THE TRAP

Ethnic, racial, or religious superiority is a serious spiritual danger. It’s dangerous because it involves self-deception. It manipulates our perception of reality so that we can see acutely the errors of others, while simultaneously we become blind to our own faults. Then we come to believe that we don’t need God’s mercy and that others don’t deserve His mercy. Paul found that many Israelites and moralizing Gentiles had fallen into this fatal deception. He sought to overcome the deception with a brilliant rhetorical trap.

His trap involved talking about the wrath-generating, gross immorality of the Greeks (Romans 1:18–32). A Jewish and moralizing Greek audience would have been cheering him on with a chorus of hearty amens. At exactly the moment when Paul knew he had his audience on his side, he said, “Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things” (Romans 2:1). Ouch! That hurts.

Paul knew the reality of human nature. He knew that hearing God’s law isn’t the same as fulfilling it and knowing what is right is different than doing right (Romans 2:13). He knew that God’s judgment isn’t based on our profession (Romans 2:2), and the truth is that all of us, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin (Romans 3:9).

Paul’s point in Romans 2:1–3:20 is that sin is a universal problem, and no group can hide from sin by claims of ethnic, racial, or religious superiority.
Write out Romans 2:12–29 from the translation of your choice. If you are pressed for time, write out Romans 2:12–16. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/ phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw Arrows to connect words/ phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse in Romans 2:1–3:20. Write it out multiple times to help memorization.

How have you noticed in yourself a tendency to judge others to elevate your self-worth?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/rom02-3
After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks overall seem to point to?

What questions emerge after reading the two chapters? What parts are difficult?

How have you sorted out the relationship between justification by faith alone and a judgment according to works in your belief system?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/rom02-4
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What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Proverbs 24:12
Ecclesiastes 12:6, 7, 13, 14
Jeremiah 31:31–34
Ezekiel 36:25–29
1 Corinthians 5:9–13

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with judging others?

Meditate on Romans 2 again and look for where Jesus is.

What is He saying to you through the texts of the week?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

In what circumstances is it appropriate to evaluate the behavior of others?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/rom02-6
Review the memory verse.
How does it apply to your life this week?

After this week’s study of the chapter, what personal applications are you convicted of in your life?

What practical applications can you make in your interactions with others?

Read more inSight from the Spirit of Prophecy at www.inversebible.org/rom02-7
Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

How does the good news of Jesus’ death and resurrection keep us from needing to judge others?

Describe a time when you contemplated the goodness of God and were led to repentance.

How have you been the victim of unjust judgment?

How can we work together to create churches that pursue faithfulness to God without becoming judgmental?

When have you experienced grace instead of a judgment of condemnation in your local congregation?

When have you had a positive experience of a friend evaluating your discipleship to help rather than condemn?

Since the judgment evaluates the direction of the life, which direction are you going?