



**“Religion and Rules Can’t Save You”**

Romans 2:1-29

Reading and Study Guide for the week  
of Jan. 21-27, 2024

**Memory verse:** “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9)

**This week, read and study Romans 2:1-29. Some questions to answer and think about this week with your family or Community Group:**

**God's Righteous Judgment - Romans 2:1-16**

1. On what basis do people often judge other people?
2. If God is judging others for their sins, what will He do to us? (2:2-3)
3. On what basis will God render His judgments? (2:5-8)
4. How will those who know God’s law be treated compared to those who never heard God’s law? (2:12-15)
5. When have you ever judged someone else and realized you were guilty of the same offense?
6. How should your anticipation of a coming judgment day affect your daily behavior?
7. Whom have you judged in a manner not pleasing to God? How can you seek forgiveness?

**Life Application Bible Notes**

**2:1** Whenever we find ourselves feeling justifiably angry about someone's sin, we should be careful. We need to speak out against sin, but we must do so in a spirit of humility. Often the sins we notice most clearly in others are the ones that have taken root in us. If we look closely at ourselves, we may find that we are committing the same sins in more socially acceptable forms. For example, a person who gossips may be very critical of others who gossip about him or her.

**2:1ff** When Paul's letter was read in the Roman church, no doubt many heads nodded as he condemned idol worshipers, homosexual practices, and violent people. But what surprise his listeners must have felt when he turned on them and said in effect, "You are just as bad, and you have no excuse!" Paul was emphatically stressing that we have all sinned repeatedly, and there is no way apart from Christ to be saved from sin's consequences.

**2:4** In his kindness, God holds back his judgment, giving people time to turn from their sin. It is easy to mistake God's patience for approval of the wrong way we are living. Self-evaluation is difficult, and it is even more difficult to bring ourselves to God and let him tell us where we need to change. But as Christians we must ask God to point out our sins, so that he can heal them. Unfortunately, we are more likely to be amazed at God's patience with others than humbled at his patience with us.

**2:5-11** Although God does not usually punish us immediately for sin, his eventual judgment is certain. We don't know exactly when it will happen, but we know that no one will escape that final encounter with the Creator. For more on judgment, see [John 12:48](#) and [Revelation 20:11-15](#).

**2:7** Paul says that those who patiently and persistently *do* God's will find eternal life. He is not contradicting his previous statement that salvation comes by faith alone ([1:16, 17](#)). We are not saved by good deeds, but when we commit our life fully to God, we want to please him and do his will. As such, our good deeds are a grateful *response* to what God has done, not a prerequisite to earning his favor.

**2:12-15** People are condemned not for what they don't know but for what they do with what they know. Those who know God's written Word and his law will be judged by them. Those who have never seen a Bible still know right from wrong, and they will be judged because they violated those standards that their own consciences dictated. God's law is written within them.

**2:12-15** If you traveled around the world, you would find evidence in every society and culture of God's moral law. For example, all cultures prohibit murder, and yet in all societies that law has been broken. We belong to a stubborn, sinful race. We know what is right, but we insist on doing what is wrong. It is not enough to know what is right; we must also do it. Admit to yourself and to God that you frequently fail to live up to your own standards (much less to God's standards). That's the first step to forgiveness and healing.

### **The Jews and the Law - [Romans 2:17-29](#)**

1. What are some "wrong" reasons a person might have for going to church?
2. Of what did Paul accuse the Jews? ([2:21-24](#))
3. How did Paul redefine what it means to be a Jew? ([2:28-29](#))
4. What is more important than knowing God's written law? ([2:29](#))
5. How could a person be very religious and yet be lacking a real relationship with God?
6. What makes a person a true Christian?
7. In which of your present situations should you be more concerned about pleasing God than pleasing other people?

### **Life Application Bible Notes**

**2:17ff** Paul continues to argue that all stand guilty before God. After describing the fate of the unbelieving, pagan Gentiles, he moves to admonish God's people. Despite their knowledge of God's will, they were guilty because they, too, refuse to live by it. Those of us who have grown

up in Christian families may know what God's Word says. But Paul says that if we do not live up to what we know, we are no better off than unbelievers.

**2:21, 22** Paul explained to the Jews that they needed to teach *themselves*, not others, by their law. They knew the law so well that they had learned how to excuse their own actions while criticizing others. But the law is more than a set of rules—it is a guideline for living according to God's will. It is also a reminder that we cannot please God without a proper relationship to him. As Jesus pointed out, withholding what rightfully belongs to someone else is stealing ([Mark 7:9-13](#)), and anyone who even looks at a woman with lust in his eye has committed adultery with her in his heart ([Matthew 5:27, 28](#)). Before we accuse others, we must look at ourselves and see if sin, in any form, exists within us.

**2:21-27** These verses are a scathing criticism of hypocrisy. It is much easier to tell others how to behave than to behave properly ourselves. It is easier to say the right words than to allow them to take root in our own life. Do you ever advise others to do something you are unwilling to do yourself? Make sure that your actions match your words.

**2:24** If you claim to be one of God's people, your life should reflect what God is like. When you disobey God, you dishonor his name. People may even blaspheme or profane God's name because of you. What do people think about God as they watch your life?

**2:25-29** *Circumcision* refers to the sign of God's special covenant with his people. All Jewish males were required to submit to this rite ([Genesis 17:9-14](#)). According to Paul, being a circumcised Jew meant nothing if the person didn't obey God's laws. On the other hand, the uncircumcised Gentiles would receive God's love and approval if they kept God's law. Paul goes on to explain that a true Jew (one who pleases God) is not someone who has been circumcised but someone whose heart is right with God and obeys him.

**2:28, 29** To be a Jew meant you were in God's family, an heir to all his promises. Yet Paul made it clear that membership in God's family is based on internal, not external, qualities. All whose hearts are right with God are true Jews—that is, part of God's family (see also [Galatians 3:7](#)). Attending church or being baptized, confirmed, or accepted for membership is not enough, just as submitting to circumcision was not enough for the Jews. God desires our heartfelt devotion and obedience (see also [Deuteronomy 10:16](#); [Jeremiah 4:4](#)).

**Romans Study Guide questions and notes are from**

