

The Bible (Unmuted) Transcript
Episode 15
#15 Romans, Part 5 (Rom 2:1-16)
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Episode Summary:

In this episode, Matt takes listeners through the first section of Romans 2 (vv. 1-16). This episode covers a lot of ground, tackling topics such as the relationship between good works and the final judgment, as well as addressing larger questions about the relationship between "grace" and "faithfulness." Specifically, this show focuses in on Paul's enigmatic statement that "it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified" (2:13). What does Paul mean by doing the law in this verse? And, furthermore, how does this statement align with Paul's later claim that "by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight" (3:20)? In this episode, all these questions (and more) are discussed and analyzed.

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Transcript:

0:00 Hey friends, welcome back to another episode of The Bible Unmuted. Today we're going to continue our series through the book of Romans. And we are at chapter 2. So I'm excited to jump into that very thick passage. Before we do though, I would like to share some fun news. So, my new book *The End of the World as You Know it*, it's a popular level book on eschatology. It is now available for pre-order. I am super, super excited about that. You can pre-order it on Amazon, you can pre-order it on the publisher's website., Lexham Press is the publisher. And if you've been following me on social media, I've been posting links where you can do that. If you plan on buying the book, I do recommend checking out Lexham Press's website, because as I said you can pre-order it there, but you get a substantial discount in doing so. I think it's like 30 something percent off. So it's a pretty good deal and so if you want to, and if you're planning on buying the book, go ahead and pre-order. Pre-orders are really helpful and helps get the word out. I hope this is a good book for folks. I hope people find it to be a blessing and encouraging to everybody who reads it. It just made my week whenever that came out. I'm super excited to finally see this fun little book finally enter into the wild. It's been several years in the making so I'm excited about it.

So I hope everybody's doing well. I hope that you're having a great week. I hope that you're ready to dive into this fantastic section on Romans. Romans chapter 2

1:50 Before we begin, let me offer a little preface. There's a lot her in Romans chapter 2 and we're going to pick it bit by bit. Here's a problem though. It will be easy to get caught up in the trees such that we forget the picture of the forest. And we want to make sure we maintain that big image...that 30,000 foot view of things, because Romans 2 is one of those chapters that you can get caught up in the weeds of it all and you can forget why Paul is even writing this section. And so, I'm trying to, every time I talk about Romans 2 and every time I teach on it, I always want to make that statement. Because it's very important for readers of Romans to just keep the big picture in mind. So we are going to do that. We are going to do our best at it, but we do have to get into the weeds because Romans 2 has a lot of....mmmm....maybe

controversial thing in it. That way we want to make sure that we pick apart and do justice to it. You know the end result is not to read Paul such that he conforms to our expectations. We don't want to read Paul such that he ends up looking like us. We want to read Paul for who Paul is. And that's my goal for Romans 2...that's my goal for studying the New Testament at all. There's some stuff in Romans 2 that might, at first glance, seem to be difficult to reconcile with what we might think Paul says elsewhere. But we're going to pick all that apart and have fun with it. And we're actually going to do Romans 2 in two episodes. So I'm going to do the first half today –or, this week - and the next half in the next episode.

So, why is Romans 2 important? Now this is the 30,000 foot view. So you want to make sure you keep this content that I'm about to share in the back of your mind as we get into the weeds of things. So, I think Romans 2 is important for initially understanding what Paul thought about *doing* the Torah. Paul talks about in Romans 2 about *doing Torah*. What does he mean by that? That's a very controversial thing that he's going to be saying. And actually that's part of the weeds. That's part of the weeds. That's not so much the 30,000 foot view. But anyway, that's going to be a question. Because you're going to read in Romans 2 about Paul saying you can *do* Torah, you can be justified by doing Torah. Which makes it interesting because in Romans 3 he says you can't find righteousness in performing the works of the law. So does Romans chapter 2 contradict Romans chapter 3? I don't think so, but initially it's understandable by people might be confused by these statements that Paul makes.

4:40 The big 30,000 foot view is the thrust of the entire book of Romans. And it has to do with the controversy over Jew and gentile relations. In other words, who are the people of God and how are they visibly marked out and seen as the people of God. And this controversy was a big controversy, because if you have read Acts, if you read Galatians, you know that one big question was, do Christians have to keep dietary laws? And of course Judaizes said 'yes you do' if you want to be justified – marked out as righteous – then you do need to keep Kosher laws. That was a big controversy. That was a huge controversy in the early church. And Paul is going to address those large issues of Jew-Gentile relations. Who are the people of God? How are they visibly marked out as such? And of course, the third part of that is how should we treat each other in light of the fact that we are a part of one family. This is going to come in Romans 12, 13, 14, 15. But we'll cross that bridge in due time.

So anyway, those two questions... The first question is: Who are the people of God? And two, the second question: How are they visibly marked out as such? Those two questions are important for helping us think about how Paul understand the Jewish idea of election. And that will be important for our study of Romans chapter 9...and chapter 10 and chapter 11. But Romans 2 lays the ground work.

So thinking about the role of works. That's another issue that comes up big time in Romans 2. Romans 2 is important for us to see the big picture that Paul has about the relationship between our faith and our works. In this section Paul will speak to that issue. And he's not going to answer all of our questions in chapter 2, but he's going to do enough to get us to thinking about it. And really, he's not going to say anything in Romans 2 that he hasn't already said in Romans 1:5. So you probably remember one of the first episodes we talked about Romans 1:5 that phrase where Paul says he wants to bring about the "obedience of faith" among all the nations. And we talked a lot about the relationship between faith and obedience and how to understand the Greek idea of *pistis* and faith and what not. So, go back and listen to that episode. But because that episode is really going to be important for this one. Because we are going to talk about obedience today and the relationship obedience has to faith and grace, especially. So if you haven't listened to that episode, where I covered Romans 1:5, go back and do that. Or, and many thanks to Linda once more for this... you can simply peruse through the transcripts on my website, matthewhalsted.com. At the top, go to Podcast and that will take you to a page where you can find the transcripts. And again, many thanks to Linda for taking a lot of time in transcribing these for folks. Sometimes I find it easier to go back and look at transcripts than go back and listen to the entire episode. So hopefully that will work for you as well.

So, N.T. Wright, who is a well-known NT scholar, a British NT scholar, he has famously called Romans 2, 'the joker of the pack'. And I completely agree because there is a lot in that chapter that will prove to be surprising and perhaps it's integral to our understanding of the letter as a whole. At least that's my contention. A lot of people read Romans for Paul's understanding, on say, justification by faith in Romans 4. And I think that's great. A lot of people run to Romans to find out what Paul thinks about election in Romans 9. And I think that's great, too. But in popular discussions, at least, very few people interact with Romans 2 in helping them think about justification and election. Which is striking in my opinion. Because Romans 2 is so important for thinking about those two things very carefully. Romans 2 is important for thinking about justification. It's important, I mean *extremely* important for helping us form our thoughts about election. So, the big question in Romans, as a whole – the 30,000 foot view – the big question for Romans, the big question for Romans 2 is: number one, who are the people of God? Number two, what shows them to be the people of God? What marks them out as the people of God? And number three, is it enough to possess Torah, to possess the law, to be part of the people of God? And the real question here is all about election. Who are the elect of God? Who are the chosen of God? And how do we find out? Do we know that someone is the chosen of God because they keep Torah? They do the works of the law? They keep dietary laws? Or is there something else? So when we talk about the word election – you know, we often immediately think about the Calvinist or Arminian debates, but really, I don't want us to go there yet. Because those are important debates, but they don't really capture what Paul is doing here. Those are 16th century issues. We want to go back to the first century. We want to back to the centuries prior to the first century. We are talking about older questions here. Not reformation questions. It's important as Stanley Horowitz once said, "To remember that Christianity did not start with the reformation." There is a whole lot we can learn from those early sources about this question. We won't go into all that here, but we want to situate Romans 2 within that early Jewish context. So don't read through the reformation lenses. Alright, there's a lot more that I can say about Romans 2, and I hope people know that I have a very big fondness for Romans 2. So I am very excited about this episode. Without further ado, let's dive in....

11:01 Let's start by reading Romans chapter 2 verses 1-16. Before I do, I again want to preface that everything we read in this passage cannot be divorced from Romans 1. Neither can this section be read apart from what follows in Romans chapter 2 verse 17 and those verses after that. Again, lots of trees here, but remember there is only one forest. Okay so let's read Romans 2 verses 1-16 as whole and then we'll come back through this text and pick it apart bit by bit. I'm going to read the whole chunk right now. Here we go...Chapter 2 verse 1:

1 Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things. 2 You say, "We know that God's judgment on those who do such things is in accordance with truth." 3 Do you imagine, whoever you are, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? 5 But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 For he will repay according to each one's deeds: 7 to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; 8 while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. 9 There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, (10 but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.) 11 For God shows no partiality.

12 All who have sinned apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified. 14 When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though

not having the law, are a law to themselves. 15 They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them 16 on the day when, according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all.

So, that's Romans 2 verses 1-16 from the New Revised Standard Version

13:35 Okay so, let's pick that passage apart. We'll start with verse 1.

1 Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things.

Okay, notice that phrase, "Therefore you have no excuse". This is a clear connection back to Romans 1 and discussion on the wrath of God. In chapter 1, Paul was describing the unrighteousness of humanity in general. Although it's likely the emphasis there was upon Gentile in particular. And here he's transitioning to those, he's focusing his discussion upon those who might look upon human unrighteousness, with a glare of judgement and critique. Here, what Paul wants to do is dispel any myths that anyone whether Jew or Gentile – he wants to dispel any myths – that anyone might have a one-up on anyone else. And given the way in which Paul frames that discussion, it seems he is addressing his fellow Jews here. So in verses 2- 5 it says...I'll just read it again,

2 You say, "We know that God's judgment on those who do such things is in accordance with truth." 3 Do you imagine, whoever you are, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? 5 But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

Okay, so if indeed Paul has in mind here his fellow Jews, he doesn't have anyone in particular in mind. And arguably, he has in mind the story of Israel as a whole, given as it was laid out in the pages of the Old Testament. God's rescue, exodus, sin, exile, more sin, the split of the kingdom, and all that stuff. And then the exile. So, he's critiquing, he's got in mind, the person who *thinks* they can one-up someone else. He's got the whole story of Israel in mind. And he's a Jew so he's not critiquing an individual, not any one person, but the whole group of people who are trusting in their own lineage for their salvation. But notice how verse 5 connects back to Romans 1. I think this is interesting. We see yet further proof how divine wrath works. What a person puts in, is what a person is going to get out, right? If you neglect the free mercy of God, if you continue unrepentantly in rebellion, all you are really doing is storing up wrath for yourself later. God is not storing up – you are storing it up. What God will do though, is reveal the truth of the situation, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. And I think the next section makes this plain in my opinion. But before we dive deep into that text, let's just remember to let the text be the text. Let's let Paul speak. He has some difficult words to hear, depending on our own particular traditions or what not. But let's not mute the text. Let's hear him out.

16:58 Verse 6 – I'm going to read verses 6 – 10.

6 For he will repay according to each one's deeds: 7 to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; 8 while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. 9 There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, 10 but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. 11 For God shows no partiality.

First, let's look at the opening line...the one where it says, '*For he will repay according to each one's deeds*'. That's verse 6. This is the answer to the question of the previous text: why will God's righteous judgement be revealed? Why does He allow people to experience judgement? The answer is because such judgement is in accord with one's deeds. It's fair. And God will do this indiscriminately, just as verse 11 says. *For God shows no partiality*. God is fair. Secondly, this idea is not Paul's. He didn't invent it. It's a scriptural idea. Paul is not making it up. It comes from Psalm 62:12, and perhaps Proverbs 24:12. So in Psalm 62 – I'll read Psalm 62:11-12. It says:

*11 Once God has spoken;
twice have I heard this:
that power belongs to God,
12 and steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord.
For you repay to all
according to their work.*

You also get this idea in other text as well. Jeramiah 17:-10

*10 I the Lord test the mind and search the heart, to give to all according to their ways,
according to the fruit of their doings. .*

Notice here how God is giving to each person according to their ways, is further described as according to the fruit of their doings. This is consistent, I think, with the view of wrath that I discussed in the last episode. God's wrath, just like Greg Boyd has argued elsewhere, is aikido-like. It's best illustrated by this idea of aikido and that of a martial art. Again, if you haven't listened that last episode, you really, really need to because we go into detail about, at least in my thinking, how the wrath of God works. Here you see the same thing – God just gives back what we deserve. But what does Paul mean in verse 7 and verses 7-10? Does it sound a lot like salvation by works? Well, it's not. It's not salvation *by* works. For clarity's sake, let's read it again so that we can get everything on the table for a thorough analysis. I'll start again with verse 6 and I'll go to verse 11. Let me read it one more time.

6 For he will repay according to each one's deeds: 7 to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; 8 while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. 9 There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, 10 but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. 11 For God shows no partiality.

Okay, I suppose that if all a person read was this one passage, then they could walk away thinking Paul was talking about salvation by works. But for obvious reasons, that's not going to work. Pun intended. So here's some reasons.

20:37 First, Paul wrote a whole lot more than just this passage. We need to keep that in mind. As we saw in Romans chapter 1 verse 5, Paul is adamant about calling people to the "obedience of faith". Remember how we discussed that for Paul, faith was for him a thick word. It was a word that for him entailed obedience. Or as we said, a faithfulness. Because remember, in Greek, faith and faithfulness mean the same thing. They come from the same word. Pistis can be translated as both. And specifically what Paul was talking about in Romans 1, was faithfulness to Christ.

Second, as we saw in our discussion in Romans chapter 1:16-17, Paul understands the gospel of Christ to have been a revelation from God. It's God's work. And as we discussed in that episode, God's righteousness is essentially His faithfulness. *His* faithfulness. I think I also mentioned in that episode how our own faith or faithfulness to God is founded upon God's faithfulness first. We only place our trust in someone if we think they are trustworthy. Likewise, our own faith in God is first based upon His

faithfulness to reveal His saving action in Christ for us. And then, our response is a life of walking by faith. And I think Paul is operating along the same train of thought here. Paul envisions that the Christian life is a changed life. It is a life that bears fruit. So we are accepted by God freely, by faith, without any merit of our own. But Paul talks about how God graciously works in us through the Spirit, a life that bears the fruit of righteousness. That's what Paul is going after here. None of this suggests that Paul has in mind perfectionism. I don't think Paul is saying that in this life we will be made perfect. Elsewhere Paul talks against that very thing. He talks about how even he hasn't been made perfect yet. Now this is an interesting topic in Romans 2, and it's caused a lot of controversies amongst scholars. I'm thinking of the popular debate from a while ago between N.T. Wright and John Piper. They had this on-going public debate about justification and what it means. In his book called *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision*, by N.T. Wright, he has some interesting comments about this question of works and is Paul really saying that you have to earn your salvation, and all that stuff. So I thought I would read from a couple of selections here. This is from page 191 and 192. He says this:

'The point of future justification is then explained like this.' (And by the way, let me stop. By future justification he is referring to the final verdict, the final judgement when you receive the final judgement for the life that you've lived...okay...so he says.) *'The point of future justification is then explained like this, the verdict of the last day will truly reflect what people have actually done. It is extremely important to notice, in line with that sense of sudden anxiety in Romans 2:15, that Paul never says that Christians earn the final verdict or that their works must be complete and perfect. He says, "those who by patience in well doing", echoes here of Romans 5:3-4, "seek for glory and honor and immortality"'* N.T. Wright goes on, he says, *'They are seeking it, not earning it. And they are seeking it through that patient, spirit driven Christian living in which, (here is the paradox) at the heart of the Christian life which so many have noticed but few have integrated into Paul's theology of justification. From one point of view the spirit is at work producing these fruits, Galatians 5:22-23. And from another point of view, the person concerned, is making the free choices, the increasingly free because increasingly less constrained by the sinful habits of mind and body, decisions to live a genuinely fully human life which brings pleasure. Of course it does, to the God in whose image we human beings were made. And as long as theologians hearing this kind of proposal shout "Synergism!", and rush back to the spurious either-or which grows out of a doctrine that has attempted to construct the entire soteriological jigsaw puzzle on the basis on medieval view of justice; and with some of the crucial bits, the spirit, eschatology, and not to mention Abraham and the covenant still in the box, or on the floor, or in the fire, we shall never get anywhere. And at this point, it is my instinct as a pastor that is aroused. I want my people to hear and understand the whole word of God, not just the parts of it that fits someone's system'*

25:52 There is a lot more here. But I think he's right here in terms of thinking about what Paul is actually saying. He's not saying that you earn your justification but that you are seeking it out. I think there is something there. Let me see if I can explain it in a way that at least helps me to conceptualize what's going on here. Because what I don't want to do, is I don't want to ignore what Paul is saying. And we don't have that liberty. But I also want to make sure it's integrated well within the greater context of Pauline thought. So, this is a way that I think we can take all of Paul's thoughts consistently. Paul is the apostle of grace, but grace has effects. It brings a change. Not complete change. Not perfection this side of resurrection. But it does bring a shift a life's trajectory. Slowly. Steadily. Patiently. This is very similar to what Jesus himself says in Matthew 10:22 *"And you will be hated by all because of my name, but the one who endures to the end will be saved."* From a pastoral perspective, I think we should highlight the fact that Paul is nowhere suggesting that we should live in a state of fear, or worry, or anxiety about whether we're doing enough to stay in a relationship with God. That sort of anxiety isn't anywhere on Paul's map. He is a good Jew. He knows that even those in covenant with God can sin, and sometimes badly so. The question for Paul is not "am I doing enough good works?", but rather "am I in covenant with the God who gives grace?" Perhaps an analogy would be helpful. I like analogies because they help me picture complex ideas. So let's think of the analogy of marriage. What makes a marriage a true, real marriage? It would make no sense for a person to ask his wife, "Hey, am I doing enough good works to earn a relationship with you?"

Good marriages are always based on grace, and mercy and forgiveness. They are, in other words, based on a covenant. But this doesn't mean that anything goes. Without faithfulness, marriage is not a true marriage. Think of it like this. It would be preposterous to for an unfaithful spouse to say to their husband or wife, "You can't insist on me staying faithful to you. After all what you would be doing is saying that you would want me to earn our marriage through good works, which means that you don't believe marriage is based on grace." Now, such a statement would be *absolutely* ridiculous. Just because a spouse insists on faithfulness, does not make them a legalist. It's not about earning your marriage, either. It's simply about living in accordance with the marriage covenant. The act of marriage brings about change. It alters other relationships. A 'yes' to your spouse is a 'no' to others. And I think this works as an analogy. It's a way of being true to what we are reading here, and with what we know Paul says elsewhere about justification being all about grace. When Paul talks about a judgement according to works, he's not negating salvation by grace. Let me repeat that because it's worth repeating.... when Paul talks about a judgement according to works, he's not *negating* salvation by grace. Rather, he's *assuming* that the salvation by grace will have produced a life that is consistent with the grace that we have been given. It does no good, then, to accuse Paul of legalism. I think that is a category mistake. And I think it just confuses the issues.

29:32 Okay. So something else to consider. The whole point here is to critique those who think that just because they have been born under the Torah, that they are automatically part of the covenant community of God. Just because you were born under Torah, does not guarantee final salvation. That's actually the larger point of this passage. In other words, the covenant family of God is not merely about who has the Torah, but who does the Torah, who keeps the Torah. This is something that Wright also talks about in his book, *Justification*. Let me just build on this. This idea of keeping Torah is accomplished through loyalty to Jesus Messiah. This is how Paul thinks. We can be confident that this is what Paul is thinking because later on in Romans he says that 'in Christ, the Torah is completed'. It is culminated. Romans 10:4 says, "For Christ is the end (*the télos - τέλος*) of the law so there may be righteousness for everyone who believes." In other words, everyone who believes in Christ can have a righteous status because Torah has found its culmination in Christ. Paul is saying all this in Romans 2 except he's using slightly different categories and concepts - and different words.

The other thing to keep in mind here is that these works that Paul is talking about, that he says at the end of Romans 2 - and I'm thinking here verses 25-29, which we will get to those verses in the next episode - but anyway to suffice it to say here, Paul says there that a person can keep the law without being circumcised. In verses 25-29, he's talking about Christians in particular, Gentile Christians. And that, I think, should help us interpret this first part of Romans 2 that we're dealing with today. When Paul talks about doing good, he's not talking about keeping the law, in terms of legalism or in terms of works of law. No, because later on he talks about people being justified who are keeping the law without being circumcised. That's interesting because how can you keep the law without doing what the law says, namely being circumcised. It's fascinating. It's fascinating that Paul would even talk like that. But really what he's doing here in this first part of chapter 2, is that he is talking about the fruit of Christian life that is founded on grace. Again, go back and read go back and read N.T. Wright's *Justification* book.

Paul is adamant that it's not about circumcision of the flesh that counts. It's the circumcision of the heart that counts. And circumcision of the heart is an act of God through the Spirit by the work of Christ. It's all grace. And it produces fruit. I am going to have more to say about these works in a moment. But let's sit on that for a bit and we'll revisit it at the end of this episode.

So, let me pause here and kind of shift gears. One way around all of this is to say that Paul is speaking hypothetically here. In other words, some have argued that perhaps Paul is not suggesting that anyone can actually do these sorts of good works. And if they tried they'd be doomed to disappointment, which would of course would drive them to the cross to accept God's free forgiveness. So all of this talk about doing works is, under this view is hypothetical. Now it's true that any attempt to earn our salvations, to

pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps, it's true that all of that is futile. I'm a firm believer that we are saved by grace alone. There is no room for human merit, because we don't have any merit at all. Our bank accounts are empty. Now, while I do think Paul would agree in substance with this idea, this hypothetical view...kind of what the people, the people who are promoting the hypothetical view...I think Paul would agree with their sentiment that nobody can earn God's salvation and grace and what not – I just don't think that is capturing what Paul is taking about here. Again, he would agree in substance with that, but it's not his point. I don't see any indication in the text that he's saying something like this, "Okay everyone, hypothetically, if you were to do all the good works necessary, then in theory, you could earn your salvation. But since nobody can actually do that, then let's just rely on grace." I just don't think that's the argument that Paul is making here. I don't see any indication in the text that he is speaking in hypotheticals. Paul seems to think that God really *will* repay people according to their works. And again, we don't have to be afraid of that idea. It doesn't do damage to the cherished Christian idea that salvation is all by grace. But it really makes sense why that's really is not his argument. He's a good Jew who already knows that salvation is by grace. He knows for example Psalm 51, where David cries out to God for forgiveness based on mercy alone.

The question for Paul then, is not 'can I earn my salvation?' That's a question that's been asked in our era, but probably not so much in his era. I mean maybe you can find some folks who were asking that question. But for him the real question that people were asking back then, and the big question in the early church was 'What is the mark of the covenant? What shows someone to be a faithful member of the covenant?' The marks of the covenant were the works of Torah – circumcision, dietary laws, etc. That's what Jews believed. And of course that left out Gentiles, unless of course they were started keeping the Torah. They couldn't keep Torah and keep their Gentile ways though. They had to choose. But for Paul, what marks someone out as a covenant keeper was not physical circumcision, but a circumcision of the heart. And just because you were born under the Torah as a Jew didn't guarantee covenant membership. After all, even Torah abiding Jews couldn't keep the law perfectly. And as a Jew, Paul knew this. After all, that's why Israel went into Exile in the first place.

35:43 So this brings us to verses 12-16. I think in this passage we will see everything a bit more clearly. Paul's big concern, his primary aim, is to show that mere possession of the Torah is not enough to receive a righteous status. So verses 12-16 says this. I will re-read it so that we have it fresh in our mind.

12 *All who have sinned apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.*

In other words, judgement is fair. It is universal. I think that's the point. Okay, verse 13,

13 *For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified. 14* *When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. 15* *They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them 16* *on the day when, according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all.*

Okay, so let's talk about that verse. Verse 13 the second verse I read. *For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified.* Let's talk about that. This is final justification, this is future justification. In other words, it's the final judgement and it's described in terms of justification. Again, I think we need to think of justification in terms of vindication. To be vindicated about something is to say that you've been shown to be in the right. You've been "*righteousfied*" or "*righteoused*", or justified is how we say it in English. In Greek, the word righteousness and justified both come from the same Greek root. And in Greek, these two words look a lot alike. For example, the word

righteousness is ***dikaïosuné, (δικαιοσύνη)***. The word justify is ***dikaíōó, (δικαίώω)***. It's an important point to make, I think, because in English the words righteousness and justify don't look anything alike at all. And they give the impression that they are completely different. But again, in Greek they are all part of the same word family. That's why I and many other scholars prefer to play around with the words. To give someone a righteous status is not to justify them, but to "*righteousfy*" them or "*righteousify*" them. I like that better. At any rate, let's get back to the text.

So, for Paul in Romans 2:13, righteousness does come from doing the law. But that's super odd for him to say because in Romans 2:26 he says that it's *possible* for an uncircumcised person to keep the requirements of the law. He says that it *is* possible for an uncircumcised person to keep the requirements of the law. How can you keep or do Torah if you don't perform circumcision? Again, circumcision is one of the most important commands of the Torah. It's something that N.T. Wright and others have pointed out a lot. If you are sensing the tension here, then just let it sink in and settle in. Because that tension will help you see how Paul, apparently, thinks there's a way to keep Torah without keeping Torah. At least not in the ways done in the Mosaic Covenant. And I think we'll see this more explicitly and clearly, later on in Romans particularly in Romans 10:4 like I mentioned earlier.

But to cut to the chase, let's just say this... Paul thinks that the way a person keeps Torah, whether they are a Jew or a Gentile, is by doing this: directing their loyalty to Jesus who has in His own life embodied the story of Torah itself. And as a result of that, He has fulfilled all the hopes and dreams associated with that story as the New Israel. I have much more to say about all that, but let's just let *that* settle in for a bit.

Let's move to verse 14.

39:40 It's a notoriously confusing verse. And it's the subject of much scholarly attention. Mainly because of some grammatical stuff. So let's look at the ESV's translation of verse 14

14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, (comma) by nature do what the law requires...

Okay, so this is not the best translation of this verse because it makes it sound as if Gentiles do the law by nature. Let's read it again.

14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, (comma) by nature do what the law requires...yada, yada, yada....

I think a better way of rendering this is in the following way: *For when Gentiles, who do not have by nature the law, (comma) do what the law requires...* So, in other words, 'by nature' should go with 'having the law'. The words 'by nature' should not go with 'doing the law'. I talk about this in my *Paul and the Meaning of Scripture*, on page 103, if you have the book you can go look at that. And a number of scholars have talked about this, too. And there in the references, I think, there are some notes to those who have made some comments. So go check out my book, page 103.

So what Paul is saying in verse 14 here, is that there are apparently Gentiles who do not naturally possess the Torah and yet oddly still somehow do what the Torah requires. That's point of verse 14. I don't think the ESV translates this correctly. And I *definitely* don't think the NRSV translates this correctly. The point, the big picture point, is that Paul wants to say that the people of God are not revealed or manifested visibly by whether or not they naturally possess the Torah. Whether you possess the Torah or not, is irrelevant to whether to determining if you are part of the people of God. That's what I'm trying to say. So, what does matter, is that they do the Torah. And apparently Gentiles can do the Torah without actually keeping the works of the Law. In Romans 3 Paul says this explicitly. Works of Law don't make you righteous. What makes you righteous, according to Romans 2, is whether or not you actually fulfill the Torah. And that fulfilling of Torah only happens through Christ.

So let's jump to verse 15. He talks about it being written on their hearts. Now I think this is an allusion to Jeremiah's New Covenant text. So, let me read Jeremiah 31:31-34. I think you can see the allusion here.

31 *The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.*

So, on verse 15 here, I think Paul is alluding to that text. So again, in verse 15 Paul says, '*They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts.*' I think that is an allusion to Jeremiah 31 here. So a lot more to say about that, but we will just keep moving on. Notice in this passage of Romans 2:1-16, the Christological nature of it all. This is where Paul is headed. This is what Paul is trying to get his point across. This is the point. It's not fulfilling Torah through legalism. It's not an individual pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. No, no, no. It's all about Christ. In Romans 2:16, Paul says that this final judgement, the final vindication, will take place via Christ. He says in verse 16, '*on the day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.*' Now, this is an important thing to keep in mind. For Paul, everything revolves around Christ. The final judgement, final justification, final vindication, the works by which people will be judged. *Everything* is measured against the rock that is Christ. So again, just to make sure we are seeing this, let's review what we've seen so far. Paul has said that the final judgment on some level, will be according to works. Paul has said, that justification comes by fulfilling or doing Torah. But, like I've also said, Paul does not mean by this that performing works of Torah is necessary. He *emphatically* denies this in Romans 3 and in Romans 2:26, where he says that a Gentile can keep Torah without being circumcised. This is proof enough, I think, that Paul envisions the fulfilling of Torah without actually keeping the commandments of Torah. And here again, we begin to see a glimpse into what Paul is envisioning. What we see in verse 16, where Paul says that Christ will be the final judge – what we see there is that the way in which Gentiles and Jews can fulfill Torah completely is through a life pledged to allegiance to Christ. I say this because apparently it is to Christ to whom we must give account. For it is Christ who has been designated as the final judge.

45:00 Now, this means that the works that God will judge, are not just good works in general. These are not works that you can mark off your checklist to see if you've earned enough marks to deserve salvation. Perish the thought! Again, Paul was a good Jew. Everything revolved around grace. What all this does suggest is that the works Paul mentions here, are those works that come from the grace of Christ. In other words, like I said earlier in the episode, the idea that we are judged in accordance with our works, does not contradict the notion that we are saved entirely by grace.

Think again of my marriage analogy. Paul doesn't go into all the details of this point in chapter 2 about this stuff. He'll get into that in Romans 6 and Romans 8, and chapters 12 and following. But we begin to see hints of all that even here in this chapter. I think as N.T. Wright said in his commentary of Romans, he says Paul is speaking cryptically. I can't remember the exact words, but I think he used that word 'cryptically', and I would agree. Paul is speaking very cryptically here. In my own book, *Paul and the Meaning of Scripture*, I talk about the Psalms quotation in Romans 2:6. And that's where Paul quotes Psalm 62 and actually it's Psalm 61 according to the Greek text that I was using. That's the text where it says, '*God will repay each according to their works*'. Go back and read page 105 of my book, *Paul and the Meaning of Scripture*, I talk a lot about that.

Here's my point for today. Paul quotes that text and 'Christologizes' it. Paul quotes that text and 'Christologizes' it. In other words, he reads it in light of his Christological convictions. That's why I say

that these works that Paul talks about, they are real works. Not hypotheticals. But they founded upon the gospel of Christ. They are not works that you conjure up out of your own strength or by your own merit. These are works that are the product of God's free grace in you. And the justification that you receive today, by faith and grace alone, will match the verdict you will receive at the final judgement. God is faithful to finish the work in you that He had started.

And this is something N.T. Wright talks about, I think, in the *Justification* book. When God saves you, He gives you His Spirit, who produces fruit in your life. And that fruit will match your confession of faith and will be in accordance with it. And so when Paul says there will be a judgment according to works, he doesn't mean *based* on works, but it's *according* to your works. Which is in accordance with the grace that you freely received when you became a believer in Christ. Again, think of the marriage analogy from earlier. If a spouse insists that you stay faithful, they are not saying that marriage is by legalism. They are not saying they want to base marriage on legalism. No, that has nothing to do with it. It's just about living in accordance with the covenant that you have struck. Grace requires a life of pledge of allegiance in a sense.

We are not perfect in this life. It's not about measuring up your works to see if they will stack up in the end. That sort of life leads nowhere good. It leads to panic. It leads to anxiety. What it is about, is staying engaged. It's staying in the covenant. It's about pursuing God in the covenant. I don't think you can lose your salvation like you can lose your keys after having a momentary lapse of memory. I don't think you can lose your salvation like we sometimes lose memories, due to being frail creatures who are in broken bodies. You can't lose something you never earned in the first place. Again, remember in one of the previous episodes, God is not vindictive or prone to anger. He is not looking for ways to strike you off the rolls. He's on your side. He's your Father. And He's a good Father who has your best interests in mind. And as a good Father, He's not going to kick you out of the house because you sin regularly. No, He's going to discipline you and love you like a good Father does. So you don't have to do works to earn your Father's love. You do the works because you already have your Father's love. You simply need to stay in the home. That's your responsibility. Stay in His protection. Stay in God's protection. You don't need to leave the home. You do need to stay in the covenant by staying in the home where you are free to grow and make mistakes, and even sin and be rebuked and be disciplined. You have to keep seeking God, even when you are stuck in sin. That's a Christ-centered thing to do. To keep persevering.

49:40 That's why Paul says in Romans 2:7, *to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.* That was something N.T. Wright picked up on in that quote I read. Paul's idea of good works is not about living about living the perfect life. It's about living a life that is constantly seeking Christ in patient endurance. That's what Paul means by works here. It's not about having more good works than bad works at the end of your life. It's simply about being in pursuit of Christ. And when you fall, and when you feel self-condemned, Christ will pick you up. I think that's why Paul says in chapter 2:15 that those who are saved, who have the law written on their hearts, sometimes suffer from guilty consciences. We know our sin all too well. But that doesn't change the fact that the law is written on our heart. That the gospel of Jesus has been carved into our soul. If you are in Christ, you are a new creation. And there is no condemnation that you have to fear. You are safe in the Father's hands.

And I think this idea here, this idea of perseverance and endurance, all by grace and all of that...I think whether you are a Calvinist or an Armenian...I think that view can be held. I'll have more to say about all those things later, but suffice it to say here, if you are a Calvinist, I think you would agree that perseverance of the saints is important. If you are an Armenian, I think you too would agree that endurance and faithfulness to Jesus is important. And so I think Paul's view here can accommodate both of those positions. A lot more to be said for sure, and I hope that I have explained this well. I hope I've done this beautiful text justice. I hope it's encouraging to you as well. When we come back next time, we are going to tackle Romans 2 verse 17 and all the way to the end of Romans 2, which will lead us into Romans 3, which will be a fascinating discussion in and of itself. We will get more into the weeds, but

hopefully not losing that 30,000 foot view that is so important for understanding the whole text. I hope you have a wonderful rest of the week. May God bless you and may His peace shine upon you

51:45 That's the end of today's episode. And thanks again for listening to The Bible Unmuted. If you like this podcast, consider rating it on your podcast platform, subscribing to it, and sharing with your friends. You can also support the podcast by becoming a patreon member. Go to: <https://www.patreon.com/TheBibleUnmuted> - or simply find the link in the description of this episode. Thanks for listening. Until next time, friends.