



Scott Turansky, Senior Pastor
September 13, 2015

ROMANS 2

Romans Series: How God Changes People

We're going to look at Romans 2 today, so you can open your Bibles there with me. We go verse by verse through the Bible and today we're in Romans 2. But before we open up to or before we start teaching in Romans 2, I'd like to take a moment and pray. Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, I want to thank you right now for the Holy Spirit. When you left here, you left us with what you call the Comforter or the Counselor who's resident with us when we've trusted you as our Lord and Savior. So Lord, I just want to thank you for the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives that confirms that we're your children, empowers us to do what's right. We want to have that supernatural blessing that you provide for us. So we ask that you would rain down your Holy Spirit's presence this morning in this room, that we would be so touched and drawn to you that we would be willing to serve you, willing to get to know you better, we'd be able to overcome the challenges that we're facing inside of our own hearts. Lord, we're asking you to do a mighty work in our lives today and we know you do that through the power of your Holy Spirit. So this morning we just want to thank you and ask you to work in our lives. In Jesus' name, amen.

The purpose of the book of Romans is to lay out a systematic understanding of how someone comes to know Jesus and then how someone changes. Over our time together as we look at the book of Romans we're going to be looking at how people change. So as we study the book of Romans, it's a systematic study of how we can understand what salvation is all about. It's a great book to understand.

If you're coming here today and you are visiting here or you're interested in spiritual things, but you haven't yet made a commitment to Jesus Christ as your Savior, you've come on a good week because today I'm going to explain to you how you can become a Christian and I'm going to give you a personal invitation for you at the end of our time today to make that commitment to Jesus. So you can be thinking about what this means for you in your own life as we look at Romans 2.

But as I'm talking about and introducing this idea of Romans 2 I want to tell you a story about Jesus and something that happened in His life when He was here on earth. He had a problem. You see, Jesus was trying to communicate to people that there's a kingdom and in order to get close to God you need to accept the Savior, which is Him, Jesus Christ. So He tells some stories to people to try to interest them in that.

One of the stories He tells them is there was a tax collector and a Pharisee who went into the synagogue to pray. And the Pharisee prays this way. He prays, “Lord, *I thank you that I am not like other people. I’m not a robber, I’m not an evildoer, I’m not an adulterer, and I’m not like this tax collector over here.*” But the tax collector, Jesus says, he stayed out of the way a little bit. He wasn’t even willing to look up to heaven and he just prayed, “*God, have mercy on me as a sinner.*” Jesus said that man is *justified before God*. His sins are forgiven.

You see, Jesus wanted to communicate to the people that were listening that there are some people who think they are really good, that they’re coming in and doing God a favor by praying somehow or doing God a favor by doing their acts of righteousness, and they are missing something. So He’s trying to illustrate to the people that there are self-righteous people who are missing something really important that they need for their own lives in order to get close to God and have their sins forgiven and so on. Now the message that Jesus was communicating is the same message that’s happening in Romans 2.

If you weren’t here last week, let me remind you or let me bring you up to date. In Romans 1 Paul starts to talk about the sins of the Gentiles. Those are those people out there, not the Jews, the Gentiles. The Gentiles, he’s saying, is many of them suppressed the truth that they have inside of them by looking at Creation, they suppressed the truth, their wicked hearts are dark and then they do all kinds of bad things. So there’s a sin list in Romans 1 of all kinds of bad things that happen to these people and the things that they do. But he says in Romans 1:20 – they are *without excuse*.

Now you have to imagine the readers who are reading Paul’s letter because it’s written to the Jews. As the readers are reading this, I’m imagining that they are saying, “Yes, Paul. Go get ‘em. Preach it to them! They’re sinners! They need salvation. They’re the Gentiles. They’re the pagans.” And so the readers are saying, “You’re right. They need salvation.”

Now he goes into chapter 2 and he’s going to turn the tables. He’s going to tell them, “You guys need salvation too, you self-righteous guys.” Just like Jesus was trying to talk about when He was talking about the Pharisees.

So look with me at Romans 2:1 and notice how it starts. Remember 1:20 says they are *without excuse*. There’s no excuse for the Gentile. They should be responding to the Lord. They need the Lord, and God has placed a witness inside of their hearts. There’s no excuse. And the Jews are saying, “Yes.”

So Romans 2:1 says – *You, therefore, have no excuse* (so he’s turning the tables and pointing it at them) *you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things*. You guys do the same things.

What Paul is saying in the book of Romans is that all of us need Jesus. There’s not some wicked people and some good people. There might be some wicked people and some good people, but wicked people and good people all need Jesus. Just because you’re good doesn’t mean you’ve resolved the sin issue that’s in your heart. So that’s what he wants to communicate.

But there's some of us...and I've got to admit I have to put myself in this category sometimes where I'm self-righteous, where I think I'm better. I'm kind of a good person. I don't do some of those bad things.

Do you know that there's 37 million people who signed up for Ashley Madison adultery site? Thirty-seven million people. That's terrible. I would never do that! Do you know there are these videos that have come out now about these people at Planned Parenthood that are selling body parts of aborted children. It's terrible. I would never do that! You know there's these ISIS soldiers killing Christians. I would never do that. And so sometimes I can start to feel good, like "well I'm better than some other people."

The whole message of Romans 2 here is I've got a sin problem just like everybody else. Every one of us, even though we might think we're better than somebody else, we all have a sin problem that must be addressed. We can't look at somebody else and say, "They're evil and we're not." There's a sin problem that must be addressed and Paul wants to challenge you and me. We're the good people. We go to church. You're all here. We're good people. But Paul is saying there's something that needs to take place in our hearts.

I want to point out six different characteristics of a self-righteous person. This was pretty convicting for me as I was reading this and just reminds me how much I need Jesus Christ in my life.

The first characteristic comes from verse 1 that I've already read to you. Self-righteous people are judgmental. Notice in verse 1 it says – *You, therefore, have no excuse you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.* The reality is, God doesn't grade on a curve. He doesn't. None of us measure up. We all have a sin problem and the problem is inside of our hearts.

This is going to be important for you as you share Jesus Christ with folks. As you take the little cards and you pass them on or you tell them about the grace, there are some people that are going to say to you, "Uh I don't need that. I'm a pretty good person," or some other excuse or some other reason. Basically what they're saying is, "I don't really need a Savior. I'm doing pretty well."

I think what Paul is doing here, what Jesus was doing with the Pharisees is that sometimes you have to help someone get lost before you can help them get saved. They have to see that they have a problem. So that's what Paul is doing for us here. The characteristic number one is that they are judgmental.

The second characteristic as we go into verse 2 is this: They believe God grades based on comparison. I'm better than somebody else. We can all think of people that we're better than.

Verse 2: *Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on comparison.* Is that what it says? No. Do you see what it says there? It's *based on truth.* The

truth. The reality that we're going to see is that as we compare ourselves to the truth and not to each other, we all come short. That's the whole point he's leading us to. None of us measure up to the truth, so we can't compare ourselves to each other.

So (verse 3) when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Because God's judgment is based on truth. You can't compare yourself to someone else; you have to compare yourself to the truth.

Now I think what we do is we kind of massage the truth a little bit and we think about excuses or we develop excuses, all kinds of them. You'll hear them. Someone will say, "Oh I know I'm living with her, but I'm committed to her." As if that makes it okay. Or "God knows my heart." Or "I'm definitely against adultery, but you should have seen this movie I saw the other day. It was about this man and woman and..." So there's a sense in which we think that we would never do those things, but we develop these excuses that somehow justify these things inside of our own hearts.

Let me go back to Jesus because Jesus tells another story. Well it's not a story; it's actually something that happened. A Pharisee invited Jesus over to lunch. So Jesus went over to the Pharisee's house for lunch. That must have been a decision you had to wrestle with that. Should I go over to his house and have lunch with him, or should I take a stand and say, "No, I'm not going to eat with Pharisees"? But Jesus decides to go and eat with them.

While He's eating with them, they're having a discussion and they're talking about different things. In the midst of this, this woman comes into the house and comes by Jesus' feet. So you have to imagine them reclining at the table. That means that they're kind of leaning on the table, feet coming out back. They have pillows that they're sitting on, feet are coming out of the back there. This woman comes up behind Jesus where His feet are and she's crying. Her tears are coming down onto Jesus' feet. It must have made the people feel uncomfortable what was going on there. So she takes her hair and she wipes off the tears and she's kissing His feet.

Now the Bible says that this woman was a sinful woman. It doesn't tell us what kind of sin that she had, but you can imagine if they're saying she's a sinful woman she had a reputation of being this kind of a person. And she's kissing His feet.

Then she takes this alabaster jar of perfume, opens it up, and she's putting the perfume on His feet. Now the Pharisee watching this, his name is Simon. And Simon says to himself, *"If this man were truly a prophet, he would know how sinful this woman is who is touching him."*

Jesus, knowing, of course, what's inside of Simon's heart, says this to him: "Simon, can I ask you a question?"

Simon says, "Sure. What would you like to talk about?" They're just having conversation around the meal.

He says, "Imagine two people who owed money to a moneylender. One owed fifty denarii and the other owed five hundred denarii to the moneylender. Neither of them could pay back their debt, so the moneylender forgave both of them. Which one of them would love the moneylender the most?"

Simon says, “I suppose the one whose debt was the biggest.”
 Jesus said, “You’re right.”

“You see, this woman came into the house here and her tears are on my feet. I came into your house; you didn’t even give me water to wash my feet (a common courtesy that was often given). You didn’t greet me with a kiss when I came in here, but she’s continually kissing my feet. You didn’t put oil on my head (which is a sign of honor that you would have oil placed on your head). You didn’t do that for me, but she’s broken this alabaster box of perfume and she’s continually putting that on my feet. The person who’s been forgiven much will love more,” is what He’s saying to Simon. “But the one who’s forgiven little will love little.”

He turns to the woman and He says to her this: “Woman, *your sins are forgiven. Your faith has healed you* or made you whole.” Wow. So here’s a woman who goes out and she knows that God has done something very significant in her life.

Now what’s the lesson from the story? The lesson from the story is the person who recognizes their sin recognizes the depth of the gift that Jesus Christ gives us of the forgiveness of sin. But if you don’t think you’re very sinful then – “crucifixion of Christ, it’s good for the pagans, but I really don’t need that much because I’m a pretty good person. I go to church, I give to the poor, I do good things to people. I do all kinds of things that are helpful. So in regards to that, I’m a pretty good person. And so as a pretty good person, I don’t need the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.”

Number three – they’re stubborn and they lack humility. Look at verse 4. *Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.*

What he’s saying is you’re running out of room. God’s judgment is coming. So if you’re stubborn and you lack the humility to bow the knee before God, then you’re missing out on something very important. It’s one of the characteristics of a self-righteous person. Well they don’t need God. Everything’s fine for me. I don’t need to do anything about it. That’s characteristic number three. Of course humility is needed in order for us to bow the knee and say, “God, I recognize that I’m a sinner and I need a Savior.”

Characteristic number four – they believe that because they try hard they earn exception. They believe that because they try hard they’re an exception. What they’re saying is “God will consider my good attempts.”

Now look at starting at verse 6 down to verse 10. We’re going to have an explanation of the fairness of God. I want you to see what he’s going to say here in these verses between 6 and 10. He says this: *God “will repay each person according to what they have done.”* God is fair. He treats everybody the same.

To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will

be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism.

He's not saying you can earn your salvation before God. If you're a good person then you'll have these good gifts. That's not what he's saying. He's saying there's a perfect standard and if you can be perfect, then you don't need a Savior. But notice if you look in your Bible down to verse 10 of the next chapter, 3:10 is where we're going. We won't get there today, but in verse 10 notice it says *there is no one righteous, not even one.*

So even those of us who think we're kind of good people, we have a significant depth of a problem inside of our hearts that needs to be addressed. Trying hard doesn't get us to heaven. We're not the exception because somehow we are trying hard. Because we can't measure up to God's perfect standard. He has a perfect standard of holiness and none of us get there. That's the point that he's making there.

That ought to make us start to feel uncomfortable. Because if we understand that God created the world, He created us, but we have a sin problem inside of us that prevents us from having relationship with Him, but even trying hard and being a good person isn't doing it, then we need something. We all of a sudden become aware of our need and that's the need for Jesus Christ in our lives.

God does not show favoritism. There are some people who believe that God somehow favors America over other countries. I've got to tell you, God favors all people the same. God loves the world, all of us, and He's created a plan by which we can have a personal relationship with God.

Verse 12. He's summarizing now. Remember he's just talked about everyone who is perfect will get this glory and so on. Now notice He says in verse 12 – *All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law* (that's the Gentiles), *and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.* That's everybody. Everybody is included in there. Everybody sinned is the point that he's making there. So that's characteristic number four.

Let's go to characteristic number five. They believe they are righteous because they know the truth. We have the truth. I know better than they do and therefore I somehow am favored in some particular way.

Look at verse 13. *For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.* So it's not just hearing it, it's not just having it, it's obeying. The issue is we can't all obey everything that's out there that God wants for us.

Now it's interesting in verses 14 and 15 he's going to go back to the Gentiles. We're going to learn something very important about each one of our own hearts here as he goes back and talks about this. Notice verse 14 in some of your Bibles is in parenthesis because it's describing this very important fact about who we are.

Notice in verse 14 it says – *Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law...* They weren't given the Ten Commandments, they weren't given the instructions by God. This is like the question about the Pygmy in Africa or wherever Pygmies live. What if they don't have a missionary, what's God going to do with them? This is the kind of question that's being addressed here.

(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They start doing the right thing. They start making choices that are right. Why? They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.)

You know how we do that. You do that in your own heart. "I think I'll do this. No, I better not do this. Maybe I can get away with this. No, I don't want to just get away with this." And so we're dialoguing inside of our hearts, accusing and defending ourselves because there's a conscience that we have. And so sometimes we even try to satisfy our conscience in the midst of our sin.

So the drug dealer says, "Hey look. I'm not a bad guy. I sell drugs to people, but I always give them exactly what they pay for and the quality of my product is excellent." What, does that make them good? Sometimes we justify ourselves by our sin. "I do it this kind of way."

Or someone will say, "It is true I'm living with this person, but we're really committed and we're going to get married." As if somehow they're trying to satisfy their conscience. But they know there's a right and there's a wrong.

God has created the conscience in us for several reasons. I've written a book on the conscience to help parents work with their children and develop this. The conscience helps us after we become Christians, but its primary task, the conscience, is to point us to the fact that we have a guilt problem. I feel bad, I feel guilty inside and I need a Savior. So the conscience is witnessing in every one of our lives.

Let's go on. Verse 16 – *This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.*

So he's saying there's no secrets here that you're going to be able to keep from God. God knows all of the things that are going on and He is the one who's going to judge these things.

Verse 17. This is me. When I look at verse 17 and start reading this, I put my chest out because this is me. Look at this. *Now you, if you call yourself a Jew (I'm not a Jew, but I fit into this same category); if you rely on the law and boast in God (that's me); if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law (that's me); if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark (that's me), an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth (okay so all of that; I'm with you, Paul. Yes, that's me)—you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself?* I'm thinking, "Whoa, whoa, wait a minute. Maybe I shouldn't put my hand up there."

You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

There's a self-righteous attitude that we sometimes develop that says, "I don't need a Savior." Paul is challenging that idea by helping us see that we're all alike. We all have the same kind of sin problem.

Jesus was teaching the same thing. When He came on the Sermon of the Mount, He wanted people to understand the importance of the heart and how important the heart is. So He says to them, "*You have heard that it was said, 'Do not murder.' But I tell you, someone who's angry with his brother has committed murder already.*" Wow. Anger, murder. I might put those in separate categories, but Jesus is saying no, they're all a part of the sin problem.

He goes on to say, "*You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who lusts after a woman in his own heart has committed adultery already.*" I go, "Whoa." Because Jesus is trying to communicate a message to me.

He chooses two issues on the Sermon on the Mount. Some of us guys have those two issues – lust and anger. So He picks those two things and He says, "Don't start thinking you're so self-righteous." So I start to be humbled as I look at this passage and I realize that I am so grateful that I don't have to somehow earn my salvation because I'm being convicted and I see I don't have it all together. I have a sin problem inside of my heart, as we all do, and we need the Lord.

Let's go to characteristic number six. Characteristic number six is this. They emphasize ritual and pedigree. You'll hear people say this ritual. They'll say, "I've been baptized" or "when I was a child I was baptized." Or they'll say, "I grew up Baptist" or "I grew up Catholic" as if somehow that gives them some kind of merit of some kind. That's what's being said in this passage as we continue on. It doesn't talk about Baptists and Catholics, it talks about being Jewish. "I'm Jewish, therefore I'm exempt."

Verse 25 says this – *Circumcision has value if you observe the law.* Now circumcision was a ritual. In our culture, circumcision is something we do for babies (I don't know why we do it) for health reasons or whatever. But for Jewish people it was a ceremony that said you are God's people. It was a ritual that they did that described something that God had with them.

Now listen to this. *Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. So then, if those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? Can you have the outside thing and not have the inside? No. He's going to say you can't do that. The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.*

You can't get saved by ritual. That's the point here. I think it's really important to look at these characteristics of a self-righteous person because I think we can easily find ourselves in there. We're reminded in this passage that those aren't good enough. We really need a Savior, Jesus Christ.

Now the book of Romans is going to develop that as we continue on and help us understand what that looks like. Verse 28 says this. Let's just finish this chapter here. *A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical.* What he's saying is you're not close to God just because you grew up in a Jewish family. That's what he's saying to these Jewish people.

I think he would say the same thing to us. You're not close to God just because your parents are Christians. Every one of you young people need to make a decision for yourself about your personal relationship with God. That's what he's saying.

You can't view yourself as in just because you were baptized somewhere as a child or as an adult. That's an outward symbol of something that's going on in your heart. You can't say, "Well I'm in because I live in America or I go to church." All of those things he's saying it's not outward, it's inward. Verse 29 – *No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart.* Wow.

And so now we're starting to ask an important question. What does that mean, *circumcision of the heart*? I want that. I want to have that in my own life. As he develops that we're going to see that is really Jesus Christ coming into our hearts, transforming our hearts. It's accepting Jesus Christ as the sacrifice of our sin so that we can enjoy that relationship with God.

Notice it says *circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God.*

The point when we started in Romans 2:1, you therefore *have no excuse*. Wow. That's you and me. We have no excuse. We can't say, "I'm righteous" or "I'm getting there some other way." There's only one way to have a personal relationship with God and that is through Jesus Christ and accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Next week we're going to go into Romans 3, but I just want you to look at Romans 3:23, this next verse. It says *all have sinned and fall short*. That's what he's saying. They *fall short of the glory of God*. We cannot get to God on our own.

It's like this. Let's say you go to Seaside at the Pier and you want to have a contest with anybody. The person who can get closest to Europe. That's what we're trying to do. Who can get to Europe by jumping off the pier? Alright.

So you've got this crippled guy and you've got this guy who's really buff, who obviously does CrossFit and everything else. He's built great. So you've got the crippled guy; he goes and falls off the edge. But you've got this buff guy who takes a running leap and gets twenty feet out there before he hits the water. They're both a little bit short from Europe.

That's how it is with all of us. Some of us might be more righteous than others, but we all need a Savior of Jesus Christ. That's what we're talking about here and that's why Romans 5:8, the next verse says this. *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* The *we* is all of us. *While we all were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

Each one of us has a sin problem in our lives and we need a Savior. So that's really the message of what it means to be a Christian or be close to God is to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Maybe you're here today and you've never made that commitment to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Maybe you'd like to do that today. Is there anybody here who would like to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior this morning? It's a decision that every one of us needs to make.

I expect that a number of you have already made that decision. That's why we come here every week and we fellowship together and we rejoice in that. But we can't in the midst of that become self-righteous and think we're better than somebody else. We all have a sin problem in our hearts. It creates a certain amount of humility in us.

Only by God's grace am I not on the list of 37 million people who signed up for the adultery site. Only by God's grace am I not one of those people who are selling body parts. It's only by God's grace that I'm not an ISIS person killing Christians. It's only by God's grace. Because I have in my heart the same sin nature that that person has, but Jesus Christ has saved me and I'm really grateful for that. It's the privilege that we have. Amen? Amen.

We're going to sing a song and as we sing this song if the Lord's speaking to your heart and you need some prayer in some area of your life, would you go to prayer counselors who will be at the side during the song as we sing. Let's come before the Lord and let's worship Him. "Lord, I give you my heart." That's the words in here that I like. "Lord, I want to give you my heart." That's our prayer together as we come before the Lord.

Would you stand with me and let's pray.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we come before you as humble people, recognizing that we've got a sin problem and we could be really evil people. But it's only by your grace that we have a Savior who has redeemed us, who's given us the power to serve you and to do what's right. Lord, I just thank you so much for your gift of salvation for Jesus Christ. There's a closeness that I feel towards you out of a gratefulness in my heart because of what you've done. So thank you. It just draws me to worship, Lord. I just want to worship you because of who you are and I want to again this morning recommit myself to you and give my heart to you. In Jesus' name, amen.