



St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
Minot, ND  
[www.anchoredminot.com](http://www.anchoredminot.com)



# The Epistle of Romans

## The Justification of the Ungodly

So, what about people who have never heard the Word of God? Are they still guilty if they haven't had a chance to hear the Word?

First, no one is condemned by the Gospel. Second, everyone has heard God's Law. How has everyone heard God's Law? Well, the Law is inscribed on everyone's hearts (See 2:15).

Think of it this way: the Gentles (who did not have the written Law) tried to follow the Law inscribed on their hearts. They did this because they had a conscience. Furthermore, the Gentles showed that they had the Law on their hearts, for they would judge others according to their conscience. Thinking of our modern day context: ever meet an atheist or a pagan that doesn't judge others around them?

Now, we must go on a bit of an excursus. What we are essentially saying – based upon Romans 2 – is that there is objective morality. It is inscribed upon mankind's heart and tablets of stone. However, we are living

## Chapter 2 Verses 12-24

in a day and age where 'right and wrong' are not seen as objective but as 'social constructs.' That is to say; many individuals would deny that the Law of God is written on everyone's conscience and that 'right and wrong' are universally objective. Instead, people are advocating for the idea that 'right and wrong' are in the eye of the beholder – truth is up to the individual. While this shift to truth being subjective is problematic for theology and the basic survival of civilization, it still doesn't allow people out of God's Wrath. For example, even if 'right and wrong' were up to the individual, does the individual meet up to their own standards of 'right and wrong' or are they guilty of failing their personal standards. Truly, no one is good, not even one.

But what about the Jews? Are they at an advantage for having the Law written on stones? Yes and no. You see, Gentles try to calm a guilty conscience – they cover the Law on their heart with a blanket of excuses. But the written Law on stone is outside of the heart. It is objectively

engraved into stone. Therefore, it is more difficult to manipulate the Law engraved on the stone. But what about following the Law? If the Jews have the Law written on stone tablets, are they at an advantage over the Gentles in following the Law and keeping it? Absolutely not! Whether the Law is on the heart or stone, mankind cannot keep God's Law to perfection because mankind's heart has the virus of sin.

When it comes to the Law, God's Law requires more than just external actions. God's Law requires more than mere reason. God's Law requires more than emotional feelings. It requires the fear, love, and trust of God. And so, if a person relies on the Law – as if they are keeping it before God – then they must uphold it to perfection. Keep in mind that to fulfill the Law, one must love God and neighbor with all of their mind, strength, and soul.

The fact, though, is that it is much easier to preach the Law toward other people than keeping it for oneself. It is easier to shake one's head in disgust toward a neighbor while doing the same sin ourselves.

This is why we need the Law and the Gospel. When considering God's Law that is written on our heart, we must confess that we all too often dull the conscience. We cover our conscience with all sorts of tactics (this is why people get so defensive when confronted with their sin – they have spent a lot of time and energy keeping sin covered). So, when the Law does its job of exposing our sin, we must then be given the Gospel that forgives our sins. The Law shows us sin; the Gospel forgives our sins. All are guilty under the Law, God judges fairly. All are in need of forgiveness – the Gospel.



