

CHAP. 2

THIS chapter contains, in general, a vindication of the justice and equity of the divine procedure against men, such as are described in the preceding chapter; and a refutation of the several pleas that might be made by the Gentiles, who had not the law, and by the Jews who had it; and concludes with exposing the wickedness of the latter, and with shewing who they are that are properly Jews, and circumcised persons, in the account of God. It begins, in ver. 1 with an inference deduced from what had been said in the latter part of the foregoing chapter; concluding that such, be they who they will, Jews or Gentiles, are inexcusable, who do the things they condemn others for: but though the judgment of such persons is wrong, the apostle observes, ver. 2 that the judgment of God, in the condemnation of them, is right, of which he, and others, were fully assured; and which judgment is commended, by the rule of it, being according to truth; by the objects of it, criminals, who are left without excuse, and by the inevitableness of it, ver. 3 being such as cannot possibly be escaped: and though some men might hope to escape it, because not immediately punished, but loaded with the blessings of Providence, and peculiar benefits of divine goodness; yet this was to be ascribed to the forbearance of God for the present; and that if these favours were despised, and they had not a good effect upon them to bring to repentance, but instead thereof were more and more hardened under them, as their guilt would be increased, so wrath would be secretly laying up for them, which will be revealed in the day of judgment, ver. 4, 5 at which time justice will be done to every man as his works will be found to be, ver.

6 then follows a description of the several sorts of persons that will be judged, and of the different things that will be their portion: as that eternal life will be given to good men, ver. 7 and the wrath of God poured down on bad men, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, ver. 8, 9. The happiness of good men is repeated again, and explained, and promised to the Jew first, and then to the Gentile, ver. 10 and a reason given of this just and equal distribution, taken from the nature of God, who is no respecter of persons, ver. 11 an instance of which is produced in both Jews and Gentiles, that sin; the one perishing with, the other without the law, ver. 12 since it is not barely having and hearing the law, but acting up to it, which only can justify before God, ver. 13 upon which the apostle proceeds to refute the plea that might be made by the Gentiles, in favour of themselves, why they should not be condemned, taken from their not having the written law; for though they had not the law written on tables of stone, as the Jews had, yet they had, as he observes, the law of nature written on their hearts, against which they sinned: this he proves by the effects of it, discernible in many of them by their outward lives and conversations, in conformity to the law; and by the inward testimony of their consciences, approving of good deeds, and reproaching for bad ones, ver. 14, 15 which two verses being put into a parenthesis, ver. 16 is connected with ver. 13 and points at the time when the doers of the law shall be justified, even at the day of judgment: which judgment is described by the author of it, God; by the subject of it, the secrets of men's hearts; by the person employed in the divine procedure, Jesus Christ; and by the evidence and certainty of it, the Gospel preached by the apostle: and then

follow a description of the Jews, an account of their profession of religion, and an ironical concession of the several characters they assumed to themselves: they are described by their name, a Jew; by their religion, which lay in trusting in the law of Moses, and in boasting of their interest in God, as the God of Israel, ver. 17 by their knowledge of the will of God, and approbation of the excellent things of his law, ver. 18 and by the characters they took to themselves, ver. 19, 20 from which the apostle takes an occasion to expose the wickedness of some of their principal men, even their teachers, ver. 21, 22 by whose wicked lives and conversations God was dishonoured, and his name blasphemed among the Gentiles, ver. 23, 24 hence it appears, that their name, profession, and character, would not justify them before God; wherefore the apostle goes on, to remove their plea taken from circumcision, shewing that could be of no use to them, but became void through their breach of the law, ver. 25 and that, on the other hand, an uncircumcised Gentile, by keeping the law from right principles, and to a right end, appeared to be the true circumcision, ver. 26 wherefore the circumcised Jew that broke the law, stood condemned by the uncircumcised Gentile that fulfilled it; so far was circumcision from being any part of his justification, or a plea in favour of it, ver. 27. Then the apostle concludes the chapter, by giving a definition of a real Jew, and of true circumcision; which he does first negatively, that it is not any thing external that makes him a Jew, or any thing in the flesh that is right circumcision; but secondly, positively, that it is an inward work of grace that denominates a man a Jew, in a spiritual sense, or an Israelite indeed; and that it is the circumcision of the heart, which is wrought by the spirit of God, that is

true and genuine: and such a Jew, and such a circumcision, are approved of by God, and commended by him, when the other have only praise of men, ver. 28, 29 and therefore, however such persons may be justified before men, they cannot be justified in the sight of God; which is the drift and design of the apostle in the whole.