

ROMANS

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

STUDY SIX

Judgment for the Judgmental

Romans 2:1–16

*When your life is characterized by grace and prompted by love,
judgment flees.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WE all have blind spots—the small areas at the back of our eyes that lack light-sensitive cells, making it impossible for us to see our complete visual field. We don't notice these vision gaps because our brains compensate by filling in the missing information with surrounding details.

In the same way, we all struggle with spiritual vision gaps that make us quick to identify the flaws of others without awareness of our own. The oldest sibling who likes to be the third “parent,” the spiritual nitpicker who always has something negative to say, or the finger-pointer who cannot stop calling out others' faults—we all face the temptation to be judgmental.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll open ourselves to the Holy Spirit to let Him expose our own blind spots by exploring the danger of self-righteousness—the thought that you can escape God's judgment because you aren't as bad as so-and-so. However, no one is exempt from sin—which means we all need Jesus!



INSIGHT FOR LIVING

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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Prayer is the posture of humble hearts who recognize their frailty, their sinful tendencies, and their desperate need for the Lord. These hearts beat to the rhythm of the old spiritual song:

Not my brother, not my sister,
but it's me, O Lord,
Standin' in the need of prayer; . . .
It's me, it's me, O Lord,
Standin' in the need of prayer¹

Echo this unknown songwriter's plea. Acknowledge *your* frailty, *your* sinful tendencies, and *your* desperate need for the Lord to transform you into the likeness of your great Savior. Pray for His guidance throughout your time in His Word.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Let's go over some theological terms that are important to our understanding of God's judgment. The *omniscience of God* comes from the Latin words *omnis*, which means "all," and *scientia*, which means "knowledge." It signifies that God knows all things, past, present, and future—possible and actual. He has no blind spots—He is all-seeing. No motives or secrets can be hidden from Him (*Psalms* 139; *Proverbs* 15:3; *Hebrews* 4:13).

The *justice of God* means that He's perfectly righteous in the way He treats His creatures (*Deuteronomy* 32:4; *Isaiah* 30:18). As the judge of all the earth, He administers righteous judgment on all people and circumstances—perfectly executing vengeance according to His own timing (*Romans* 12:19; *2 Thessalonians* 1:6). Now, let's see how Paul addressed those who thought they had done nothing wrong.

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Observation: Judgment for the Judgmental

Observation is the first step of our *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method. To observe [Romans 2:1–16](#), place yourself in the text.² Imagine sitting down in the Roman congregation as Phoebe opened the scroll from Paul and read it aloud. Record your initial observations.

God's Judgment Is Inescapable

Now, note that [Romans 2:1–2](#) begins with “Therefore” (NASB). Look at the previous section ([Romans 1:18–32](#)) for context. Also note the change in the personal pronouns—from *they* to *you*. How is this group different from the previous one? Why do the self-righteous have no excuse?

The difference between you and them is that you're so proud of yourself. There's no self-pride in what they're doing, but your sin is in your self-righteousness. And the self-righteousness makes you without excuse. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Reread [2:1–4](#). What kind of spiritual blind spots did this group have? Why are they mistaken? What is the purpose of God's patience?

*I've found that folks make a habit of deliberately overlooking their own wrongs and rationalizing around it or conveniently forgetting them.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

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God's Judgment Is Righteous and Impartial

Read [Romans 2:5–10](#) again. What is the motive behind God's act of judgment?

Isn't it interesting how God goes to the very core of the issue by addressing the heart? —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Carefully observe [2:11–16](#). Record the words and phrases that show there is no partiality with God. How are Jews and gentiles equally guilty before God?

How can that be for the gentile? You know in your heart it's wrong. You don't need the Book of God to tell you it's wrong. If you're a Jew, then you are those "who have sinned under the Law and you'll be judged by the Law." Whether Jew or gentile, you're equally guilty. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: God's Righteous and Impartial Judgment

Now, let's move to the step of interpretation, which helps us gain a deeper understanding of the passage.² [Romans 2:1–4](#) tells us that God in His justice will punish anyone who does evil things. Explore the term [justice](#) in the *Holman Bible Dictionary* at studylight.org or the Bible dictionary of your choice. How would you explain God's justice to a friend who isn't a Christian?

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God is all-seeing, so He misses nothing. He ignores nothing. God is absolutely just and right and fair and true. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

In [Romans 2:5–11](#), we observed that God’s judgment is impartial. Look up the Greek word *prosopolepsia*, translated “favoritism,” in the Greek dictionary like the one at biblehub.com. How is the impartiality of God a good thing, and why is it significance for us today? How can we find hope in God’s impartiality?

God doesn’t favor one over another. Not even the Jew is favored over the gentile when it comes to this matter of depravity. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

[Romans 2:9](#) states that “tribulation and distress” (NASB) will come upon every soul who does evil. Look up the Greek words *thlipsis* and *stenochoria* at billmounce.com, which are translated “tribulation” and “distress,” or check out [Constable’s Notes](#) at netbible.org for a deeper understanding. How would you describe the lifestyle of a person given to judging others?

That is a part of the lifestyle of a person given to judging others. You increasingly become more intense in your negativism. How easy to be engaged in acts of sinfulness and at the same time justifying yourself by finding someone who’s doing something you would not do. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The third-parent syndrome, the pious nitpicker, and our tireless finger-pointer need to be transformed by mercy and grace so that our actions can be prompted by love rather than condemnation. Only then can we take out the speck in our neighbor’s eye to build up him or her.

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Correlation: Right Judgment, Wrong Judgment

Let's correlate *Romans 2:1–16* with other passages of Scripture to get a clearer picture. Comparing *Matthew 7:1* with *Luke 12:57* shows us that there are two kinds of judging.

Right Judgment

According to *Luke 12:57–59* and *1 Corinthians 5*, which judgment should believers engage in? Read *Proverbs 9:1–6*; *Matthew 10:16*; and *1 Corinthians 2:11–16*. How essential is this kind of judging to the spiritual health of the body of Christ?

You and I know there are times that judgment is not only necessary, it's essential. Jesus Himself said in Luke 12:57, "You on your own initiative should judge what is right." He's the one who calls those Pharisees to task for their hypocritical lifestyle. That's judging. But it wasn't the kind of judging that is wrong, it was the kind of judging that is essential. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Wrong Judgment

What kind of judging is condemned in Matthew 7:1?

This kind of judging that Jesus is condemning is an attitude of self-righteousness that cares nothing for the soul of others but puts them down to elevate oneself. It's the idea of viewing someone without mercy, condemning this person for what he or she has done or said, no concern for the person's soul, only engaging in unmerciful kinds of criticism. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Hear the hypocrisy in David's judgment when Nathan told him the story in [2 Samuel 12:1–6](#). How did David react when he found that he was the merciless rich man who took the poor man's lamb and butchered it for his guest in [12:7–13](#)?

I love David's response. "I have sinned." That's the perfect response to a Romans 2:1–16 passage. "Guilty as charged. I am wrong."
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: It's Me Standing in the Need of Prayer!

Observation, interpretation, and correlation—all these steps lead to timeless truths, from which we can draw timely applications.² Questions such as, "Is there a sin I need to confess?" or "Is there a habit I need to break?" help us bring these truths to the inner chambers of our lives.

What are some practical ways you can live your life in awareness of your own need for God's mercy and grace?

Until we solve our habit of judging, we will not have much success reaching our community, campus, neighborhood, or family. Judging turns people off. If I could stop the activity in a church in one area, it would almost always be in the area of the tongue. This little muscle hiding behind ivories runs far too loose and boasts great things when, in fact, it is revealing our heart. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Think of some ways you can extend grace and mercy to someone who has been burdened by a self-righteous kind of religion. Write them below. Why not commit these ideas to the Lord in prayer? Ask Him to help your life be characterized by grace and prompted by love.

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The person who doesn't know the Lord is watching Christians. This person is watching you in traffic, observing you when the bottom drops out of your life. This person is sizing up how different you are from him or her.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A FINAL PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for speaking to me in ways I can understand through Your Word. Every time I study the Scriptures, I realize how much I need You. Yes, it's me. It's me, O Lord, standing in need of You! Help me live a life characterized by grace and prompted by Your sacrificial love. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. "Standing in the Need of Prayer," *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism: An African American Ecumenical Hymnal* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2018), hymn 147, hymnary.org/text/not_my_brother_nor_my_sister_but_its_me.
2. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2006, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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