

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO ROMANS 2

This chapter contains, in general, a vindication of the justice and equity of the divine procedure against men, such as are described in the preceding chapter; and a refutation of the several pleas that might be made by the Gentiles, who had not the law, and by the Jews who had it; and concludes with exposing the wickedness of the latter, and with showing who they are that are properly Jews, and circumcised persons, in the account of God. It begins, in ([Romans 2:1](#)), with an inference deduced from what had been said in the latter part of the foregoing chapter; concluding that such, be they who they will, Jews or Gentiles, are inexcusable, who do the things they condemn others for: but though the judgment of such persons is wrong, the apostle observes, ([Romans 2:2](#)), that the judgment of God, in the condemnation of them, is right, of which he, and others, were fully assured; and which judgment is commended, by the rule of it, being according to truth; by the objects of it, criminals, who are left without excuse, and by the inevitableness of it, ([Romans 2:3](#)), being such as cannot possibly be escaped: and though some men might hope to escape it, because not immediately punished, but loaded with the blessings of Providence, and peculiar benefits of divine goodness; yet this was to be ascribed to the forbearance of God for the present; and that if these favours were despised, and they had not a good effect upon them to bring to repentance, but instead thereof were more and more hardened under them, as their guilt would be increased, so wrath would be secretly laying up for them, which will be revealed in the day of judgment, ([Romans 2:4,5](#)), at which time justice will be done to every man as his works will be found to be, ([Romans 2:6](#)), then follows a description of the several sorts of persons that will be judged, and of the different things that will be their portion: as that eternal life will be given to good men, ([Romans 2:7](#)), and the wrath of God poured down on bad men, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, ([Romans 2:8,9](#)). The happiness of good men is repeated again, and explained, and promised to the Jew first, and then to the Gentile, ([Romans 2:10](#)), and a reason given of this just and equal distribution, taken from the nature of God, who is no respecter of persons, ([Romans](#)

2:11), an instance of which is produced in both Jews and Gentiles, that sin; the one perishing with, the other without the law, ([Romans 2:12](#)), since it is not barely having and hearing the law, but acting up to it, which only can justify before God, ([Romans 2:13](#)), upon which the apostle proceeds to refute the plea that might be made by the Gentiles, in favour of themselves, why they should not be condemned, taken from their not having the written law; for though they had not the law written on tables of stone, as the Jews had, yet they had, as he observes, the law of nature written on their hearts, against which they sinned: this he proves by the effects of it, discernible in many of them by their outward lives and conversations, in conformity to the law; and by the inward testimony of their consciences, approving of good deeds, and reproaching for bad ones, ([Romans 2:14,15](#)), which two verses being put into a parenthesis, ([Romans 2:16](#)), is connected with ([Romans 2:13](#)), and points at the time when the doers of the law shall be justified, even at the day of judgment: which judgment is described by the author of it, God; by the subject of it, the secrets of men's hearts; by the person employed in the divine procedure, Jesus Christ; and by the evidence and certainty of it, the Gospel preached by the apostle, and then follow a description of the Jews, an account of their profession of religion, and an ironical concession of the several characters they assumed to themselves: they are described by their name, a Jew; by their religion, which lay in trusting in the law of Moses, and in boasting of their interest in God, as the God of Israel, ([Romans 2:17](#)), by their knowledge of the will of God, and approbation of the excellent things of his law, ([Romans 2:18](#)), and by the characters they took to themselves, ([Romans 2:19,20](#)), from which the apostle takes an occasion to expose the wickedness of some of their principal men, even their teachers, ([Romans 2:21,22](#)), by whose wicked lives and conversations God was dishonoured, and his name blasphemed among the Gentiles, ([Romans 2:23,24](#)), hence it appears, that their name, profession, and character, would not justify them before God; wherefore the apostle goes on, to remove their plea taken from circumcision, showing that could be of no use to them, but became void through their breach of the law, ([Romans 2:25](#)), and that, on the other hand, an uncircumcised Gentile, by keeping the law from right principles, and to a right end, appeared to be the true circumcision, ([Romans 2:26](#)), wherefore the circumcised Jew that broke the law, stood condemned by the uncircumcised Gentile that fulfilled it; so far was circumcision from being any part of his justification, or a plea in favour of it, ([Romans 2:27](#)).

Then the apostle concludes the chapter, by giving a definition of a real Jew, and of true circumcision; which he does first negatively, that it is not anything external that makes him a Jew, or anything in the flesh that is right circumcision; but secondly, positively, that it is an inward work of grace that denominates a man a Jew, in a spiritual sense, or an Israelite indeed; and that it is the circumcision of the heart, which is wrought by the Spirit of God, that is true and genuine: and such a Jew, and such a circumcision, are approved of by God, and commended by him, when the other have only praise of men, (~~4128~~ Romans 2:28,29), and therefore, however such persons may be justified before men, they cannot be justified in the sight of God; which is the drift and design of the apostle in the whole.

Ver. 1. *Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man,* etc..] Some think, from the connection of these words with the preceding chapter, that the Gentiles are here meant; and particularly those among them who seemed to be virtuous, and took upon them to be the reprovers of others, and yet did the same things themselves, as Socrates, Cato, Seneca, and others; and therefore must be inexcusable, because they knew better, and would be thought to have been so; wherefore such could never be justified before God by their works, but might be justly condemned by him, nor shall they escape his righteous judgment. Others think the Jews are meant, who despised and condemned the Gentiles, and thought themselves to be righteous persons, and justified in the sight of God; and who, though they were secretly guilty of many abominable iniquities, yet were very severe upon the sins of others, and therefore inexcusable: others think that magistrates are designed, whether among Jews or Gentiles, who reprove and punish sin in others, and therefore must be supposed to know the law, and the nature of sin, and so are inexcusable and self-condemned when they do the same things; wherefore though they may pass with impunity among men, they shall not escape the judgment of God. Rather the words respect every man, of whatsoever nation, office, or place; and may be particularly applied to hypocrites, and seem designed to correct censoriousness, and hasty judging, and to throw confusion on such who value themselves on being the censurers and reprovers of others:

whosoever thou art that judgest; whether a Jew or a Gentile, a public magistrate or a private person:

for wherein thou judgest another; that is, in what case or instance; the Complutensian edition and the Arabic version read, “in” “or with what judgment thou judgest another”; (see Gill on “~~400~~ Matthew 7:2”);

thou condemnest thyself; by judging them:

for thou that judgest dost the same things; art guilty of the same thing condemned in others, and therefore must be self-condemned.

Ver. 2. *But we are sure that the judgment of God*, etc..] By “the judgment of God”, is not meant what is exercised on and towards men in this life, but what will follow after death; which is called judgment to come, is represented as certain, will be universal as to persons and things, and is here called “the judgment of God”, in opposition to the judgment of men; and because it will be carried on by God only, who is omniscient and omnipotent, and will be definitive: this is and will be,

according to truth, against them which commit such things; in opposition to all hypocrisy and unrighteousness: and it may design the law and light of nature by which the Gentiles, the law of Moses by which the Jews, and the Gospel of Christ by which all have enjoyed the Gospel revelation, will be judged; or the truth of their own consciences in them all: now we may be sure of this judgment; and of its being according to truth, from reason, from Scripture, and from the being and perfections of God.

Ver. 3. *And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same*, etc..] Some men may be so vain as to imagine, that though they do the same things which they condemn in others, they

shall escape the judgment of God: but such will find themselves most sadly mistaken; there is no avoiding the general judgment; all men must come to it; there will be no eluding it through craftiness and deceit, through bribery and corruption; there will be no escaping condign punishment, through might in the criminal, or through the judge's ignorance of his crimes, or want of ability and power to punish.

Ver. 4. *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness*, etc..] The apostle anticipates an objection against what he had said, taken from the prosperity of these persons; who might conclude from thence, that they were not so wicked as he had represented them; and that they should escape the judgment of God, otherwise they would have been punished by God in this life, and not have prospered as they did; which objection is removed by

observing, that it was not their innocence, but “the riches of” divine “goodness, and longsuffering and forbearance”, which were the causes of their prosperity: by “the riches of God's goodness”, are not meant the riches of his special, spiritual, and eternal goodness, which his own people are only partakers of: but the general riches of his temporal and providential goodness, which the men of the world have commonly the greatest share of; they have it in great plenty, which is signified by “riches”: and by his “longsuffering and forbearance” are designed, not his forbearance of his chosen ones and his longsuffering to them, which issue in their salvation; but his forbearance of sinners, and longsuffering towards them, in not as yet pouring down his wrath and displeasure on them; all which are “despised” by them; the riches of his goodness, when he is not glorified for his providential mercies, and in them, and when these are abused to the lusts of men. The

forbearance of God is despised, when men on account of it harden themselves in sin; and his

longsuffering, when they deny his concern in Providence, or a future judgment, and promise themselves impunity. Moreover, the apostle obviates the above objection by asserting that God's end in his goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, was not to testify to their innocence, as they imagined, but to lead them to repentance, of which they were ignorant;

not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance. This is to be understood not of a spiritual and evangelical repentance, which is a free grace gift, and which none but the Spirit of God can lead, or bring persons to; but of a natural and legal repentance, which lies in an external sorrow for sin, and in an outward cessation from it, and reformation of life and manners, which the goodness of God to the Jews should have led them to; who had a large share of the good things of life, a land flowing with milk and honey, and many outward privileges which other nations had not, as the giving of the law, the covenant and promises, the word and ordinances; and repentance here chiefly designs, as it may respect the Gentiles, a change of mind and practice in them relating to idolatry and superstition Now the providential goodness of God has a tendency to lead persons to repentance on this account; but of this end of divine goodness the Gentiles were ignorant; nor was this end answered thereby; which shows the wretched depravity of human nature; (see ~~4415~~ Acts 14:15-17).

Ver. 5. *But after thy hardness and impenitent heart*, etc..] The apostle goes on to show, that such persons who promise themselves impunity on the score of prosperity, shall not always go unobserved and unpunished; for there is a day of wrath and righteous judgment hastening on, and will take place after they have filled up the measure of their iniquity. There is a natural “hardness” of the heart in every son and daughter of Adam; and there is an acquired habitual hardness, which is increased by sinning; and a judicial one, which God, for sin, sometimes gives persons up unto. An “impenitent heart” is not only an heart which does not repent, but such an one as cannot repent, being harder than the nether millstone. Now men, by such hardness and impenitence,

treasure up unto [themselves] wrath: they are the authors of their own destruction; by which is meant the wrath of God, in opposition to the riches of his goodness, despised by them; and is in reserve for wicked men: and is laid up

against, and will be brought forth in

the day of wrath; which the Scriptures call “the evil day”, (^{306B}Amos 6:3) (^{406B}Ephesians 6:13); the day fixed by God, when he will call men to an account for their sins, and stir up all his wrath against them:

and revelation; that is, the day of revelation, when Christ shall be revealed from heaven in flames of fire, the sins of men shall be revealed, and the wrath of God against them:

of the righteous judgment of God; so some copies read; that is, the day of the righteous judgment; so the Arabic version reads, “and of the appearance of God, and of his righteous judgment”; for the judgment will be at the appearance of Christ, who is God, and at his kingdom, (^{504E}2 Timothy 4:1). The Alexandrian copy reads, “and of the retribution of the righteous judgment of God”; and so the Ethiopic version seems to have read, rendering the words, “if so”, or “seeing thy retribution may come upon thee”, and “if the judgment of God may befall thee”; for when the judgment of God shall come, as there will be a revelation of men's sins, and of the wrath of God against them, there will be a just retribution according to their works. Or “the revelation of the righteous judgment of God”; that is, when the judgment of God, which is now hid, shall appear; and which is said to be “righteous”, because it will be carried on in a righteous manner,

and proceed upon, and be executed according to the strictest rules of justice and equity.

Ver. 6. *Who will render to every man according to his deeds.*] God will be the Judge, who is righteous, holy, just, and true; every man in particular will be judged; as the judgment will be general to all, it will be special to everyone, and will proceed according to their works; for God will render to wicked men according to the demerit of their sins, the just recompense of reward, eternal damnation; and to good men eternal life, not according to the merit of their good works, which have none in them, but according to the nature of them; such who believe in Christ, and perform good works from a principle of grace, shall receive the reward of the inheritance, which is a reward of grace, and not of debt. In other words, God will render to evil men according to the true desert of their evil deeds; and of his own free grace will render to good men, whom he has made so by his grace, what is suitable and agreeable to those good works, which, by the assistance of his grace, they have been enabled to perform.

Ver. 7. *To them who by patient continuance in well doing,* etc..] These words are descriptive of one sort of persons, to whom God will render according to their works; and must be understood not of the Gentiles, the best and most moralized among them; for they sought after worldly things, after human wisdom, and popular applause, and not after God, his honour and glory, nor after immortality, which is only brought to light by the Gospel; nor of the pharisaical Jews, who sought for righteousness by the works of the law, and honour and glory from men, and not from God; nor of any unregenerate persons, but only of such who have the true principles of grace implanted in them, whether Jews or Gentiles: now the things which these men seek after are

glory; not the glory of this world, nor any from the men of it; but the glory of God and Christ; to be glorious within and without, by the grace and righteousness of Christ here, and to enjoy eternal glory with him hereafter.

Honour; not that which Adam had in innocence, and did not abide in; but that which is, and abides with Christ, and which all the saints have, and shall have.

Immortality; not the immortality of the soul, which is common to all; but the incorruption of the body, or the glorious resurrection of it to everlasting life at the great day, or the incorruptible crown, and never

fading inheritance of the saints in light. The manner in which these things are sought is, “by patient continuance in well doing”; by doing good works, and by doing these good works well, from a principle of faith and love, and with a view to the glory of God; and by patiently enduring reproaches and sufferings for well doing, and by persevering therein: not that these things are to be had, or are expected by the saints to be had for the sake of patience and well doing; yet they may be sought for, and looked unto, as an encouragement to well doing, and continuance therein; and though not “for”, yet “in” well doing there is a reward. These words do not express that for the sake of which glory is had; but only describe the persons who seek, and the manner in which they seek for it, to whom God will render

eternal life, which he of his rich grace promised them before the world was, and of his free favour has put into the hands of Christ for them, and which, as a pure gift of grace, he bestows on them through him.

Ver. 8. *But unto them that are contentious*, etc..] This is a description of the other sort of persons to whom God will render according to their deeds, “who are of the contention”; who contend for victory, and not truth; strive about words to no profit; are quarrelsome, and sow discord among men, and in churches;

and do not obey the truth; neither attend to the light of nature, and to that which may be known of God by it; nor regard and submit to the Gospel revelation and so design both the Gentiles, which knew not God, and Jews, and others, who obey not the Gospel:

but obey unrighteousness; are servants of sin: to these God renders

indignation and wrath; wrathful or fiery indignation, the hottest of his fury.

Ver. 9. *Tribulation and anguish*, etc..] These, with the foregoing words, are expressive of the second death, the torments of hell, the worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched: which will fall

upon every soul of man that doth evil; whose course of life and conversation is evil; for “the soul that sins shall die”, (²³⁸⁰⁴Ezekiel 18:4,20), unless satisfaction is made for his sins by the blood of Christ:

of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; regard being had to what nation they belong.

Ver. 10. *But glory, honour, and peace,* etc..] Which are so many words for the everlasting happiness of the saints; which is a “crown of glory that fadeth not away” (~~(1)~~ 1 Peter 5:4)); an honour exceeding that of the greatest potentates upon earth, since such that enjoy it will be kings and priests, and sit with Christ on his throne to all eternity; and is a peace that passes all understanding: all which will be rendered

to every man that doth good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile; which none without Christ, and his grace, and by the strength of nature, does, or can do; not that good works are causes of salvation, but are testimonies of faith, and fruits of grace, with which salvation is connected, whether they be found in Jews or Gentiles; for neither grace nor salvation are peculiar to any nation, or set of people.

Ver. 11. *For there is no respect of persons with God.*] It will not come into consideration, at the day of judgment, of what nation men are; or from what parents they are descended; nor of what age and sex persons be; nor in what state and condition they have lived in this world; nor will it be asked to what sect they have belonged, and by what denomination they have been called; or whether they have conformed to such and such externals and rituals in religion; but only whether they are righteous men or sinners; and accordingly as they appear under these characters, judgment will proceed. Some object from hence, though without any reason, to the doctrine of particular election of certain persons to everlasting salvation. This passage respects matters of strict justice, and is a forensic expression relating to courts of judicature, where persons presiding are to have no regard to the faces of men, but do that which is strictly just between man and man; and does not respect matters of grace and free favour, such as giving alms, forgiving debts, etc.. A judge, as such, is to regard no man's person, but to proceed in matters before him, according to the rules of law and justice; should he do otherwise, he would be chargeable with being a respecter of persons; but then he may bestow alms on what objects he pleases; and forgive one man who is personally indebted to him, and not another, without any such imputation. This, applied to the case in hand, abundantly clears it; for though God, as a Judge, respects no man's person; yet in matters of grace he distinguishes one person from another, as it is plain he does by the bounties of his Providence. Besides, God is not bound to any person by any laws, but acts as a Sovereign; he is not moved by anything in the creature; as his choice is not confined to persons of any particular nation, family, sex, or condition, so neither does it proceed upon

anything, or a foresight of anything in them, or done by them; and as there is no worthiness in them that are chosen, and saved above others, so no injury is done to the rest: add to all this, that those that are saved by virtue of electing grace, are saved in a way of righteousness agreeably to the holy law, and strict justice of God; so that no complaint can be made against the distinguishing methods of grace, upon the foot of strict justice.

Ver. 12. *For as many as have sinned without law*, etc.] This is an instance of the strict justice of God, and proves him to be no respecter of persons; for the Gentiles, who were “without law”, the written law of Moses, not without the law of nature in their breasts, nor without some civil laws and statutes of their own; inasmuch as they “sinned” against the God of nature, and the law and light of nature, they

shall also perish without law: not that their condemnation and perdition will be illegal, or not in due course of law; but it will not proceed upon, or according to the law of Moses, they never had; and much less for not believing in Christ, of whom they never heard; but their perdition will be for their sins committed without the law of Moses, against the law of nature: their not having the written law of Moses will be no plea in their favour, or be a reason why they should not be condemned; their persons will not be regarded as with or without the law, but their sins committed by them, to which facts their consciences will bear witness:

and, so on the other hand,

as many as have sinned in the law; who have been in and under the law of Moses, and have sinned against it, meaning the Jews:

shall be judged by the law; and condemned by it, as they were in this world, and will be hereafter: their having this law will be no bar against their condemnation, but rather an aggravation of it; their hearing of it will be no plea in their favour; nor their doing of it neither, unless they could have done it to perfection; for perfect obedience it requires, as a justifying righteousness, otherwise it curses, condemns, and adjudges to death.

Ver. 13. *For not the hearers of the law are just before God*, etc.] The apostle here shows, that the Jews were justly condemned, notwithstanding their having and hearing of the law; since hearing without doing it, will never denominate persons righteous in the sight of God, however it might recommend them in the sight of men: regard seems to be had either to the first delivery of the law by Moses to the people of Israel, when he read it to

them, and they hearkened to it, and promised obedience; or rather to the reading and hearing it every sabbath day; and may include a speculative knowledge of it, without a practical obedience to it; and which therefore must fall greatly short of entitling them to a justifying righteousness; since not these,

but the doers of the law, shall be justified; by whom are meant, not such who merely literally and externally fulfil the law, as they imagine; for the law is spiritual, and regards the inward as well as the outward man, and requires internal holiness, as well as external obedience; and the apostle is speaking of justification before God, who sees the heart, and not before men, who judge according to outward appearance: nor are such designed who are imperfect doers of the law; for the law requires a perfect obedience, and what is not perfect is not properly righteousness; nor does it, nor can it consider an imperfect righteousness as a perfect one; for it accuses of, pronounces guilty, curses, and condemns for every transgression of it. But such only can be intended, who are doers of it spiritually, internally, as well as externally, and that perfectly. Adam, in his state of innocence, was a perfect doer of the law; he sinning, and all his posterity in him, none of them are righteous, but all pass under a sentence of condemnation. The best of men, even believers in Christ, are not without sin in themselves; and when any of the saints are said to be perfect, it must be understood in a comparative sense, or as they are considered in Christ. There never was but one since Adam, and that is Christ, who has fulfilled, or could perfectly fulfil the law; the thing is impossible and impracticable for fallen man: hence these words must be understood either hypothetically, thus, not the hearers of the law, but if there were any perfect doers of it, they would be justified before God; or else of such persons who are considered in Christ, by whom the whole perfect righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them, and who may be reckoned as perfect doers of it in him, their substitute, surety, and representative.

Ver. 14. *For when the Gentiles which have not the law*, etc..] The objection of the Gentiles against their condemnation, taken from their being without the law, is here obviated. The apostle owns that they had not the law, that is, the written law of Moses, and yet intimates that they had, and must have a law, against which they sinned, and so deserved punishment, and which they in part obeyed; for these men

do by nature the things contained in the law. The matter and substance of the moral law of Moses agrees with the law and light of nature; and the Gentiles in some measure, and in some sort, did these things by nature; not that men by the mere strength of nature without the grace of God, can fulfil the law, or do anything that is acceptable to God; and indeed, what these men did was merely natural and carnal, and so unacceptable to God. Some understand this of nature assisted by grace, in converted Gentiles, whether before or after the coming of Christ; others expound the phrase, by nature, freely, willingly, in opposition to the servile spirit of the Jews, in their obedience to the law; though it rather seems to design the dictates of natural reason, by which they acted: and so

these having not the law, the written law,

are a law to themselves; which they have by nature and use, and which natural reason dictates to them. So Plato distinguishes the law

“into written and un written ^{f15}: the written law is that which was used in commonwealths; and that *κατα εψη γινομενος*, “which was according to custom or nature”, was called unwritten, such as not to go to market naked, nor to be clothed with women's clothes; which things were not forbidden by any law, but these were not done because forbidden by the unwritten law;”

which he calls “unwritten”, because not written on tables, or with ink; otherwise it was written in their minds, and which by nature and use they were accustomed to.

Ver. 15. *Which show the work of the law written in their hearts,* etc..]

Though the Gentiles had not the law in form, written on tables, or in a book, yet they had “the work”, the matter, the sum and substance of it in their minds; as appears by the practices of many of them, in their external conversation. The moral law, in its purity and perfection, was written on the heart of Adam in his first creation; was sadly obliterated by his sin and fall; upon several accounts, and to answer various purposes, a system of laws was written on tables of stone for the use of the Israelites; and in regeneration the law is reinscribed on the hearts of God's people; and even among the Gentiles, and in their hearts, there are some remains of the old law and light of nature, which as by their outward conduct appears, so by the inward motions of their minds,

their conscience also bearing witness; for, as the Jews say ^{f16} **wb hdy[m**
mda l ç wtmçn, “the soul of a man witnesses in him”; for, or against him:

and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another; and this the Heathens themselves acknowledge, when they ^{f17} speak of

“**ταμειον δικαστηριον και κριτηριον της συνειδησεως**, “the conclave, tribunal and judgment of conscience”; and which they call **δικαστην δικαιοτατον**, “the most righteous judge”: whose judgment reason receives, and gives its suffrage to, whether worthy of approbation or reproof; when it reads in the memory as if written on a table the things that are done, and then beholding the law as an exemplar, pronounces itself either worthy of honour or dishonour.”

Ver. 16. *In the day when God shall judge*, etc..] These words are to be read in connection with (^{40B}Romans 2:13), and express the time when both Jews and Gentiles will be judged, called a “day”, both because of the clearness and evidence of the judgment that will be made, and because a certain time is fixed, though not known, which will surely come; also the matter of the judgment, which will be,

the secrets of men: whether good or bad, which are only known to God and themselves, and which may have been done ignorantly by them; “for God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil”, (²¹²⁴Ecclesiastes 12:14), which is so interpreted by the Jews ^{f18},

“when R. Jochanan came to that Scripture, he wept; “for God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing”;

upon which the gloss says, yea, for those things which are hidden from him, which he has committed through ignorance, will he bring him into judgment; everything, even the least thing in a literal sense, but not for such silly trifling things they mention in the same place; doubtless the Holy Ghost means the secrets of men's hearts and actions, and the hidden things of darkness which are contrary to the holy law of God. The person by whom this awful judgment will be carried on is,

Jesus Christ; to whom all judgment is committed, who is ordained Judge of quick and dead, and is every way fit for that office, being God as well as man, and so both omniscient and omnipotent: and this the apostle says will be,

according to my Gospel; his meaning is not that the Gospel will be the, rule of judgment, because he speaking of the judgment of the Gentiles, as well as of the Jews, who never heard of the Gospel; but that what he had said concerning a day of judgment, of Christ's being the Judge, and of God's judging by him the secrets of men, were as true and as certain as the Gospel which he preached was; and was "conformable", or agreeable to it, as the Arabic version reads it, and might be learned and proved from it. This he calls, "my Gospel"; not because the author or subject of it; but because it was committed to his trust and was preached by him; and in opposition to, and to distinguish it from the Gospel of the false apostles. Eusebius says ^{f19}, that the Apostle Paul had used to call the Gospel according to Luke his Gospel, and that it is said, that whenever he makes mention of his Gospel, he designs that.

Ver. 17. *Behold, thou art called a Jew*, etc..] From hence to the end of the chapter the Jews are particularly addressed; their several privileges and characters are commemorated, which by an ironical concession are allowed them; several charges are brought against them, even against their principal men; and the plea in favour of them, from their circumcision, is considered; and the apostle's view in the whole, is to show that they could not be justified before God by their obedience to the law of Moses: "behold"; take notice, observe it, this will be granted: "thou art called a Jew"; thou art one by name, by nation, and by religion; but no name, nor outward religion, nor a mere profession, will justify before God:

and retest in the law; which may be understood of their having the law and the knowledge of it, what is to be done and avoided easily, without any fatigue and labour; of their pleasing and applauding themselves with the bare having and hearing of it; of their trust and confidence in it; and of their inactivity and security in it, as persons asleep; and so of their coming short of the knowledge of the Gospel, and of Christ the end of the law for righteousness, their whole confidence being placed in that: so the Targumist in (^{<24RB>}Jeremiah 8:8) paraphrases the words,

"we are wise, "and in the law of the Lord", $\hat{w}xyj\ r\ agj\ na$, do we trust;"

and makest thy boast of God. There is a right boasting of God in opposition to boasting in the creature, when men ascribe all the blessings of nature and grace to the Lord alone, and praise him for all their enjoyments,

temporal and spiritual; and when they trust in, and glory, and make their boast of Christ as the Lord their righteousness, in whom alone they are, and can be justified. But the boasting here spoken of, was such that was not right; these men boasted of their bare external knowledge of the one God, when the Gentiles around them were ignorant of him; of their being the covenant people of God, when others were aliens and strangers; and of their having the word and worship of the true God, which other nations were unacquainted with; and, on these external things they depended, which was their fault.

Ver. 18. *And knowest his will*, etc..] Not the secret will or purpose of God; nor his revealed will in the Gospel, for of this they were ignorant; but his declared will in the law, showing what is to be done, and what is not to be done: to know which in express terms was a privilege, that other people had not; but then the bare knowledge of this will be of no avail: for persons may know their Lord's will, as the Jews did, and not do it, and so be worthy to be beaten with many stripes:

and approvest the things that are more excellent: or “triest the things that differ”; from one another, and from the will and law of God; or as the Syriac, “discernest” *atyl w*, “things that are convenient”; agreeable, which are fit and ought to be done: and having tried and discerned them, they approved of them in their judgment as the things more excellent; but then they did not put these excellent things in practice which they approved of; and the knowledge and approbation they had of these things, arose from their

being instructed out of the law, and not the Gospel; for the excellent things of the Gospel, they had no discerning, knowledge and approbation of; (see <000>Philippians 1:10).

Ver. 19. *And art confident that thou thyself*, etc..] Being vainly puffed up in, their fleshly minds, they were strongly persuaded that they were very fit persons to be

a guide to the blind: all men are by nature blind, as to the knowledge of divine and spiritual things; the meaner sort of the people among the Jews seem to be intended here; or else the ignorant Gentiles, whom the Jews were very fond of making proselytes to their religion and laws; but miserable guides were they, whether to their own people, or others; blind guides of the blind. Gospel ministers best deserve this title:

a light of them that are in darkness; so Christ, John the Baptist, the disciples of Christ, and all Gospel ministers are; but these men, who arrogated such characters to themselves, were dim lights, and dark lanterns. The apostle seems to have respect to those very high and exalted characters the Jews give of their doctors, as when they call one, **arwhnd anyxwb**, “the lamp of light”^{f20}; another, **açydyq anyxwb**, “the holy lamps”^{f21}; and a third, **l arçy rn**, “the lamp of Israel”^{f22}; with many others of the same kind; (see Gill on “~~4154~~ Matthew 5:14”) and (see Gill on “~~4155~~ John 5:35”).

Ver. 20. *An instructor of the foolish*, etc..] All men in a state of unregeneracy are foolish, and need instruction; here the common people among the Jews, who knew not the law, are meant; it was very usual to call anyone of their doctors and masters **hrwm**, “an instructor”: it follows,

a teacher of babes; either in age or in understanding; such who taught either of them were called by the Jews **twqwnyt ydml m**, “teachers of babes”. Thus they paraphrase the text in (~~2113~~ Daniel 12:3):

“they that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament. This is the Judge who judges, the judgment of truth truly, and the collectors of alms: and they that turn, many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever; these are, **twqwnt ydml m**, “the teachers of babes”^{f23}.”

Though these are said^{f24} to be inferior to the wise men, or doctors:

which hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law: they had not a true knowledge of the law; only a draught and scheme, the outward form of the law, and a mere shadow and appearance of the knowledge of the truth of it. From hence the apostle would have it concluded, that though the Jews had the law, and in some sense knew it, yet inasmuch as they did not perform it, they could not be justified by it; and that even their teachers, their greatest masters and doctors, were very deficient, as appears from what follows; and since they could not be instilled by it, who taught others the knowledge of it, the hearers of it could not expect justification from it.

Ver. 21. *Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?* etc..] Several charges are here brought against the Jews, even against their

teachers; for though they are put by way of question, they are to be considered as so many assertions and matters of fact; thus, though they taught others, they did not teach themselves; they were blind leaders of the blind; they were ignorant of the law, of the spirituality of it; they were desirous to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they said, nor whereof they affirmed: they were ignorant of the righteousness of God, of whom they boasted; and of the more excellent things of Moses, and the prophets, they pretended to explain; and of the Messiah, of whom their prophecies so much spoke: and besides, what they did understand and teach, they did not practise themselves; than which nothing is more shameful, or more betrays stupidity and ignorance; for as they themselves ^{f25} say,

“he that teaches men, **hç[y al awhç rbdb**, “that which he himself does not do”, is like a blind man who has a lamp in his hand, and enlightens others, but he, himself walks in darkness.”

And such teachers they own were among them.

“Beautiful (say they ^{f26}) are the words which come out of the mouths of them that do, them: Ben Assai was a beautiful preacher, but did not well observe;”

i.e., to do what he said.

Thou that preach at a man should not steal, dost thou steal? some understand this figuratively, of stealing, or taking away the true sense of the law, and putting a false one upon it; of which these men were notoriously guilty: but rather, it is to be understood literally, not only of the inward desires and motions of their minds after this sin, and of their consenting to, and conniving at theft and robbery, but of their doing it themselves; who, under pretence of long prayers, “devoured widows' houses”, (^{¶1234}Matthew 23:14 ^{¶1240}Mark 12:40 ^{¶1247}Luke 20:47), plundered and robbed them of their substance: no wonder that these men preferred Barabbas, a thief and a robber, to Jesus Christ.

Ver. 22. *Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, etc..]*

Adultery here is to be taken not figuratively for adulterating the word of God, and mixing it with their own inventions; but literally for the sin of adultery, and that not in heart only, but in act:

dost thou commit adultery? an iniquity which greatly prevailed among the Jews at this time of day; hence Christ calls them “an adulterous generation”, (~~4029~~ Matthew 12:39 16:4 ~~4033~~ Mark 8:38); and that to such a degree, that by the advice of their great Rabbi, R. Jochanan ben Zaccai, they left off the trial of the suspected woman, cases of this nature being so very numerous: and this sin prevailed not only among the common people, but among their principal doctors; as may be learnt from their own writings, and from that conviction of this iniquity which the Scribes and Pharisees were brought under by Christ, when the woman, taken in adultery, was had before him by them, (~~4100~~ John 8:9).

Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? for though at this time they abhorred idolatry, to which their forefathers were so much inclined, and so often fell into, yet they were guilty of sacrilege; by violating the worship of God, and polluting it with their own inventions; by pillaging or withholding, or not offering the sacrifices they ought; and by plundering the temple, and converting the sacred things of it to their own use.

Ver. 23. *Thou that makest thy boast of the law*, etc..] Of their having it, which other nations had not; of their knowledge of it, which many of their own people were without, or had but a small share of; and of their keeping of it even to perfection:

through breaking of the law dishonourest thou God? sin sometimes is expressed by a word which signifies a “fall”; sometimes by another, which signifies missing of the mark, or straying from it; sometimes by another, which signifies a “contrariety to the law” of God; and here, by one which signifies a “passing over it”, and the bounds which it has set, as the rule of man's obedience; and hereby God, the lawgiver, is dishonoured: for as God is glorified by good works, when rightly performed, he is dishonoured by evil ones; for his authority, as a lawgiver, is trampled upon and despised. Now persons guilty of such iniquities as here mentioned, could not be justified before God, or accepted by him on account of any works of righteousness done by them.

Ver. 24. *For the name of God is blasphemed*, etc..] The being and perfections of God, such as his holiness, omniscience, and omnipotence, are denied, or evil spoken of; and also the law of God, and the forms of worship instituted by him:

among the Gentiles through you: through their iniquities, who when they observe them, conclude that the God of Israel is not omniscient, or he would know, and take notice of these things; and that he is not holy, or he could not bear them; nor omnipotent, or he would revenge them:

as it is written; the passage or passages referred to are not mentioned, but are perhaps (²⁵¹⁶Isaiah 52:5 ²⁵¹⁷Ezekiel 36:20,23). In the former of these texts the words are, “they that rule over them make them to howl; saith the Lord, and my name continually every day is blasphemed”; which are spoken of the rulers of the people, either of their ecclesiastical or political rulers, or both; and so Aben Ezra interprets them of *l arçy yl wdg*, “the great men of Israel”; and here by the apostle are applied to their doctors and wise men: and in the latter are these words, “thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the Heathen”; that is, by their unbecoming walk and conversation, and especially by the disagreeable conduct of their principal men: and the Jews own the same things, and complain of them in much the “same language the apostle here does, saying, “they disgrace the law before the people of the earth, (the common people, or else the Gentiles,) how? a wise man sits and expounds in the congregation, saying, thou shalt not lend upon usury, and he lends upon usury; he says, thou shalt not commit a robbery, and he commits a robbery; he says, *bwngt al* , “thou shalt not steal, and he steals”: says R. Berechiah, it happened to one man that his cloak was stolen from him, and he went before the judge about it, and he found it spread upon his bed or couch: and, says the same Rabbi, it happened to a certain man that his pot was stolen from him, and he went before the judge about it, and he found it upon his hearth: hence it is said, “as they were increased they sinned against me, therefore will I change their glory into shame”, (²⁸⁰⁷Hosea 4:7) ^{f27}.

Ver. 25. *For circumcision verily profiteth*, etc..] The plea from circumcision in favour of the Jews, and their acceptance with God, and justification before him, is here, and in the following verses, considered. The apostle allows that circumcision was profitable; which must be understood whilst it was in force, before the abrogation of it, for since, it is not profitable but pernicious; and then it was only profitable, in case the law was kept:

if thou keepest the law; that is, perfectly; for circumcision obliged persons to keep the whole law. Now the circumcised Jews did not keep it in such

sense; wherefore circumcision was of no use to them, but, on the contrary, was an handwriting against them.

But if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision; that is, it is not accounted circumcision; it is of no avail; such a man was all one as an uncircumcised Gentile, and appeared to be uncircumcised in a spiritual sense: the apostle perhaps alludes to a practice among some of the Jews, to bring on and draw over the foreskin, after they had been circumcised; (see Gill on ^{<4078>}1 Corinthians 7:18”).

Ver. 26. *Therefore if the uncircumcision keep*, etc..] These words are spoken hypothetically; if any such persons could be found among the Gentiles who keep the whole law of God; and can only be absolutely understood of such, who from a principle of grace act in obedience to the law; as in the hands of Christ, and who look to Christ as the fulfilling end of it, for righteousness; in whom they keep

the righteousness of the law perfectly:

shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? by this question it is suggested, that an uncircumcised Gentile, who keeps the law as in the hands of Christ, and under the influences of his Spirit and grace, and keeps it in Christ, is reckoned a circumcised person in a spiritual sense, and must be preferable to a circumcised Jew that breaks it.

Ver. 27. *And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature*, etc..] That is, the Gentiles, who are by nature uncircumcised; for as circumcision was by the command of God, and performed by the art of men, uncircumcision is by nature, and what men naturally have. Now

if it, such persons,

fulfil the law in Christ, they will

judge thee, the circumcision: and condemn, as Noah condemned the old world, (^{<8107>}Hebrews 11:7), and the men of Nineveh and the queen of the south will condemn the men of that generation, in which Christ lived, (^{<4124>}Matthew 12:41,42 ^{<4133>}Luke 11:31,32).

Who by the letter and circumcision transgress the law; that is, either by the law, which is “the letter”, and “by circumcision”, or “by circumcision which is in the letter”, (^{<4129>}Romans 2:29), sin being increased by the prohibitions of the moral law, and the rituals of the ceremonial law, and the

more so by a dependence upon an obedience to either of them, or both, for justification.

Ver. 28. *For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly*, etc..] The apostle removes the plea in favour of the Jews, taken from their name and privilege, by distinguishing between a Jew and a Jew, and between circumcision and circumcision: “he is not a Jew which is one outwardly”; by mere name, nature, nation, religion, and profession:

neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; which takes away the flesh of the foreskin, but not the carnality of the heart; leaves a mark upon the flesh, but no impression on the mind. This is nothing, is not the true, solid, substantial, spiritual circumcision, which only avails in the sight of God.

Ver. 29. *But he is a Jew which is one inwardly*, etc..] Who has an internal work of grace upon his soul: who has not only an outward name, but an inward nature; not the law of God in the hand, but in the heart; not an external righteousness only, but internal holiness; and who is not a mere outward court worshipper, but a worshipper of God in Spirit and in truth. The Jews have a ^{f28} saying themselves,

“that whosoever denies idolatry, *ydwhy arqn*, “is called a Jew”.”

so that, according to them, this is a name that is not confined to themselves, but belongs to all such who truly fear and worship God; and they say, in the same place, that Pharaoh's daughter was called *tydwhy*, “a Jewess”, because she denied idolatry, and went down to wash herself from the idols of her father's house. And elsewhere ^{f29},

“that faith does not depend upon circumcision, but upon the heart: he that believes not as he should, circumcision does not make him a Jew; and he that believes as he ought, he indeed is a Jew, though he is not circumcised.”

And circumcision is that of the heart; which God requires, and he himself promises to give, (^{f30}Deuteronomy 10:16 30:6 ^{f30}Jeremiah 4:4), upon which last passage, a very noted Jew ^{f30} has this observation, *bl h tlm ayh taz*, “this is the circumcision of the heart”; the very phrase the apostle here uses: circumcision of the flesh was typical of this, which lies in a godly sorrow for sin, in a putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, and

in renouncing a man's own righteousness in the business of justification. The ancient Jews had some notion of this typical use of circumcision. So Philo the Jew says ^{f31}, that circumcision taught **ηδονων και παψων παντων εκτομην**, “the cutting off of all pleasures and affections”: and elsewhere he says ^{f32}: it is a symbol of two things particularly; the one is the cutting off of pleasures, as before; and the other is the removal of arrogancy, that grievous disease of the soul: and in another place ^{f33} he calls purity, or chastity, **περιτομης περιτομην**, “the circumcision of circumcision”. Now this our apostle says is

in the spirit; meaning either the spirit or soul of man, which is the seat and subject of it; or the Spirit of God, who is the author of it: the Ethiopic version reads it, “by the Holy Ghost”:

and not in the letter; or “by the letter” of the law; but the Holy Ghost produces this spiritual work instrumentally, by the preaching of the Gospel. To which the apostle adds,

whose praise is not of men, but of God; referring not to circumcision immediately spoken of before, but to the Jew who is one inwardly: and alludes to the name Judah, from whence the Jews are called, which comes from the word **hdy**, which signifies to “praise”; and intimates here, that such persons must not expect praise from men, who are only taken, with outward things, but from God, who searches and knows the heart.