Gentiles, who have a general revelation about God, not a specific revelation of God. It is a general revelation and therefore you've got to read words like "truth" and words like "knowledge" in this chapter in that context. The Gentiles received a "general revelation" of the existence of God/ So Ch 1, the Gentiles receive a general revelation of the existence of God. Ch 2, however, the Jews receive a "specific revelation" of the character and purpose of God. I mean, they had the Law of Moses, an entirely different revelation from the Gentiles. I will give you an example of the contrast. Ch 1:18 "The Gentiles hold the truth, small "t," in unrighteousness, that is, the existence of God. Ch 2:8, "Unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath," now the truth in Ch 2:8, we can say is with a capital "T," this is The Truth, the gospel, the character of God, the principles of righteousness, it is a very different truth in Ch 1:18 to what it is in Ch 2:8. Ch 1, it is a general revelation, Ch 2, it is a specific revelation.

## Parallels between Ch 1 and Ch 2

And here's the point, there are parallels between Ch 1 and Ch 2. In Ch 1 we have talked about the failure of the Gentile world. In Ch 2 we have recorded the failure of the Jewish world. In Ch 1, the Gentiles receive the

general revelation, in Ch 2, the Jews receive a specific revelation. Ch 1:21 you find the Gentiles are unthankful. In Ch 2:4 you find the Jews despise the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, they are equally unthankful. Ch 1, the wrath of God comes upon the Gentiles in Ch 1:18, as a general sentence for their crimes. In Ch 2:5, the wrath of God comes upon the Jews and the believers and it is called there, in v 5, "the day of wrath," it's a specific day, it is the day of the judgment seat of Christ, that's what it is, that's "the day of wrath," of Ch 2. In Ch 1, the Gentiles in v 27 receive a "recompense of their error," that is God gives them over to their sins and they are punished "by" their sins, not "for" their sins, but "by" their sins. Perhaps they catch diseases associated with their immoral life-style? In Ch 2:6 "every man receives according to his deeds," specifically, you see this is judgment, in Ch 2, in a specific sense. They were without excuse, these Gentiles in Ch 1:20, they are "inexcusable" Jews in Ch 2:1, so you see, Jews and Gentiles are both guilty of the same crimes. You will appreciate that, the Jew from his position of knowledge is far more responsible for what he has done than the Gentile ever was, in Ch 1. So the Gentile is judged "by" his sins, the Jew, Ch 2, is judged "for" his sins. The Gentile is judged in a "general" sense, the Jew will "appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ," in, if you like, a specific sense. Can you see that? There's the contrast, you see, between these two chapters. Both groups have failed, but one, you might say, has failed in a far more "responsible" manner, or let's say an "irresponsible" manner, than the other, that's the difference.

When you get to the end of Chapter 1, the Jew is beaming from ear to ear, at Paul's dialogue against the Gentiles in Ch 1. He is laughing up his sleeve as you can you imagine, "I told you, I told you didn't I, didn't I tell you? Sinners of the Gentiles, didn't I tell you? Filthy animals they are as you read through this chapter; backbiters, haters of God, inventors of evil things, we always knew the Gentiles were an abomination and now we've got inspired proof of it from the pen of the Apostle." You can imagine, by the end of Chapter 1, how the Jew is feeling, as opposed to the Gentile, which is why Paul, without missing a beat starts straight away in Chapter 2, "Therefore, therefore, thou art inexcusable O man whosoever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself, for thou that judgest doest the same things," he says. Ch 1 concludes, you will see, in v 32, "knowing the judgment of God," that is the judgment coming upon the Gentiles, Ch 2:1 begins equally with judgment upon the Jew. "Be careful Jews," he says, "Yes, there is a judgment that will come upon the Gentiles, but before you commend yourself, take a hard look at your life.

### **The basis of God's Judgement**

This is how the chapter falls out, in the first 16 verses of Chapter 2. We have the basis of God's judgement. There are three key points in the first 16 verses. The first one is in v 2. Judgment will be according to truth; that is the principles of the Truth, capital "T." What I am saying is that the Judgment Seat of Christ at Sinai will be according to the principles of Truth, capital "T," that's the first point, v 6 of Chapter 2. That judgment will apply to Jew or Gentile, and it will apply to them according to their deeds; this is brethren and sisters in the Truth according to what they've done. Finally in Ch 2:16, it will be in the day when "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel," it will be on a specific day, that's the first 16 verses of Ch 2. From vv 17-29 the Jews are singled out now as a race. Privilege brings responsibility; they had enormous privileges but 1400-1500 years before the 1st Century, despite their privileges, they have failed to attain righteousness, in fact, they have failed even to scratch the surface of righteousness. The Apostle is now going to discuss that, in contrast to the failure of the Gentiles in Ch 1, you see? We will ignore the third part, Ch 3:1-8, because we are not going to cover it tonight.

### **You are "inexcusable Oh man" who judges**

So what does he say? Ch 2, "Therefore he says, thou art inexcusable Oh man, whosoever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself for thou that judgest doest the same things." "Oh man," who is the "Oh man" of Chapter 2:1? Well, the man here is an "enlightened" man, that is, a believer. Now we couldn't restrict this man, of course, just to Jews, because it could apply to Gentile believers equally as much as to Jewish believers, but this is a man that judges other people. If this man didn't know the Truth, if he didn't have a framework for judgment, if he didn't have a manner by which he could measure himself compared with others, he could never do that, so this is a man "in the Truth." It could apply to Jews as well as Gentiles but it appears very clear that Paul is slanting his words towards the Jews, because this is how the Jews felt about themselves in comparison to the Gentiles, that's the point. In Chapter 1, "God's wrath" is falling upon the Gentiles because they forgot God. What did they know about God? They had a dim revelation, a dim knowledge of the existence of God supplied to them from creation, from the design of creation. What do you think God's attitude, brothers and sisters would be to the Jews if it turned out that their character was basically the same as the Gentiles, despite their elevated knowledge? You'd think, for example, that the Jews might be more responsible to God for what they knew than the

Gentiles would be for what they knew. Of course, here's Amos 2, listen to this carefully, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities," Amos 3:2. Look at Chapter 2:1, "Therefore, thou art inexcusable Oh man," you see that is exactly the position the Jews occupied, God had known them of all the families of the earth, therefore the Jew was responsible. "Therefore thou art inexcusable, Oh man, because you judge someone else and yet you are doing exactly the same thing; you are a hypocrite, he says. "But," v 2, "we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them that commit such things," now you know what? This is an extremely simple verse to understand. The judgment of God is according to "the Truth" against them that commit such things," Col 3:25. "He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done, and there is no respect of persons." Nothing complicated about that is there? "He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong he hath done and there is no respect of persons," and let's not pretend this is just a New Testament concept. Psa 62:12, "Unto thee, O Yahweh belongeth mercy for thou renderest to every man according to his work." "Unto thee, O Yahweh, belongeth mercy for thou renderest to every man according to his work." I mean, it is extremely simple, there's no respect of persons, man's conduct will be met with a result in the Day of Judgment.

The fact is, brothers and sisters, we can talk all day about what we believe, the issue, however, is, what do we do? What do we do in our lives? We might say, "Well, we are not like the Gentiles, we are enlightened. Do we live like the Gentiles? Do we own a television and spend a lot of time in front of it. Do we attend organised sporting fixtures? Could our work mates, for example, tell the difference between us and them? Now they might know we attend an ecclesia on Sunday, but if frankly there is enough overlap between what we do in our spare time and what they do in their spare time, there's no difference between us and them. They won't be able to detect the difference, you see, and if our workmates can't detect the difference, what will the Judge make of that, because there is a day in which we will answer for everything we've done. Russia is knocking on the door of Constantinople, Britain is evacuating out of Europe, the EU is crumbling about to rebuild itself in preparation for the Gogian invasion. If we sit back on a Saturday afternoon, and say "I might go to the cricket, and I might have a couple of beers like the Gentiles," what are we thinking of, in this day and age, to be doing that sort of thing? What "sign of the times" do we want God to give us to make us believe that his son is at the door? Yet, the brotherhood across this city is trending towards the kind of life style I've just described. What are we thinking of, brothers and sisters, to see this sort of thing happening in our community, of all communities, and in this city, of all cities? We ought to Now why was Paul saying this in v 2 of Romans Ch 2? Who would ever think this, v 3, look, "Thinkest thou you this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" Why would he ever say that? I mean, that doesn't make sense, does it? Which one of us would think that we will get away with something that we condemn other people for getting away with; for other people for doing? We condemn them, of course, because we know it is wrong, but if we went and did the same thing, what would possess us to think that we are going to get away with it when we've already admitted it is wrong by judging our neighbour? And perhaps the neighbour is a Gentile, and we might be right in our judgment? But we do it, don't we? We do it all the time; you do it, I do it, and you see, this is a very Jewish problem.

### **Judgment is according to Truth**

The Jew did not believe that judgment would be according to Truth, that's the heart of it. It says in v2, "judgement will be according to Truth"; the Jews did not believe that. What did the Jew think would be the basis of judgment? He thought that judgment would be according to race, that there was something about them that made them bullet-proof, that made them immune to the judgment of God, you see? He thought that because he had been called out of Egypt that he was the special object of God's favour, no matter what he did. What was the consequence of that? V 4, The Apostle says, "Despisest thou the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Listen to v 4 from the RSV. "Do you presume upon the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience? Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" Now this verse, of course, is an allusion to a famous verse in the OT. Which verse? Ex 34:6, "Yahweh, Yahweh EI, merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, but by no means clearing the guilty," that's the verse. But you see, from the Jewish point of view, the character of God was comprised of two halves, mercy and judgment, mercy for the Jews, judgment for the Gentile. You might say, "How would the Jew ever come to that deduction? It is very simple, he didn't believe judgment was based on Truth he believed it was based on race. Mercy for my race, judgment for yours, it was as simple as that; that was how the Jew thought, you see? What that meant, though, is that he thought he had salvation "in the bag" already. What that meant, was that the goodness of God did not lead him to repentance, it led him to sin, didn't it? It led him to sin, because he presumed that God would look after him no matter what he did. He developed a sense of entitlement, that the rules that apply to the Gentiles don't

apply to him, that therefore he could judge the Gentiles for doing this or that but do those very things himself and be immune to the judgment of God, because God judges after all, based on your race, not based upon Truth, you see? That's how the Jew thought, and if we were to think like that, it would completely change how we lived the Truth and what we would think we would ever be accountable for. The Jew thought there was a quality about him that made him immune to judgment, a sentiment that says, "Well, you know, if God's forgiven me once, he can forgive me again," and in doing that, look what happened, look at v 5. "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart," (the word means "unrepentant") "treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

You might just observe in v 4 we have "the riches of God's goodness," spoken of and in v 5 we have "the treasure of wrath," now they are different words, but it is the same idea, and do you see the point? The Jew has refused the "riches of God's goodness," in v 4, and he has accumulated the "riches of God's wrath" in v 5. He has refused the riches of v 4 and immediately opened another bank account to treasure up the "wrath" of v 5. And that mountain of treasure builds and builds and builds across his life until the "day of wrath," doesn't it, v 6. "Who," that is God, "will render to every man according to his deeds," He will not judge according to race, He will judge impartially. Look at the end of v 9, "Jew first, also Gentile;" end of v 10, "Jew first, also Gentile;" what's the point? V 11, "There is no respect of persons with God." Judgment will be according to Truth, it will not be according to race. Elementary, elementary," I mean, natural justice alone might teach you that; that why could you get away with something that you are condemning someone else for? Well, the Jew thought he could and I think you see why. But Paul says, it is not true, it doesn't work like that. You know, this Jewish characteristic that we are describing, we've seen in Christadelphia, it is not hard to find, in fact, lift up a corner of your own life and it is not very hard to find, even in your own life. This is the disposition that says, "I'm not like those filthy Gentiles out there," even though we are Gentiles, even though we weren't born baptised, you can still think like that, or the disposition that says "I'm from a traditional Christadelphian family, five generations in the Truth, my great-great something-grandpa first came to the Truth before they had wheels, you know, that's how long our family has been in the Truth, and therefore, there's perhaps something about me that's better than everyone else around me. Or I'm a very busy brother or very busy sister and so it is reasonable for me to take certain liberties in the Truth, perhaps have a bit of time for myself. What would be the biblical word for that attitude? Judaism, isn't it? That is pure and simple Judaism. And what does Judaism say? I add up the ticks in my life, and subtract the crosses, and as long as the ticks outweigh the crosses I'm in the kingdom of God. That is all Judaism is, and the minute we say, "I can do this" and "as a consequence of this great deed, I can take a liberty," that is Judaism, that is exactly how the Jews thought, and it is alive and well in Christadelphia today. Why is it alive and well in Christadelphia today? It is alive and well today because we are human, it is alive and well in every one of us because we are all made of exactly the same stuff as you read in Rom Ch 1, no surprises, therefore that Judaism is a natural tendency of our lives.

The problem is, when Christ comes, our ecclesia won't help us, and our family won't help us, all our good deeds in that sense, won't help us, we will stand in our lot with this book in our hand, we'll go up against the Bible like that, and we will explain ourselves according to truth. It is as simple as that isn't it? It really is as simple as that, because as v 11 says, "there is no respect of persons before God." Now it is interesting, you know, I haven't read with you vv 7-10, but just as you cast your eyes down these verses, you will notice a preponderance on "deeds," and on "doing things." Look at the end of v 6, "every man is going to be rendered according to his deeds." V 7, "to them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory." V 8, "unto them who are contentious and do not obey the truth." v 13, "not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law." You see the emphasis, because, you see, in the final analysis, Christ will judge us based on what we have done. It is very easy to pay lip-service to the Truth, words are extremely cheap. What do you do, what do you do in your life, that's really what's going to count for currency in the final analysis

### **The classes of people at the Judgment Seat**

And the next thing that the Apostle does from vv 12-16 is he now spells out the different classes of people that will be at the Judgment Seat. This is a little bit of a difficult section, not especially complicated to understand, but extremely controversial amongst the churches because of the fact that it is used to suggest that there is something in man which is inherently good. You will read, for example, in v 14 that the Gentiles by nature do the things contained in the Law, and there is a debate in the churches about what exactly that means. Christadelphians don't really debate that, but there are other controversies in the brotherhood about what these verses do mean. Let's make some observations to start with. You will see that vv 13-15 are put in brackets. The brackets aren't inspired, but they do help and they are basically right, because what that means is that you can read v 12 followed by v 16 and it makes complete sense, so let's do that. "For as

many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." So there you are, I've removed the brackets and you can see that v 16 directly follows v 12, and therefore the brackets are reasonable. The next question is, what does it mean in v 12 about people "sinning without law," "perishing without law," "sinning in law," or "in the law" it says and being judged "by the law?" You might have noticed when Bro John read this evening that he deleted the word "the" all the way through here, that is "in (the) law," and that was correct, because the definite article is not there.

We are not talking about 'the' law as in the Law of Moses, we are talking about "law;" we sin "in law," we sin "outside of law," or whatever it might be, but it is just "law." Well, what is the "law?" The answer is, it's the Truth, it is Divine law in a general sense that he is speaking about, "the Truth." Now understanding that, read v 12 again, "For as many as have sinned without the Truth shall perish without the Truth and as many as have sinned in the Truth shall be judged by Truth," does that make sense? That makes complete sense. Psa 49:20 says, "Man that is in honour and understandeth not is like the beasts that perish," so if you don't know the Truth in v 12, you will perish without the Truth, that's quite understandable, and if you do know the Truth, you will be judged by it, that is what v 12 is saying, "light" or "enlightenment" is the basis of responsibility. Now that might sound very simple in v 12, but in fact, that is a little controversial in the brotherhood as well. Here's Bro Thomas' opinion on the meaning of Rom 2:12. I'm not going to read that whole quotation, it comes from the Ambassador of the Coming Age, vol 3 p 216. What Bro Thomas is simply saying here is "in the absence of light, that is, when men are in a state of ignorance, as many as have sinned without law shall perish without law." What he is saying here from v 12, is that the people who perish without law are ignorant people outside the Truth and that "law" is simply a synonym for "the Truth," in Rom 2:12. What about v 13, "For not the hearers of law are just before God, but the doers of law shall be justified. Simply hearing the Truth won't help you, I mean, hearing the law might make you a good lawyer, but it won't make you faithful; doing it will make you faithful, there's no mystery, therefore, about v 13, it is all about doers compared with hearers. What about v 14? Well here's the problem, "For when the Gentiles which have not law do by nature the things contained in law, these having not law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."

Now we've got to be careful how we understand these verses because, of course, between us and the churches there is an enormous controversy here, and you can see why. In v 14 we've got Gentiles who apparently are lawless and yet, by nature, do the things of the law. The churches will interpret that to say that there's some, essential goodness in mankind that despite being ignorant, he is propelled, nevertheless, to do good over evil. Well, let me tell you, if the Gentiles by nature do anything, it is the deeds of Rom 1, that ought to be evident to all of us, so no, we must have a better explanation to vv 14-15 than what the churches give, and of course, there is a better explanation, and it's contained in v 15, and here's the clue. V 15 says, "these Gentiles show the work of law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing them witness." That is a quotation as you can see on the screen, from Jer 31:33, "the Gentiles have got law," that is Divine law, the Truth, "written in their hearts," that means, these Gentiles have come to the Truth, that's the only way, they are enlightened. They know what they are doing, that's the only way, the only explanation of having "law written in their hearts," and having a developed conscience. It is a bit misleading; by the way, at the end of the verse to read, "Their thoughts, the meanwhile, accusing or excusing one another," the word "excusing" ought to be "defending." Their thoughts accuse or defend one another, so their conscience weighs things and they justify or condemn certain activities. Similarly, at the end of v 14, it is a little misleading to read, the end of v 14, "These Gentiles are a law unto themselves." I mean, that's a phrase we use today to describe people who just wantonly go about their business doing whatever pleases them. They are not a law "unto themselves," in that sense, they are a law "for themselves." So how would we understand v 14, then? And you see there's a problem here because if you start to read it, "when the Gentiles which have not law do by nature things contained in law," how do these Gentiles "have no law," when we have just explained in v15, that they are in the Truth, they've clearly got a divine law? What does v 14 mean? Well the answer is this, v 14 is written from the point of view of the Jew, and he looks at the Gentile and says, "Well, there's no heritage there, he doesn't clearly have the oracles of Moses, he doesn't keep any ceremony, he's never offered a sacrifice, what has the Gentile brought to the table, he's lawless, in that sense, he doesn't have the pedigree of the Jew."

From the Jewish point of view the Gentile was "without law," but he comes to the Truth, and by nature, not knowing the details of the Mosaic Code, nevertheless, enacts in his life the very principles of the Mosaic code as a condition of the revelation that the Truth has made in his life, that's what he is So from the Jewish point of view, you see, the Jew couldn't understand that the Gentile comes out of obscurity, learns the Truth,

he doesn't learn the Law of Moses, he learns the Truth, and starts living the character which the law of Moses taught, couldn't understand it and he lives it immediately, the Jew would see. The issue is, of course in these verses that the Gentiles are "doers," but the Jews are "hearers," that's the problem. The Jews could never grasp how the Gentile could please God and he couldn't because he never believed that he was simply a hearer and not a doer because the Jew has spent all his life doing things, but they were the works of men, of course, not the works of God, that's the problem. You want to see how the Gentile responds to the truth as compared with the Jew? Look down at v 26, of this chapter, Rom 2:26, "Therefore, if the uncircumcision," that's the Gentiles, "keep the righteousness of the Law," that is, "the righteous precepts of the Law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?" If the Gentile acts as the Jew ought to, and the Jew acts as the worldly Gentiles do, wouldn't God just swap the classes of people like that? Now the Jew thought, "No, no, no, he doesn't have Abraham's blood?" Ah! Ah! "Judgment is according to Truth, there is no respecting of persons with God," yes, he will swap them, he will just do that. That might be very logical to us, but that was a foreign concept to the Jew because of how he thought of himself in comparison to the Gentiles. That is exactly, however, what the Apostle is saying, exactly what the Apostle is saying.

### **The classes of people at Judgment**

Now you put those four or five verses from Ch 2:12 through to Ch 2:16 together, these are the classes of people at judgment. We have all humanity, and all humanity is divided into two groups, the ignorant and the responsible. The responsible, that is, those who will be judged are divided into two groups, the faithful and the unfaithful, and the faithful and the unfaithful themselves, are divided into two groups, Jew and Gentile, you see. Now what I have done on the screen, is I have put v 12-16 down according to the groups that they represent. "For as many as have sinned without law shall perish without law," v 12, there's the ignorant, "perish in ignorance." And "as many as have sinned in law shall be judged by law" there's the responsible, they are going to judgment, "to the day of judgment," they are in the Truth. "For not the hearers of the law are just before God," here's the unfaithful, "but the doers of the law shall be justified." There's the faithful, whether they be Jew or Gentile. There's the faithful. "For when the Gentiles who have not law do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile, accusing or excusing one another." These are faithful Gentiles in the Truth who have responded to the law of God being written on their hearts, you see? "In the day," v 16 says, "when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ; there's the responsible who will be judged. So you see, v 12, rolls straight to v 16 to the responsible and in between, you've got segregated out these different groups of people explained in vv 13-15, so in fact no great mystery of this portion of Romans 2.

### **You are called a Jew and rest in the Law**

But what you will notice in vv 14-15, is that there's no mention of the Jew. These are the classes that will be at judgment, where is the Jew? Of course, he is part of the faithful, if he is faithful, but we've only got the Gentiles mentioned, in vv 14-15. Well, the Jew begins in v 17, you see? Paul is going to deal with the Jew specifically as a major class. V 17, "Behold, thou art called a Jew and rest in the Law," now what's going to happen from vv 17-20, if the Apostle is going to delineate eight credentials of the Jews, look at them. You Jews, he says, 1. You rest in the Law; 2. Make your boast of God; 3. Know His will; 4. Approve the things that are excellent, that is you can test the differences of things; determine the good versus the evil; 5. You are instructed out of the Law; 6. You are confident that you are a guide of the blind and of them in darkness, you are a teacher; v 20, 7. You are an instructor of the foolish and the babes; 8. You've got a form of knowledge and of the truth in the Law. Now why has the Apostle done that? Why has he listed those credentials? You know why? Because those are the credentials that the Jew was planning to take to the Judgment Seat of Christ, that's what he was going wear as a badge of honour before the Lord Jesus Christ. It wasn't his works in the Truth he was going to take, it was these accolades he was going to take, that's what he thought would get him into the Kingdom of God, his inherited righteousness, his pedigree, his descent from Abraham, irrespective of his heart, you see? So that's why the Apostle himself, "a Hebrew of the Hebrews" as he once was, "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," he speaks about his own past life when he writes to the Philippians, and he says in Philip 3:8, this list here, he says, "I count as dung that I might win Christ." It's not worth a cracker, those eight qualities that you read in vv 17-20. it won't help you at all, but this is what the Jew based his hope of salvation upon. But there is more to it than that, because whilst the Jew says this in vv 17-20, look at v 21, "Well," he says, "You, therefore, who teach another teach you not yourself?" Do you adopt the same principles that you try to inculcate into others? "You that preach a man should not steal, do you steal, Physician, do you actually heal yourself?" he says. "You who say that a man should not commit adultery, do you, do you? Or you that abhor idols; and the Jew detested idolatry, never served idols from the time that they returned from Babylonian captivity, do you commit sacrilege?" Now, here's the thing, Acts

19:37, they did rob temples, their avarice for money was so much so that they would of course loot temples, they would take idols in order to make money out of them, so they had no big problem with sacrilege, did they commit adultery? Matt 16:4, they were a wicked and adulterous generation in the eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, they preached a completely different lifestyle.

You see, "you Jews," can you see vv 17-20, the Apostle is listing these credentials ironically, he says, "This is what you say, this is what you line up behind, you are nothing like it, even if that could get you into the Kingdom of God, you break your own rules, you Jews. You are just hypocritical," he says. The consequence of that, of course, is in v 24, "That the name of God is now blasphemed among the Gentiles through you," he says. The whole purpose that the Jews were placed in the land in the very beginning was nullified because of their attitude toward God. Not only, not only, would they forfeit salvation themselves, but as Yahweh's witnesses they were meant to take the truth to the rest of the world. Instead of that the world found them so obnoxious they blasphemed the God of Israel, so the Jew destroyed his own personal salvation and shut the door on the lives of the Gentiles as well, because the Gentiles couldn't come at them, and then nation after nation came against that people. God brought them, but the nations were happy to come, against the Jews because of what they thought of the Jews, not just only in Bible times, but even in the 20th Century, as you know. The Jew thought that his salvation was guaranteed, you see? It all began there, that he thought his salvation was guaranteed, and therefore no lifestyle change was required. His whole cast of thinking was completely against him ever coming to the Truth, really, I know some did, in the first century, some thousands did, but they were also but a tiny fraction of the Jewish population, because he thought he could inherit eternal life because of what flowed through his veins. It began and ended there, and therefore, he despised the goodness of God because he thought he was never in bondage to any man, he already thought that he had salvation. As you read these words, brothers and sisters, from v 17 about the Jews, can you see any risk to us? Read them again, v 17, "Behold, you are called a Christadelphian, and you rest in the Bible, and make your boast of the God of Israel. You know His will, you know the difference between right and wrong, you are confident that you can teach the truth to other people, that you can instruct the foolish and teach babes and have a form of knowledge of the principles of the truth," can you see that? We could walk to the Judgment Seat saying, "Well, I've been baptised 50 years, and I come from a large ecclesia, and it's a pretty solid ecclesia, actually, it's quite good, quite conservative and the ecclesia's been going for 150 years or something like that, and I've marked up my Bible here and here," well, what is in your heart?

What effect has all this had on me or you as a person, what do you do in the truth, because that's what we are going to answer for isn't it? and you see, on account of the fact that Judaism is an extremely potent human tendency, we could read these words from v 17 of us in exactly the same fashion as we could read them of Israel. What's the remedy? V 29, "He is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God." Forget what everybody else says, what are you like before God? When the Lord Jesus Christ holds you up against that book, or against his character, what does he see? How many parallels are there? What is the comparison? it all comes down to that at the end of the day, it absolutely comes down to that, doesn't it? Well, we might look at these principles here in vv 17-29 and we might say, "This is not very hard to grasp, if God calls the Jews and they don't respond, but the truth goes to the Gentiles and they do, and He sees in the Gentiles what He wanted to see in the Jews, and He sees in the Jews what was there in the Gentiles before they converted, well, He's going to go like that (crosses his arms over) isn't He, He's going to swap them over, and that's what he says here, vv 25-27, and we might say, "That makes completely logical sense." V 25, "For circumcision verily profits if you keep the Law, but if you be a breaker of the Law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision." Circumcision was a token that the Jews believed and accepted the Law. If they then go and deliberately break the law, their circumcision counts for nothing. They might as well not have it. If you get baptised into the Truth, you do so because your baptism is a token of the things you believe. It is the first act of obedience. If then, by your lifestyle, you deny all the principles that you've been baptised into, your baptism counts for nothing. It is as simple as that, that's exactly what he is saying. Therefore, v 26, "If the Gentiles keep the righteousness of the Law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?" and for the Jews, v 27, "shall not the uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the Law, judge thee, Jew, who by the letter and circumcision transgress the Law, won't the Gentiles rise up in Judgment against the Jew?" and you know they did. The Queen of Sheba will rise up against the cities of Galilee. The Gentiles of the Roman ecclesia rose up against the Jews in Ch 11 by asking whether God STILL had a purpose with natural Israel, they could see it a hundred miles away, it was clear to anybody with sound reasoning. The Gentiles did rise up against the Jew; not in a physical sense, they simply raised the question as to whether God's patience had run out with the nation of Israel, because there were any number of examples they could give, of the failure of the nation of Israel, you see? Extremely simple to understand, but here's the question. Do you think that logic would work on the Jew? Do you think that would convert a Jew? The answer is, if it was just that logic,



no, it wouldn't. It definitely wouldn't. That might be completely reasonable and sound as we have read it, but that wouldn't convert a Jew because he still thinks there is something about him which is special, that means he doesn't have to try where other men do.

### **What does God require of you?**

What you find, you see, in the last verses of this Chapter, is that the Apostle Paul is not just reciting a logical argument. This is a paraphrase of Deut 10:12-21, If you want to convert the Jew, a man who rests in the Law of Moses, you can do no better, brothers and sisters, than quote the lawgiver himself, and this is what the lawgiver said. Ch 10 beginning at v 12, look at it, Rom 2 is simply a paraphrase of these verses. "And now Israel, what doeth Yahweh require of thee but to fear Yahweh thy God, walk in His ways and love Him and serve Yahweh thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul." What Gentile didn't understand that? That is an elementary first principle when you come to the Truth, the truth first second and third in your life. "Circumcise, therefore the foreskin of thy heart, and be no more stiff-necked." V 25, circumcision; v 26, circumcision, V 27, the Gentiles are acting as though they are circumcised and the Jews are not, because the Gentiles do by nature the things which the Law taught, and the Jews do not. Why? Because the Jews are hearers, and the Gentiles are doers. "For Yahweh your God is a God of Gods, a Lord of Lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible, which regardeth not persons nor taketh a reward. V 17, "There is no respect of persons with God." Can you see? Paul is simply paraphrasing what Moses said; the Jew should have known this from the Law of Moses, that his pedigree wouldn't help him if his character bore no resemblance to what he claimed. Moses taught that, so he is not just giving you a logical Greek argument in Rom 2, he is giving you the argument of Moses, you see? "No respect of persons with God," and can you see the point? Think about it. "Yahweh your God is a God of Gods, a Lord of Lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible." Brothers and sisters, do you really think, do you really think a God like that is going to show partiality amongst human kind? Would a God like that, who is so far above the rest of us really show partiality amongst human kind? I mean, it is laughable, isn't it? "You shall fear Yahweh," Moses says, "You shall fear Yahweh your God, Him shall you serve, because He is your praise," that is to say, "He is the object of your praise." Look how he concludes this chapter, "He is a Jew which is one inwardly. Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God."

The Jew spent his life seeking the praise of men, that's what the accolades in vv 17-20 were all about; it was all about how he looked in front of men. His point here is that the object of your praise should be God, not fellow man, and do you see what he has done here, Brothers and Sisters? He has just elevated the Gentile and he has just reduced the Jew before the almighty supremacy of God, can you see that? The Gentile, in Ch 1, was in a hopeless position, received a general revelation of God, and he abused it so terribly that he looked up from a gutter so deep that he could hardly see the light of day. The Jew was no better in Ch 2, he looked down from his pedestal of the Law of Moses, afraid of even the shadow of a Gentile lest he be defiled. He hardens his heart so irreversibly that invasion and captivity can't change it and you get to the end of Ch 2 and all mankind is found wanting; the Gentile of Ch 1, the Jew of Ch 2, that's why they both so desperately need the Gospel of God, but let's make no mistake, what if God had called Australia instead of Israel? What if we were the people of God in a natural sense instead of Israel? Would things be any different? No they wouldn't be any different. Why wouldn't they? Because we are built of exactly the same stuff as the Jews, we are built of exactly the same stuff as the Jews, and the warning is therefore implicit, we've been called to the Truth. There are millions of Christians out there. You read of the Protesters, you read of the opponents of the Catholic Church down through history, often extremely capable Bible commentators, often extremely enlightened, but they are Trinitarians, and they believe in devils and souls and various things. What would make you think that if we are prepared to condemn them, because they have false doctrine, but our lives have got enormous gaps in them as far as the character of Christ is concerned, that we are going to simply waltz in to the Kingdom of God, when their lives may have very few gaps in them in comparison to ours, but they've got false doctrine. What is it? Is it simply the BASF that's going to save us? Ridiculous! But can you see, it is very easy to think like that. That is exactly how the Jew thought, never do it, never ever do it; we are judged according to truth, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, and it is our deeds that will count in the final analysis, because our deeds will expose just what kind of faith it is that we hold.

Transcript by Fay Berry 2016