

**Paul Speaks to the Moralist: Being Good is Not Enough! Rom2:1-16**

TO: THE CAPITOL COMMUNITY

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We live in a society of pragmatism and rationalization, especially when it comes to dealing with spiritual things. Mankind does not accept God's assessment of human sin and the imperative of divine judgment. That is not to say that men will not admit they are sinners; "Nobody is perfect," is the cry. But getting mankind to realize the gravity of their sin is another matter.

Typically, the non-believer has little trouble agreeing that those guilty of "big sins", i.e. murder, & rape, deserve judgment—even death. However, that God's wrath should fall on those guilty of "lesser sins"—such as envy, arrogance, or pride, does not seem quite right to them. It is this contention that measures the magnitude of the hill Paul will climb.

*In our last study, Paul dealt with the sinfulness of all men, presenting the legal case that all men know enough about God to fall under the condemnation of sin. Because of **conscience & creation all men are without excuse in their failure to glorify God.***

I. INTRODUCTION

The self-righteous moralist and Jew would have been quick to agree and join this indictment against the pagan. They would, in effect, shout 'Amen' and easily condemn the pagan for the very sin of which they themselves were guilty. The "so called" respectable sins of their society were overlooked and/or disregarded by the moralist of that day. That is why, after dealing with the unrighteousness of the heathen, Paul now turns to the self-righteousness of the hypocrite.¹

II. THE MORAL MAN IS JUDGED RIGHTLY

^{ESV} **Romans 2:1** *Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself,*

because you, the judge, practice the very same things.² We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who do such things.³ Do you suppose, O man— you who judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself— that you will escape the judgment of God?⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

No Excuse= [anapologetos] "without excuse;" "inexcusable." **1** without defense or excuse. **2** that which cannot be defended.

- A. The Moral Man's plight** (vs. 1): Paul turns the spotlight of God's Word on those who are what we might call hypocrites. That is, they are people who would condemn the actions of others but have no intention of getting right with God themselves. These people look alright outwardly, but inwardly, they are guilty of many of the same sins of the wicked mentioned previously².
- B. The Moral Man's Excuse:** "I should be excused on the basis of comparison," i.e. "I'm not as bad as the pagan." "My morality should excuse me from judgment."
- C. The plea refuted:** "You do the same basic things, but in a more refined way." Scripture gives us examples of the moralist in action:

- Jews—John 8:1-11
- David—2 Samuel 12:1-9

The moralist makes at least one of two capitol mistakes in their assessment of their position.

1. They misunderstand the height of God's Law.
2. They underestimate the depth of their own moral misconduct.

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They desire the fruit of Christianity without the root! They underestimate the awesome knowledge of God, refusing to acknowledge that God knows it all. (Ps. 147:4; Ps. 139:1, 2, 4, 23, 24; Acts 15:18; Mt. 11:23). In doing so they despise His goodness and forbearance (2:4). To despise is to belittle, or to look down upon. So is the attitude of the moralist toward God.

III. THE FUTURE OF THE MORAL MAN.

^{ESV} **Romans 2:5** *But because of 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 He will render to each one according to his works:*

Refusal to Admit our Sin Makes Judgment

Worse. Because of stubbornness and an unrepentant heart, they were storing up wrath against themselves for the day of God's wrath; a time when His righteous judgment will be revealed. Often we, like the moralist, like to think that if we ignore something long enough, it will eventually go away. We think that time will eventually erase the memories of our "mistakes." Here Paul reminds us that God's standards do not change. Society may accept certain sins as normative—God will not. The fact that we stubbornly refuse to call these things what they are, only increases the depth of our sin, and adds more fuel to the fire of God's wrath. **Consider the sobering truth about God's judgment:**

A. GOD'S JUDGMENT IS PERSONAL. (VS.6)

^{ESV} **Romans 2:6** *He will render to each one according to his works:*

Every person will be judged according to their own merits. You will not pay for the sins of another. God's judgment will be fair and tailored to each individual life.

The sin of the moralist (hypocrite) is that of being indignant at other people's shortcomings and of being indulgent of his own.

The moral man (hypocrite) tends to want to lump everyone together and condemn and judge

others by his own, biased standard. God, on the other hand, judges men based on what he knows about their hearts. And his knowledge of the human heart is thorough. (Heb 4:13; Jer. 17:10)³

B. GOD'S JUDGMENT IS PROPER. (VS. 7-10)

^{ESV} **Romans 2:7** *to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life;⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every human being 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.*

God's judges in a righteous manner. When He judges, it will be a true and accurate judgment. When others judge, that judgment is skewed by prejudice and assumption. Not so with God! God has **all** of the information. God will treat no one unjustly⁴!

THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM

At first glance, this section would seem to indicate that salvation is by good works. BUT, we must keep in mind Paul's purpose in Romans 2:7-10. This section does not deal with **SALVATION**. It deals with **JUDGEMENT!** Paul is not showing men how to be saved; he is showing men that they are lost and condemned before a righteous Judge. Paul is simply pointing out a fundamental principle: **THAT GOD PUNISHES EVIL MEN AND REWARDS RIGHTEOUS MEN⁵. Men are never saved by their works as confirmed in Eph. 2:8-9.**

The condition of the heart is everything. A personal relationship with Jesus Christ is the only way to gain eternal life and escape judgment. As you think about your standing before God consider:

1. How many good people are there? (Rom. 3:10-12)
2. How many bad people are there? (Rom. 3:19, 23; 5:12)

Query: Is there a way to gain eternal life without accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?



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C. GOD'S JUDGMENT IS PERFECT. (VS. 11)

^{ESV} **Romans 2:11** *For God shows no partiality.*

There is no special treatment with God. No favoritism! All men will be judged by the same criterion: Do they have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

IV. THE FOCUS OF GOD'S JUDGEMENT

From man's perspective, there will be those who tell us that they did not grow up religious: they don't know the Bible; or they grew up in disadvantaged circumstances. Although sounding good, this excuse will not hold up. All people will be judged by what they do know; not by what they don't know. Consider:

A. GOD'S JUDGMENT IS PERFECT (VS. 11-13)

Here we see the perfection of God's judgment because He judges everyone with faultless discrimination. Whether a person has access to God's Word or not, he will be judged by his deeds, and when he falls short he will indeed be lost without Jesus Christ as his Savior.

^{ESV} **Romans 2:11** *For God shows no partiality. ¹² For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.*

B. GOD'S JUDGMENT IS FAIR (VS 14-15)

Paul anticipates that some may think this is unfair because the Jews have had the advantage of God's written Word. So he explains how perfectly discriminating God is in applying His judgment.

^{ESV} **Romans 2:14** *For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.*

While the Gentiles do not have the Law written in their hearts, not even the Ten Commandments,

nevertheless "the requirements of the law are written on their hearts." **They know the moral standard of God.**⁶

The person who genuinely seeks to know and follow God is divinely assured he will succeed. "You will seek me and find me," the Lord says, "when you search for me with all your heart."⁷ John MacArthur

V. CONCLUSION

What does all this teaching regarding the perfection of the judgment of Christ mean to those who believe and to those who do not believe?

➤ TO THE BELIEVER:

To the Christian it means that God knows everything and that one day we will stand before Him to give an account of our lives. He knows what has gone on in our hearts.

➤ TO THE UNBELIEVER:

Those who are not believers must realize that if they do not have the righteousness of Christ through faith, their sins are yet upon them, and God will judge them with perfect judgment. Handy moralizations—"Everybody's doing it," "To err is human, to forgive is divine," "Nobody's perfect"—will not suffice⁸. Verse 16 declares that the day is coming when all men will be judged through Jesus Christ.

VI. PRINCIPLES TO PONDER

- There is no excuse for passing judgment about another person's sin.
- Being impatient with God about another's sin shows contempt for the patience He shows toward me and my sin.
- God shows no favoritism in His judgment of sin.
- Obeying the will of God is more important than knowing the will of God.
- I am accountable before God for what I know about God.
- Spirituality is evaluated by God internally more than externally.
- No human being naturally hungers after God and yet is responsible for not hungering.



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What a challenge the perfection of the judgment of God brings to all of us! Believers should strive for a profound inward righteousness. Nonbelievers should seek the righteousness that comes from God by faith.

^{ESV} **1 Peter 2:24** *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*

POSTSCRIPT

John MacArthur gives an excellent illustration of God's honoring a genuine quest of find Him: "This man grew up in one of the most primitive tribes in Africa. Because he was ill-behaved and incorrigible as a child, he was frequently made to stay outside when the family had guests. Although he was severely punished by the tribe as well as by his mother, he persisted in acts of pointless mischief and even cruelty. He reports that he felt guilty and heartsick even while doing the mischief but could not seem to help himself. He knew something was very wrong with his life and would often go into the forest and pound his head against a tree, crying, 'What's wrong with me? Why do I do such things?' More than once he considered suicide.

One day one of his friends returned from a visit to the coast. Among the many fascinating stories he told was that of some people who met together every Sunday to sing, and talk. When the boy asked his friend why those people met together, he was told they were singing about and praying to the God who had created the whole world. They called their God *Father* and believed he heard and answered their prayers.

With that small bit of knowledge about the Lord, the boy over whom the tribe had despaired decided to pray to this God himself. 'I had never heard anyone pray,' he recounts, 'but I decided I would just talk to this God like He was my father. I can't explain what happened but it was an exciting experience. I wanted to know more about this God but there was no one in our village who knew anything about Him. So for two years I

kept praying by myself on Sundays, hoping that some day someone would come along who could tell me about Him.'

While working on a government road project, he visited his cousin in the village where he had been born and discovered to his great surprise and delight that a group of people met there on Sundays to sing and pray to the God he had heard about. 'How excited I was,' he says. 'I could hardly wait for Sunday. That morning I sat in the back. I listened to a man tell about God for the first time in my life. I found He was far more wonderful than I had ever imagined. The preacher said that God loved the world so much that He sent His only Son named Jesus to take away my sins. I wondered if He knew how terrible I was. I wondered if He knew the awful things I had done back in my village. But the preacher said no matter what I had done, God would forgive me and make my heart clean. I knew it was all true.'

MacArthur goes on to say: "Because that young man had been genuinely seeking God, when he finally heard the gospel the Holy Spirit confirmed its truth to his yearning heart. He knew that God had heard his prayers and had sent him to a place where he could hear the message of salvation. "I gave my heart to God that morning," he testifies, "and it was nice to know He had a Son, too. He was really a Father, just like I had been praying."⁹

¹ Courson, Jon: *Jon Courson's Application Commentary*. (Nashville, TN : Thomas Nelson, 2003) S. 882

² Carr, Alan www.sermonnotebook.org/romans%202_1-16.htm

³ Carr, Alan p3

⁴ Goettsche, Rev. Bruce, *A Word to Good people*,

<http://www.unionchurch.com/archive/053004.html>

⁵ <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/romans/romans2.htm>

⁶ Hughes, R. Kent, *Romans, Righteousness From Heaven*, (Crossway Books, Wheaton, ©1991) p56-57

⁷ MacArthur, John, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Romans 1-8* (Moody Press, Chicago, ©1991) p142

⁸ Hughes, p57-57

⁹ MacArthur, p142-143