Paul’s Letter to the Romans

Chapter 2

If we go back to Chapter 1: 28 through 32, and actually connect these verses with the beginning of Chapter 2, a better sense of what Paul is saying emerges. Here again was a perfect example of the early church fathers as they put the whole of the canon together had to figure where to place the verse numbers and the chapter designations. Now we kind of blew through the first chapter along with a historical introduction, as well as Paul introducing himself to the Roman people, and touched on the fact of, with Paul's personal introduction, he begins immediately to lay the basis or foundation of the new Christian faith.

Let's now dig into Chapter 2

A] Romans 2: 1 through 11; (read)

1] "*Therefore you are inexcusable oh, man, whoever you are, who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself, for you who judge practice the same things.*  
 If we look back at the last few verses regarding where God gave the sinner over to all those vile acts, and note Paul points to the folks he's writing to, mentioning the fact that there are those who look over the sin being committed and become tacit about it. But now he brings up how we self-righteously judge those who commit those sins, when we also commit them. Those folks who turned away from God will commit heinous deeds but we who DO know God commit sins too. You don't throw bricks at the image you see in the mirror.

Now speculating why Paul would launch into this immediately is a bit of a mystery, only because we don't know at this point the real problem was. We do know (or soon will during this study) that the Jewish Christians were at odds with the gentile Christians, over worship attitudes and holding to the Law of Moses, and both were facing persecution from the outsiders, could it be their composite attitudes in blaming each other for whatever actions were going on? Were the Jewish Christians judging the gentile Christians for not following the Law and vice-versa?

2] "*But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things*."

God judges in reality. That was simple. What I believe Paul is doing is telling the people to put such issues in God's hands and let Him be the judge. For, one, He alone knows what is truly going on and He also knows what is in people's hearts

3] "*And do you think this, oh man, you who judge those practicing such thing, and doing the same you will escape the judgment of God?"*

Sometimes we become so self-righteous we don't see the sin in our own lives, do we? We really believe we are just in God's Eyes, and just so perfectly please Him. This particular statement also sets the stage for a statement Paul makes later on in this letter. ‘For all sin and fall short of the Glory of God.’

4] "*Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance and longsuffering not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?*

So, at this point it makes one wonder what was going on with the Roman Christians, both Jew and Gentile, that he jumps right on their faults. It is interesting that so many of the commentators cite this as Paul is pointing directly at the Jews who believe they have the real track to God, and become self-righteous in the process. That is why they cling to the Law instead of Grace and that the Gentile Christians must come to the Law and forego Grace.

I don't know if this is completely correct, but I do think there is a probability that this is what Paul is referring to. At the same time not having formal teaching on the real attributes of God, neither group understands Grace, therefore, are in error in defining it. They need that personal relationship with God, and THAT leads them to their repentance.

5] "*But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourselves wrath in the day of wrath and revelation at the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds—"*

Ever watch someone do a nasty deed to someone else, and as the voices of disapproval rise, will step back and say, ‘What? What did I do?’ As if to say, I did nothing wrong here. Addressing these two Christian groups, we can ask the question without formal teaching, did they actually understand the mercy and grace of God, and did they understand the concept of the repentant heart? For the Jewish Christians had they learned the reality of God’s personal sacrifice for their sins as foretold by the prophets?

Paul is telling them that the unrepentance and lack of caring is being tallied against you because of absence of a true relationship with God. It is like an ongoing rap sheet (a detective term I learned from watching detective mysteries on TV)

6]--"e*ternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory honor and immortality, but those who are self-seeking and do not obey truth but obey unrighteousness indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also the Greek, for there is no partiality with God.”*

There is a choice in what behavior we have and what 'reward' we get. God will and does reward every man according to his actions. And as it is shown through scriptural teaching, God does not distinguish between the Jew and Greek (non-Jew). If we label ourselves Christian then we have a whole new set of criteria to live by, and we are judged by it. Here it shows that a man who seeks his own path apart from God as opposed to the man who constantly seeks after God, and His own path will lead to destruction, where the righteous man’s path will lead to his place with God.

B] Romans 2: 12 through 15; (read)

1] "*For as many as have sinned without law, will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law,--"*

Because Paul just cannot seem to bring himself to use periods, we'll interrupt sentences where we need. No matter what, sin is sin, whether under the Law for the Jews, or not for the Gentiles, (do you see the point) The Gentile Christians have not been subject to the Law of Moses, whereas the Jewish Christians believe they are still under that Law. Therefore, should the Gentile Christian be judged under the Jewish Law? Or does God judge separately by His standards, and then the sinner whether Gentile or Jew will be punished in the end? We all will die someday, and it is just a matter of Grace, whether we are with the Lord or not. Here again, Paul is setting the platform of sin attitudes for both the Gentile believer and Jewish believer.

2]--*"(For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified;"--*

So who are the 'hearers of the law'? the Jews because they are the ones who received the law, but doers and Paul does include the gentiles in this, and remember the Law never went away it was just fulfilled by the death and resurrection of Christ the ultimate sacrifice. What we have are hearers who do not act on what they hear in the Law, and they lose, however the doers will be justified. This aims at the leaders of the Jews who have corrupted their practices and lead their people to their destruction

3]--"*For when gentiles, who do not have the law, but by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law are a law unto themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them,) in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel."*

This then does point to the Jew that Paul is addressing which further on down will more ably verified.

Now this was a qualifying statement wherein Paul mentions the Jews being the hearers of the Law but then qualifies this by adding in parenthesis that the gentiles can and do live by what the Law says and it is credited to them. So what I see is the Jews were insisting that the gentile believers believe and act according to Jewish Law because Jesus was, in their mind, Jewish, therefore they should follow Jewish tradition and Law. Yet Peter, in his meeting with Cornelius, was shown BY GOD, that much of Jewish Law no longer applied in so far as dietary commands. The Law of Moses was for the Jew, but the basics of the Law were for all men. The Ten Commandments. This went to daily behavior, and actions. The laws for particular dietary and feast obligations were for the Jew.--- does this make sense?

C] Romans 2: 17 through 24; (read)

1] "*Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the Law, and make your boast in God, and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the Law, and are confident that you yourselves are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the Law."*

So there you have it, He is addressing the Jew and their regulation affinity, and the crux of the problem is that it is between the Jewish Christian and their Law and the gentile Christian who do not have the Law. From the beginning of this letter, the first thing he needed to address, and is doing so with this opener, is stepping right into this battle between Jew and Gentile and who is right and who is wrong, when it comes to the Law. ---Brave man.

The Jewish believer should be the teacher and guide for the Gentiles to claim a greater measure of understanding of the Jewish Jesus, but instead of being the teacher they are being the commander. When I witness for Christ, I don't demand they believe, but I gently bring them a new truth that they can understand. God the changes the heart. As we have studied in Proverbs, the parent does not frustrate the child when they teach, that kind of thing only turns them off from the admonition. But the parent does gently teach and apply the rod of correction, not by beating sense into the child but by gentle prodding.

Therefore, by the description Paul writes, they may know the Law but are not necessarily applying it in their own lives, and not being that light for those who do not know.

2] "*You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, do not commit adultery do you commit adultery? You who abhor Idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the Law?"*

Let's pick these off one at a time.

When I teach, I must study first before I can teach, therefore, I continually teach myself, right? (oh, I would hope so)

When one preaches on the sins of stealing, yet they can steal time, steal the limelight, steal ideas. One boss I had when I was very young, accused me of stealing from him, because when I got lazy, he was still paying my time and THAT was stealing from him. I never forgot that.

Committing adultery, yet how many commit adultery in our hearts when we guys see a pretty girl pass in from of us where do our eyes go? Or gals, when you see a handsome man with his muscles all pumped and sticky outy where do your eyes go? More common than you might believe.

In the idol issue, remember when we studied the letters to the Corinthians, we noted that meat sacrificed and other food stuffs to idols was then sold in the market and the market in those days was a bartering place and one dickered for the lowest price. There was no set price like we have in our grocery stores today, you went to market, asked the price and then bargained them down.

Now I want to be careful here, where writers seem to infer that the Jews were being sacrilegious or practicing their own idolatry, as there was only one temple and that was in Jerusalem, so the temples referred to would have been the foreign temples and the sacrifices referred to were the foreign sacrifices. What I am thinking is, the Jewish people figured the foreign temples and sacrifices were fair game, so why not. What an example they set for the Gentile believers.

3} "*For the Name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles because of you" as it is written." (Ezekiel 36: 22)*

The reputation of the Jew in Rome was becoming well known throughout Rome and in the Roman world because of their superior attitude, and these Gentile Christians were feeling the brunt of the criticism. One group of Christians might be condemned because of the actions of another group of Christians, Happens today, doesn't it?

D] Romans 2: 25 through 29; (read)

1] "*For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the Law, but if you are a breaker of the Law your circumcision has become uncircumcision."*

This only means being Jewish. A good Jew knew the Law and kept the Law and was honorable for doing so, but apparently with the way Paul was writing this there were a bunch of them in Rome who were seemingly Jew in name only, and to be practicing at Christianity was casting a pall on the name of Christ. In other words, the Jew who broke his own law was no better than the Gentile who never had the Law. How do people view you? Especially when you say you are a Christian, and then they see you in life circumstances? Does you action in life reflect who you are in any circumstance? An example that we shine in, is in traffic where the person in front is too slow, or someone cuts us off in heavy traffic.

2] "*Therefore if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the Law will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?"*

The circumcision was the covenant between God's people and God, and if the Gentile was keeping the Law better than the Jew and worshipping God through Jesus Christ, doesn't that count as a righteous man? Can the Jewish Christian who is not as faithful be able to overlord the Gentile Christian who is faithful?

3] "*And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the Law, judge you even with your written code and circumcision, are not a transgressor of the Law?"*

The picture emerges where the Jewish Christian, apparently in his arrogance, holds the gentile in low regard, hence the real problem. There has been a problem in the Jewish community where they hold themselves higher than their captors, because they have the living God, and evidently some of these Jewish believers in Christ did the same thing. But Paul has turned this around and telling them, being Jewish does not give you the higher moral ground, Not anymore.

4] "*For he is not a Jew, who is one outwardly but nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew who is one inwardly and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not from men, but from God."*

Paul is quoting from Deuteronomy 10: 16; "Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked." That meant that the Jew was as human and genetically the same as all non-jews and it was the covenant with God in Circumcision that set them apart, but all that circumcision was, was physical (and I might add, painful) and did not do much else. It was the heart of the people who practiced this making the statement that they belonged to God. Therefore, how could a circumcised person who does not follow the Law of Moses and serve the God who set him apart to begin with be a Jew?

So with all this being said, Paul is speaking directly at the Jewish Christian in an attempt to get their attention and will be striving to build a balanced bridge between the Jew and the Gentile. And we will find, this letter really aims more at these Jewish believers but broadens out to all believers as he goes on.