

DISCUSSION GUIDE: ROMANS 2:1-16

INTRODUCTION

In Romans 1:18-32, Paul laid out a stinging case against the unreligious Gentiles, saying they were without excuse in their rejection of God. Now, in Romans 2:1-16, Paul lays out the case against the religious moral person who may have been tempted to excuse themselves from Paul's charges in Romans 1. In short, the gospel is the great equalizer. All of us need the gospel—the sinner and the self-righteous

1. In Romans 2:1-5, Paul indicts the religious moral person who thinks they are somehow exempt from God's judgement and yet they practice the very things they condemn in others. As they hypocritically judge others, they are storing up judgement for themselves.

—Consider the mindset Paul mentions of presuming on the kindness, forbearance, and patience of God. Discuss how this might look like in a person's life.

—Verse 4 says God's patience and kindness are meant to lead us to repentance. Discuss the meaning of repentance. Is it mere sorrow for sin? How can we know if repentance is genuine? Why can it be so challenging to discern true repentance? (Read 2 Corinthians 7:10-11)

2. In Romans 2:6-11, Paul tells us that God's judgement is righteous. He shows no partiality. No one will be able to claim that he was not fair.

—Verses 7 and 13 has the potential to be confusing. On the surface it may seem that Paul is saying we are justified by our works. But we know that cannot be the case because that would contradict the rest of Romans. Rather, Paul is speaking of the fruit of justification which is godliness. So, he is really saying exactly what James 2:14-17 says—that faith without works is dead. Discuss how the Bible relates faith and works. Why are works (or spiritual fruit) necessary in the life a genuine Christian? (Read Ephesians 2:8-10).

3. There seems to be a parallel between Romans 1 and Romans 2 and the younger and older brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15. In that story, the younger brother is like the obvious "sinner" of Romans 1, while the older brother resembles the hypocritical moralist of Romans 2.

—Take some time to read Luke 15:11-32. How is the attitude of the older brother similar to the hypocrite in Romans 2:1-16? How is the younger brother similar to those indicted in Romans 1:18-32?

—What implications does this have for us as we live in a nominally “religious” culture like the Bible belt Deep South?

—Consider your own life. Are you prone to the moralism of the older brother and hypocrite of Romans 2? Discuss and confess ways this may show itself in your life.

—How is the gospel such good news for the moralist hypocrite?