

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Romans 2: 1-3

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we will read Romans 2:1–16. Today, we will read verses 1-3.

This week's passage continues Paul's discourse on condemnation. Last week's passage focused on the condemnation of the ungodly and unrighteous. As we've said, God uses godliness and righteousness as two measures to categorize people into four types. Godliness refers to our relationship with God, and righteousness refers to our relationship with others. To be ungodly and unrighteous means not believing in God and being unjust toward others. This refers to those who have not yet received grace and salvation. Though they enjoy God's general grace, they do not glorify or thank Him as God. As a result, their thoughts become futile, and they fall under the threefold "giving over" of God. If they persist in their hardness of heart and do not repent, their sins remain unforgiven, and they will fall under God's wrath and be eternally condemned.

This week's passage, Paul addresses those who enjoy judging others. The Greek word for "judge" is *krino*, which can also be translated as "condemn" or "pass judgment." A common trait of people who like to judge or condemn others is that they think highly of themselves—at least better than those they judge. They consider themselves qualified to judge others. This is a group of self-righteous people.

Many Bible scholars believe this passage refers to the Jews. Personally, I believe that since Paul was writing to the saints in the church in Rome—a predominantly Gentile church—from Romans 2:17 to 3:8 he directly addresses the unrighteousness of the Jews and the privileges they enjoyed as God's chosen people in the Old Testament. Since Paul speaks so directly and frankly about the Jews later on, the passage we are reading this week—Romans 2:1–16—regarding self-righteous people who like

to judge others, should not be limited to the Jews alone. Therefore, I categorize this group as the “ungodly yet self-righteous.”

Ungodliness has two aspects. First, they do not believe in Jesus and are unwilling to humble themselves to worship God—this makes them ungodly. Second, in application to us believers who have received grace and salvation, we are positionally godly, but if we do not live out a godly life in practice, then we too fall into the condition of being ungodly yet self-righteous. So, this passage is not only directed at unbelievers; it also serves as a reminder and warning to us, lest we fall into self-righteousness and the habit of judging others.

In this discourse on condemning the self-righteous, Paul presents three dimensions—like a 3D coordinate system: the vertical axis is the moral dimension, the horizontal axis is the dimension of time, and the third axis is the dimension of God’s order of judgment. If we were to plot Paul’s logic in a 3D chart, we would be amazed at how complete, detailed, and clear his reasoning is. But since we’re working with text, we’ll need to explain it with more words. Paul begins with the moral dimension.

Verse 1: “Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.”

“O man, whoever you are who judge,”—Paul clearly tells us that those who judge others, whoever they may be, are without excuse. That means everyone is included, even the saints. Though we’ve received grace and salvation, if we do not live out godliness, we too may fall into judging others.

Next, Paul says, “in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself.” In the original Greek, the words for “judge” and “condemn” are the same: *krino*. In other words, whatever you use to judge others, you are also using to judge yourself. This aligns exactly with what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 7:1–2 says: “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”

Paul then explains why: because “you who judge practice the same things.” If we use the moral dimension as the vertical axis, Paul is telling us that everyone has two moral standards: one is what we know, and the other is what we actually live out. The moral standard we know is far higher than the one we live. In other words, there’s much we know but cannot do. If any saint feels unconvinced, I suggest reading Matthew 5–7, the Sermon on the Mount. That is the constitution of the kingdom of heaven. We can all understand and agree with it—but in practice, it is incredibly difficult to live out.

The trouble with a self-righteous person is that they use what they know to judge what others do. But if they honestly examine themselves, they’ll find they’re not much better than those they judge. Perhaps they do better in some areas, but worse in others. So if you use your knowledge to judge others’ actions, you’ll always find something to criticize. Paul tells us that when you judge others, you are condemning yourself in those very things.

Verse 2: “But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.”

This verse contains two main points:

1. God judges us according to what we do.
2. God’s standard of judgment is based on truth.

First, let’s look at how God judges according to our actions. Each of us is born with a sinful nature. Under its influence, we develop lusts. When external temptations come, those lusts are enticed, and we fall into sin. James 1:14–15 describes this vividly: “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”

God does not condemn us for having a sinful nature but for our sinful actions. So how do we prevent sin from being born out of our sinful nature? The first step is to

flee external temptations—and the first step to fleeing is to know. That’s why God gave the Law at Mount Sinai through Moses, so the Israelites would know the boundaries God had set. The Mosaic Law regulates human behavior—it was God’s protection for His people in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, Jesus takes it further in the Sermon on the Mount by giving the constitution of the kingdom of heaven. This fulfills the Law of Moses, because it not only regulates behavior but also the heart.

Knowing God’s boundaries is not enough. We must also have mature life to live within those boundaries. Our problem is that once we know something, we think we’ve already attained it. But that’s far from the truth. God does not judge us by what we know but by what we do. Self-righteous people like to judge others based on what they know. Their judgments may appear noble before men, but they count for nothing before God—because judgment belongs to God. In fact, God will use their own standards to judge them, because though they know, they cannot do.

Second, God judges according to truth. His standard is not relative, like in man-centered cultures where everything is subjective—good is relative, bad is relative, and standards change with time, customs, and regions. But God’s judgment is absolute, based on His truth.

So what is God’s truth? John 14:6: “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life.’” Jesus is the truth. The Greek word *aletheia* means “truth—not as spoken but of reality.” That is, truth is not merely words or doctrine but reality lived out. Jesus being the truth means that the life He lived on earth for 33.5 years is the very reality of truth.

In other words, God’s standard of judgment is to compare our lives with Jesus’ life. Wherever we fall short of His standard, that is our sin. So, if we want to understand God’s standard of truth, we must read the four Gospels thoroughly and see how Jesus lived on earth. That is God’s absolute standard of judgment. I believe anyone who reads the four Gospels will fall to the ground and confess their sin—we simply do not measure up to the standard of Jesus Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters, we live in a society shaped by man-centered culture. It's easy to fall into relative value systems without realizing it. We think that as long as we live above the laws of man, we're fine. That may be true on earth, but before God and in eternity, that's far off. We must realize that when Christ returns, His judgment will begin with the house of God, and His standard is His own life on earth for 33.5 years. Any gap from that standard will be counted as sin.

Therefore, we must strive to live godly lives toward God and righteous lives toward others. We must also learn to regularly examine ourselves. Whenever we realize we fall short of Christ's standard, we must quickly confess. 1 John 1:9 tells us: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Verse 3: "And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?"

This is Paul's warning to us. To the self-righteous who judge others, Paul speaks plainly: "O man"—don't harbor false hope. You judge others while doing the same things yourself. Do you think you can escape God's judgment? Dear brothers and sisters, may we all heed Paul's warning. In our daily lives, may the Lord have mercy on us, teaching us to live godly toward God and righteous toward people.

I'd like to end with a stanza from a hymn by Watchman Nee:

"Each day I lift my eyes and long to see, the judgment seat's pure light.

May all my life and work on that day stand, enduring the testing fire."

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for showing us that the words Paul spoke to the ungodly and self-righteous are also a reminder for us. Though we have received grace and are justified by God, we confess that in our daily lives we fall short in many ways. We often, knowingly or unknowingly, judge others. Help us see that in whatever we judge others, we will be judged by God in the same. Under God's

absolute standards, we fall far short. So, we humble ourselves and ask for Your mercy.

Help us escape the condition of self-righteousness. Teach us not to criticize or judge our spouses, our children, or our fellow brothers and sisters in the church. Let us first see our own unworthiness in God's light, seek God's mercy, and be filled with patience and tolerance for those around us through God's love. May our lives reflect godliness toward God and righteousness toward others. Bless my daily life. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.