

Romans 2:3-4

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Paul is reminding the audience that God's judgment cannot be avoided, both for the good and the bad things we do. When we pass judgment on others for things we are also guilty of, we are incurring God's judgment on that action.

The previous verses (Romans 2:1–2) made clear that when we usurp God's job as the judge and judge others while not applying the same standard to ourselves, God will judge us by the same standard, the same truth. An interesting phrase in 2:1 translated “*the same things*” in the phrase “you who judge practice the same things” is in Greek, “*ta toiauta*,” which means “similar things.” The self-righteous Jewish “authorities” might well say they are not doing the same things as those “scummy Gentiles.” But Paul exposes them, and will show in subsequent verses that what they are doing is similar.

In chapter 1, we saw one way in which God judges: by giving us what we want and allowing us to experience the resulting negative consequences, including becoming a slave to our passions and sinful nature (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). Another means by which God judges us is by applying to us the judgment we wish on others. Here we desire to *pass judgment* on others and instead we ourselves are judged.

Paul emphasizes here that we as humans tend to think we can get away with bad behavior, but it is just not true: *But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God* (v 3)?

Addicts believe they can practice addiction without adverse consequences, and those who judge others believe they can do so without being judged themselves. But God is God, and God is just. The theme statement of Romans (Romans 1:16–17) made clear that just-living occurs when we humble ourselves before God and believe that His way is the best way for us, while prideful living stands in contrast, “I know best.”

God does not allow injustice to persist indefinitely. Humanity might engage in wishful thinking, hoping that God will not judge, but Paul emphasizes here that simply will not be the case. God made the world with a moral cause-effect, and He enforces it just as surely as He does for physical cause-effect.

Paul is still addressing *O man*, who passes judgment here in this section, which can be anyone, but we will learn soon he particularly has the competing Jewish authorities in mind, who claim Paul's teaching is wrong (v 17).

Despite the stark reality that truth will be applied to those who use it on others (and judgment will be dispensed upon those who judge others), God can bring redemption. Condemnation is something justice requires, but God bore all the condemnation of the world upon Himself that we might receive deliverance by faith (Colossians 2:14). Further, God is eager to forgive (John 3:16).

Paul alludes to the mercy of God and His eagerness to forgive humans when he asks, *Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance* (v 4)?

However, as Paul will make clear in Romans, although Jesus bore all our sins and has unconditionally freed us from the eternal penalty of sin through our receipt of the gift through faith, in order to experience the full benefits of that deliverance requires that we walk daily in faith. Walking by faith is the means by which we appropriate the power God gives us through the resurrection power of Jesus to apply and gain the practical benefits God promises.

Walking by faith in the resurrection power of Jesus allows us to overcome sin and its negative consequences in our daily lives. The natural consequence of sin is death (Romans 6:23). This includes avoiding judging others wrongly. The key manner in which we judge others wrongly is by condemning them for things we ourselves do (v 1). And Jesus asserts that when we are able to observe a fault in another, it is because we have that fault present in ourselves (Matthew 7:2–4).

Thankfully, our merciful God is always seeking to restore us (2 Peter 3:9). It is ever our opportunity to repent of our prideful condescension toward others, receive forgiveness for our pride and replace it with humble obedience.

Biblical Text

3 But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?