

SERMON STUDY GUIDE



Part 3 // “Rendered Hearts”



In the middle of the first century, in the heart of the Roman empire was a group of house churches that believed that Jesus of Nazareth, crucified and risen from the dead, was the true Lord of the world! The Romans had to be some of the bravest, most tested Christ-followers as they were heavily persecuted by the rulers of the day. Therefore, Paul writes a letter to them, expressing what he wishes he could say in person to them. The contents of this letter are so revolutionary that for 2,000 years churches all around the globe read it, reflect on it, and apply these truths to their lives. Join us as we venture through Romans and see how the gospel's message gives us a new identity and a new way to live!

ICE BREAKER QUESTIONS

- If you could instantly become an expert in something, what would it be and why?

- What is one thing that you want God to do in your life this season in Life Groups?

GOING DEEPER INTO THE MESSAGE

Read Romans 2:1-16 (CSB)

Therefore, every one of you who judges is without excuse. For when you judge another, you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the same things. 2 Now we know that God's judgment on those who do such things is based on the truth. 3 Do you think—anyone of you who judges those who do such things yet do the same—that you will escape God's judgment? 4 Or do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? 5 Because of your hardened and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment is revealed. 6 He will repay each one according to his works: 7 eternal life to those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality; 8 but wrath and anger to those who are self-seeking and disobey the truth while obeying unrighteousness. 9 There will be affliction and distress for every human being who does evil, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek; 10 but glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does what is good, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. 11 For there is no favoritism with God. 12 For all who sin without the law will also perish without the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For the hearers of the law are not righteous before God, but the doers of the law will be justified. 14 So, when Gentiles, who do not by nature have the law, do what the law demands, they are a law to themselves even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Their consciences confirm this. Their competing thoughts either accuse or even excuse them 16 on the day when God judges what people have kept secret, according to my gospel through Christ Jesus.

POINT 1 -God is the Judge; we are not.

Romans 2:1-16 presents a powerful message about God's role as the ultimate judge and humanity's inability to judge others righteously. Paul warns the readers to avoid the judgement of others because it only highlights our own hypocrisy. When we judge others, we condemn ourselves because we practice the same sins we condemn others for practicing (2:1).

The passage also emphasizes several important points to Paul's argument in Romans: God's judgement is based on the truth of God (2:2) and the works of man (2:5-8).

This is not to say we can't name and discern sin (Paul surely did so in Romans 1:18–32). But it is important that we don't become the Judge who decides someone's final destiny.

God's judgment applies equally to all people, regardless of their background or religious knowledge (2:12-16). Both Jews and Gentiles will be judged fairly, based on their actions and the truth written on their hearts.

In conclusion, this passage encourages us to walk in humility, self-examination, and recognition of our own need for God's mercy and grace.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Paul warns against judging others while practicing the same sins ourselves. In what areas of our lives do we find ourselves being critical of others' behavior while still struggling with similar issues? How can we cultivate more self-awareness and humility in this area?
- According to verse 4-5, Paul states that it's the kindness of God that leads to repentance. Reflect on a time when you experienced God's kindness in your life. How did it impact your relationship with Him and your attitude towards sin?
- Paul shares that the works of the law are written on the human heart: i.e. the conscience or "oughtness" of man (2:15). How have you seen this at work in your life? Or in the lives of others?

Let's continue reading Romans 2:17-29

17 Now if you call yourself a Jew, and rely on the law, and boast in God, 18 and know his will, and approve the things that are superior, being instructed from the law, 19 and if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light to those in darkness, 20 an instructor of the ignorant, a teacher of the immature, having the embodiment of knowledge and truth in the law— 21 you then, who teach another, don't you teach yourself? You who preach, "You must not steal"—do you steal? 22 You who say, "You must not commit adultery"—do you commit adultery? You who detest idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? 24 For, as it is written: The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. 25 Circumcision benefits you if you observe the law, but if you are a lawbreaker, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. 26 So if an uncircumcised man keeps the law's requirements, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? 27 A man who is physically uncircumcised, but who keeps the law, will judge you who are a lawbreaker in spite of having the letter of the law and circumcision. 28 For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, and true circumcision is not something visible in the flesh. 29 On the contrary, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart—by the Spirit, not the letter. That person's praise is not from people but from God.

POINT 2 - Allow God's Spirit to transform our hearts

In verses 17-29, Paul turns his attention to the Jewish community and exposes their false security in the law and hypocrisy that was rampant within their community. Just having the law (i.e. growing up learning and studying the Torah), did not guarantee their right standing with God. Many of them not only knew the law they taught the law without being obedient to the law (19-24). In doing so this blasphemed the name of God with the Gentiles. Paul wanted them to see that just knowing about God through the law was not enough to save them from their sins.

Righteousness also didn't come through the external acts of things like circumcision (25-29). Although circumcision was the mark of the covenant with God in the Old Testament (Genesis 17:10-14), this act alone did not transform the heart or make one righteous before God. Paul desperately wanted the readers to realize that they needed an internal transformation or the circumcision of the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit (vs.29).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Paul points out the hypocrisy of those who teach others but don't follow their own teachings (verses 21-23). In what areas of your life do you find yourself giving advice or instruction to others that you struggle to follow yourself? (i.e. Parenting, work ethic, words spoken, addiction, patience, etc.)
- Paul warned against basing our relationship with God on external practices of religion, rather than experiencing the inner work of God's transformation. How do you keep yourself from making your faith a series of religious rituals (i.e. going to church, reading the Bible, meal-time prayer, etc.)?
- In the last year, how have you seen the Holy Spirit transform your heart (inner life)? What do you desire the Holy Spirit to transform in you this year? How can you remain open to the Spirit's work in your life?