

Dr. Craig Keener, Romans, Session 5

Romans 2:11-3:23

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Keener, Romans, Session 5, Romans 2:11-3:23, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Craig Keener analyzes Romans 2:1-3:23, focusing on Paul's argument that all people, both Jew and Gentile, are accountable to God's judgment. Keener explores Paul's rhetorical strategies, including the use of diatribe and syllogism, to dismantle potential objections. He examines key themes such as God's impartiality, the role of the law, and the concept of spiritual circumcision as opposed to physical circumcision. The lecture also discusses the significance of "faith in Christ" versus "faith of Christ" and the implications for justification. Finally, Keener connects Paul's arguments to relevant Old Testament passages and emphasizes the ultimate need for salvation through Christ.

2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Keener, Romans, Session 5 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Pauline Epistles → Romans).



Keener_Romans_Session05.mp3

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided lecture excerpts by Dr. Craig Keener on Romans 2:1-3:23:

Briefing Document: Dr. Craig Keener on Romans 2:1-3:23

Overview:

This lecture, the fifth in a series on Romans, focuses on a detailed analysis of Romans 2:1-3:23. Dr. Keener explains how Paul establishes that all of humanity, both Gentiles and Jews, are under God's judgment. He emphasizes God's impartiality, the inadequacy of the Law for salvation, and the necessity of faith in Jesus Christ for righteousness. Keener highlights the use of rhetorical devices and the structure of Paul's arguments.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Universal Sinfulness and God's Impartial Judgment (Romans 2:1-16):

- **Rhetorical Trap:** Paul uses a "diatribe" style, common in Stoic lectures, employing rhetorical questions and an imaginary interlocutor. This allows him to anticipate and dismantle objections to his arguments.
- **Hypocrisy of Judgment:** Paul initially targets those who judge others, highlighting the inconsistency of condemning sins they themselves commit (2:1, 3). This applies to both morally lax Gentiles and strict Jews who condemn others but are also sinners. He asserts that everyone is inexcusable.
- **Syllogistic Argument:** Keener points out that Paul uses a syllogism: "They commit these sins... such sins merit God's judgment... therefore, they will not escape God's judgment." This rhetorical strategy underscores the universality of God's judgment.
- **God's Mercy and Repentance:** God's mercy provides space for repentance (2:4), and that mercy is meant to lead to righteousness, not to simply excuse sin. However, those who reject God's mercy "treasure up wrath" (2:5).
- **Chiastic Structure (2:6-11):** The passage demonstrates a chiastic structure, emphasizing God's impartiality. This structure pairs statements like "God repays each according to their works" (v.6) with "God is impartial" (v. 11), and those doing good with those who disobey the truth.

- **Accountability:** Those with greater revelation (like the Jewish people with the Law of Moses) are more accountable for their actions (2:12-15), which also has implications for those today who have had more exposure to the Gospel.
- **Context of Good Works:** Keener examines the question of who the "doers of good" for eternal life are and gives the various scholarly positions. He ultimately argues this refers to the principle that the righteous are saved, and in practice, only those in Christ are able to fulfill that.

1. **The Law and Hypocrisy (Romans 2:17-24):**

- **Indictment of the Jewish Interlocutor:** Paul shifts focus to a Jewish objector, exposing the hypocrisy of those who boast in the Law but fail to keep it.
- **Boasting in the Law vs. Boasting in God:** Keener notes that the imaginary objector makes 11 "pious Jewish claims" about his understanding and adherence to the Law, but Paul then uses rhetorical questions to expose the contradiction with their actions. Paul says that true boasting should be in God, not one's own works. This is described as a subtle form of idolatry.
- **Hyperbolic Accusations:** Paul uses hyperbolic accusations (like temple robbery) to highlight the discrepancy between knowledge and behavior.
- **Profaning God's Name:** The hypocrisy of the objector leads to the profaning of God's name among the Gentiles (2:23-24), using a proof text from Isaiah 52:5. This is significant, as God's name was being blasphemed because of the sin of his people, rather than their suffering as described in the original context of the scripture. This relates to the importance of church discipline and avoiding hypocrisy to maintain the credibility of the gospel.
- **Inner Transformation:** Keener emphasizes that merely knowing the law doesn't lead to right living.

1. **Inward Jewishness and Spiritual Circumcision (Romans 2:25-29):**

- **Value of Jewishness:** The value of Jewishness lies not in physical circumcision but in adherence to the covenant. Those who do not keep the covenant are not truly "Jewish" in God's eyes.
- **Spiritual Circumcision:** The true mark of God's people is spiritual circumcision—a transformed heart. This concept is alluded to in the Old Testament, such as in Jeremiah. The Spirit transforms the hearts of believers, making them truly part of God's covenant people.

- **Barriers to Gentiles:** Physical circumcision was a major barrier for Gentile men desiring to join God's people, but Paul contends that the focus is on the inward work of the Spirit, not outward markers.

1. **God's Faithfulness and the Question of Jewish Privilege (Romans 3:1-8):**

- **Diatribes Continue:** Paul continues the diatribe, responding to the objection that if Jewishness is not inherently valuable, then what is its purpose?
- **Advantages of Jewishness:** Paul acknowledges that the Jewish people had a special role in salvation history and were entrusted with God's oracles (3:2). He says that having greater access to revelation is a benefit, but does not make them superior or exempt from judgment.
- **God's Unwavering Faithfulness:** Even though Israel was unfaithful, God's faithfulness remains (3:3-4). This faithfulness is linked to his righteousness and justice.
- **Israel's Sin and God's Glory:** The argument that Israel's sin glorifies God is refuted, and Paul shows how this idea leads to the absurd. God is righteous to judge all, including disobedient Israel (3:6-8).
- **Core Ideal Audience:** He notes that those of the ideal audience will likely have a stronger understanding of what Paul is arguing.

1. **Universal Sin and the Need for Justification (Romans 3:9-20):**

- **All Under Sin:** Paul declares that both Jew and Gentile are "under sin" (3:9), and that this fact is repeatedly testified to in the Old Testament.
- **Scriptural Support:** Paul uses multiple Old Testament passages (from Psalms and Isaiah) linked by common themes of sin, death, and body parts to demonstrate the pervasive nature of human sin. He does this with the technique of Gezer HaShavah.
- **The Law Condemns:** The law reveals sin but does not provide a way to overcome it. The law shows the righteousness of God in condemning that sin, showing how God will silence all mouths at the judgment. He highlights that the law was never meant to provide justification.
- **The Inability of Works:** No one can be justified by "the works of the law," and the term "works of the law" may include all laws, not just Jewish identity markers.

1. **God's Righteousness Through Faith (Romans 3:21-31):**

- **God's Solution:** God's solution for universal sin is offered through the righteousness of God, made available through faith in Jesus Christ (3:21). This righteousness is revealed apart from the Law, as testified to by both the Law and the Prophets.
- **Emphasis on Faith:** Paul emphasizes that righteousness comes through faith and not through works. This is because God has now demonstrated the climax of his salvation in Jesus Christ. This is not boasting in one's own achievement, but complete dependence on God.
- **Repetition for Emphasis:** Paul uses repetition to drive home the point, repeating terms like "righteousness" and "justify".
- **"Faith of Jesus Christ":** Keener explains the scholarly debate about the meaning of "the faith of Jesus Christ," whether it is Jesus' faithfulness or our faith in Jesus. He explains that although there is compelling evidence for both, he sides with the view that it is our faith in Jesus. This is because Jesus is primarily the object of faith throughout Paul's letters.
- **Justification for All:** This righteousness is for all who believe, both Jews and Gentiles, because all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (3:22-23). The gift is available to all, and there is no distinction.
- **Aorist Tense:** The aorist tense of "sinned" in verse 23 may have an allusion to Adam, though Keener suggests this is not the primary emphasis at this point. However, he notes this will be a key discussion later in the book.
- **God's Righteousness and Grace:** God offers salvation and his grace. He can be "just and the justifier" because of the work of Jesus.

Quotes:

- "God's mercy gives space for repentance. God's mercy here brings righteousness, not simply blessing sinners in their sin."
- "Jewish people knew that God judges people by their deeds. The surprise here is that God's own people are not favored. In fact, Paul says they're judged more strictly because they know better."
- "The righteous do good works in chapter 2 and verse 7. Well, these can't be Jewish works of the law 3:20, 27, and 28."

- "The point is that Jewish ethnicity and possession of the law do not guarantee superiority over the Gentiles... The law of nature. Some Gentiles might do right because of the law of nature."
- "For Paul, boasting in one's works versus boasting in God's activity was sinful."
- "Jewishness is valuable only for those who keep the covenant...If you don't keep the covenant, you're actually in more trouble because you knew better."
- "The true mark of God's people is spiritual circumcision—a transformed heart."
- "What's the value of ethnic Jewishness?...Paul's response is greater opportunity. They had a special role or they had a special role in salvation history...Also, they had greater access to the clearest revelation, scripture."
- "God's covenant faithfulness was unable to be violated... His covenant faithfulness equals his righteousness, but God's righteousness means that God is also Israel's judge."
- "The law reveals people's sinfulness... the law didn't make us righteous."
- "The law and the prophets teach the way to be made righteous... They point us to it, not by boasting of one's achievement, but by faith, that is, by depending on God."
- "All have sinned...Thus, righteousness, Paul says, comes only through God's gift in Christ."

Conclusion:

Dr. Keener's lecture provides a thorough analysis of Romans 2:1-3:23, emphasizing Paul's meticulous arguments, rhetorical strategies, and theological depth. He highlights the universality of sin, the inadequacy of the law for salvation, the importance of inward transformation, and the necessity of faith in Jesus Christ for justification. Paul's presentation of God's impartial judgment and the need for salvation applies to everyone regardless of religious or cultural background.

4. Romans Study Guide: Session 5, Romans 2:11-3:23

Romans 2:1-3:23 Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is a diatribe and how does Paul use it in Romans 2:1-3:23?
2. Explain the rhetorical trap Paul sets in the opening of Romans 2.
3. How does Paul utilize the concept of God's impartiality in his argument?
4. Describe the chiastic structure found in Romans 2:6-11.
5. What is Paul's point about the knowledge of the law in relation to judgment?
6. How does Paul use the idea of "treasuring up" in the context of God's judgment?
7. What are the three possible views regarding those who do good works in Romans 2:7, and which does Keener favor?
8. How does Paul connect the idea of inner circumcision to the keeping of the covenant?
9. What are the primary advantages of being ethnically Jewish according to Paul?
10. How does Paul argue that both Jews and Gentiles are under sin in Romans 3:9-20?

Answer Key

1. A diatribe is a lecture style that uses rhetorical questions and addresses an imaginary interlocutor to engage the audience and dismantle potential opposing arguments. Paul uses it to anticipate and refute objections to his claims about God's judgment and human sinfulness.
2. Paul begins by having the reader condemn others for sins they themselves commit, establishing a rhetorical trap. This highlights the hypocrisy of those who judge others while being guilty of the same actions and shows that all are accountable to God.
3. Paul uses God's impartiality to emphasize that God judges both Jews and Gentiles by the same standard, based on their deeds, not on their ethnicity or knowledge of the law. This underscores that no one can claim special favor with God.

4. The chiastic structure in Romans 2:6-11 presents an inverted parallel, where verses 6 and 11 are parallel (God's impartiality), verses 7 and 10 are parallel (rewards for good), and verses 8 and 9 form the center (wrath for evil), underscoring God's fair judgment.
5. Paul explains that knowledge of the law makes one more responsible for obedience to it, meaning that those who know God's law will be judged more strictly for their disobedience, not that it makes one righteous. He emphasizes that the law identifies sin but does not transform hearts.
6. Paul uses the idea of "treasuring up" to contrast accumulating good deeds for heavenly rewards and accumulating wrath by refusing to turn to God. Those who fail to repent are said to be treasuring up wrath for themselves.
7. The three possible views are a real but small class of people, a hypothetical class of people, or Christians. Keener argues it is primarily the natural law that is innate in humanity but notes that it also applies to Christians in principle.
8. Paul argues that inward or spiritual circumcision, through the Spirit, is what truly makes one part of the covenant rather than outward circumcision alone. He notes that both Gentiles and Jews can be circumcised in the heart through Christ.
9. Paul states that the primary advantages of being ethnically Jewish are a special role in salvation history and greater access to God's clearest revelation (Scriptures). However, these advantages do not guarantee righteousness before God.
10. Paul uses a compilation of Old Testament verses to show that all, both Jew and Gentile, have sinned. He connects these verses through common themes such as death and body parts, emphasizing that sin impacts everyone and that no one is exempt.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer each of the following questions with a well-developed essay.

1. Analyze the rhetorical strategies employed by Paul in Romans 2:1-3:23. How do these devices contribute to his overall argument regarding sin and judgment?
2. Discuss the significance of God's impartiality in Romans 2:6-16. How does this concept challenge the assumptions and privileges of both Jewish and Gentile audiences?
3. Explore the tension between the law and the Spirit in Romans 2:17-29. What does Paul suggest is the true measure of faithfulness to God and his covenant?
4. How does Paul defend the value of ethnic Jewishness in Romans 3:1-8 while also emphasizing that all are under sin? What is the relationship between God's faithfulness and Israel's unfaithfulness?
5. Examine Paul's argument in Romans 3:9-20 that all are under sin. How does he support this claim using both Old Testament scriptures and the concept of the law itself?

Glossary of Key Terms

Anaphora: A rhetorical device involving the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses or sentences.

Apostrophe: A rhetorical device where a speaker addresses an absent person, an inanimate object, or an abstract concept, as if it were present and capable of understanding.

Chiastic Structure: A literary device in which ideas are presented in a specific order (A, B, C, B', A') where the last element is parallel with the first, and the second element is parallel to the second-to-last, etc. It is sometimes referred to as an inverted parallelism.

Diatribes: A rhetorical style of lecture involving questions and answers, often with an imaginary interlocutor to engage the audience and explore the subject matter from different angles.

Gezerah Shavah: A method of interpreting scripture by linking texts that share a common keyword or phrase.

Genitive (objective/subjective): A grammatical case indicating possession or relationship. A subjective genitive indicates the subject performing an action, while an objective genitive indicates the object of the action.

Hypocrisy: The practice of claiming to have moral standards or beliefs but not actually adhering to those standards.

Midrash: A method of interpreting scripture by explaining and expanding its meaning through commentaries and stories.

Prosopopeia: A rhetorical device in which a speaker or writer represents an absent person or thing as speaking or acting. Personification.

Reductio ad absurdum: A rhetorical technique where an argument is taken to its logical conclusion to demonstrate that it is contradictory or absurd.

Syllogism: A logical argument where a conclusion is derived from two premises, a major premise, and a minor premise.

Theodicy: The theological attempt to reconcile the existence of a good and powerful God with the existence of evil and suffering.

Torah: The first five books of the Hebrew Bible, often referred to as the Law of Moses.

5. FAQs on Keener, Romans, Session 5, Romans 2:11-3:23, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Romans 2:1-3:23

1. **What is the "diatribe" style that Paul employs in Romans 2:1-3:23, and what does it accomplish?** The diatribe is a lecture style common in ancient Greek philosophy, characterized by rhetorical questions, direct addresses to an imaginary interlocutor, and demolishing potential counter-arguments. Paul uses this style to engage his audience, anticipate objections to his points, and forcefully dismantle opposing views without needing an actual opponent present. This method allows him to control the argument and highlight the flaws in commonly held beliefs about moral superiority and judgment.
2. **How does Paul use a "rhetorical trap" in the initial verses of Romans 2?** Paul sets up a rhetorical trap by first showing that people, both Gentiles and Jews, condemn others for actions that they themselves commit (as implied in Romans 1:29-31 and explicitly in 2:1-3). He builds a syllogism stating that those who commit sins deserve God's judgment, that people recognize this in others, and thus, they cannot escape God's judgment themselves. This trap aims to expose hypocrisy and demonstrate that no one can stand before God on their own merit.
3. **What role does God's mercy play, according to Paul, and how does it relate to judgment?** God's mercy, as described in Romans 2:4, is not about ignoring or excusing sin; rather, it is intended to lead people to repentance. This mercy provides a space and opportunity for turning away from sin and toward God. However, those who reject this mercy and continue to sin are effectively "treasuring up wrath" for themselves (Romans 2:5), highlighting that God's mercy is not an excuse to continue in wrongdoing but an invitation to transformation, after which God's impartial judgment will come.
4. **How does Paul use the concept of God's impartiality in Romans 2, and how does it challenge common assumptions about Jewish identity?** Paul emphasizes that God's judgment is impartial, meaning that He will judge both Jew and Gentile according to their deeds, not on their ethnic identity. He shows this using a chiasmic structure in Romans 2:6-11 to stress that everyone will be judged according to what they have done, not their lineage. This directly challenges the Jewish belief that they are favored by God due to their possession of the law. Paul

also points out that those with greater revelation (like the Jews) are held to a higher standard because of their knowledge.

5. **What does Paul mean when he refers to the "law written on their hearts" (Romans 2:14-15), and what implications does this have for his argument?** Paul is likely referencing the natural law that is inherently known to humanity, a concept that was prevalent in Greco-Roman thought and in Jewish thinking as well. He argues that even Gentiles, who do not have the written law of Moses, have an innate sense of right and wrong, a conscience that can accuse or defend them. This concept supports his argument that all people are accountable to God, regardless of whether they are familiar with the Mosaic Law or not. In practice, Paul implies, this "law on the heart" is most fully realized in Christians through the work of the Holy Spirit.
6. **How does Paul use the imaginary Jewish "interlocutor" in Romans 2:17-24 to illustrate his point about hypocrisy?** Paul's imaginary Jewish interlocutor boasts of his knowledge of and adherence to the law, claiming to be a guide and a light to others. Paul demolishes this claim by using a series of rhetorical questions and contrasts which highlight the hypocrisy of claiming righteousness while simultaneously breaking the very laws he upholds. This is also used to show that a claim to Jewish ethnic identity is not sufficient if it is not accompanied by corresponding behavior. Paul concludes by showing that such hypocrisy has led to God's name being blasphemed among the Gentiles.
7. **What is the significance of "spiritual circumcision" in Romans 2:25-29, and how does it redefine true Jewishness?** Paul argues that true Jewishness is not defined by physical circumcision but by "circumcision of the heart," which is brought about by the Spirit of God. He suggests that an external adherence to the law and the physical act of circumcision are of no value if the heart is not truly devoted to God. He concludes that a genuine Jew is one who seeks praise from God and is transformed inwardly, regardless of their ethnic background.
8. **According to Paul, what is the purpose of the law and why can't it save?** Paul clearly states that the law, while good (as he will expand on later), cannot make anyone righteous. It is intended to reveal sin, to define right and wrong (3:20). However, by itself, the law cannot transform hearts. Instead, the law points humanity to the need for God's mercy and grace. Paul explains that justification is not found through adherence to the law but only by faith, through the work of Christ, because all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. This leads him to argue for the justification of all, Jew and Gentile, by faith in Christ.