

“Judgement”

- *Romans 2:1-16*

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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Romans 2:1-16 *Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. 2 But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against*

those who practice such things. 3 And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? 5 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who "will render to each one according to his deeds": 7 eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; 8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, 9 tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; 10 but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 11 For there is no partiality with God. 12 For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law 13 (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; 14 for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, 15 who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) 16 in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

Paul begins Chapter 2...reflecting on what he had just covered in chapter 1, by saying “therefore you are without excuse...”

At the heart of chapter 1 was the idea that the reality of God was and is innately a part of all men. Paul pointed out that God’s manifest is all around us and thus we cannot claim we are ignorant and thus innocent. In this matter, all of mankind stands on a level playing field. Yet we know that some *have* acknowledged His reality and have received the work of the cross, while others will reject such and are lost. In this, the picture is clear. However, there still lies an ambiguous scene in the God camp, because for sure, it seems we are not all batting for the home team. So Paul begins to draw a picture ...a “scenario” in which he separates the wheat from the tares...the true child of God from the feigning believer.

In the day in which Paul was penning these words, the average Jew believed himself to be outside the realm of what we would understand to be the “across-the-board” judgment. He would have believed himself to be, *well*, “special.” After all, he was one of “God’s chosen people,” and thus he believed himself to stand in a special place before God. He thought himself innocent of the “base sins” of man. It was of course, nothing more than a chronic case of elitism.

The greater church today is so often found guilty of the same thinking. Because of issues of church attendance and church participation we can erroneously begin to see ourselves as outside the grand scope of judgement that God exercises upon this earth. Because we DO some religious stuff we therefore take upon ourselves the mantle of righteousness. It seems we are unable to grasp that God seeks us first and foremost to BE...not to DO. We therefore “hide-in-plain-sight,” in the pews and hallways of churches around the country, attempting by osmosis to absorb the righteousness that stands as the “bar” of the Christian faith; an attempt at “innocence by association!”

Now I believe...and apparently so does Paul, that despite such attempts, our heart still quietly convicts us, if only in the quiet of the dark hours of the night. Because of such silent conviction, we tend therefore to move in our own



defense. And as they say, the best defense is a good offense. If I can just prove that I am not as bad as the next guy...especially if the next guy claims salvation, then I must in reality be ok. Thus “enter stage right,” the widely accepted practice of judging others and their sins as not being as holy as we think ourselves. Because we don’t sleep around like that other guy, then we are therefore innocent of sexual sin. Because we do not steal we are innocent of theft. But do we lust? Do we covet? Jesus tells us clearly our hearts and our minds condemn us whether we physically act upon these desires or not! See, the problem is that we want to judge ourselves in light of others. But they are not the “bar”: *Jesus is*. Chapter 1 of Romans tells us that the unredeemed are without excuse, and now in chapter 2 he is telling us that the pseudo-righteous are in the same boat.

It is not hard today to peruse the local newspaper and find the guilty soul who is deserving of justice and punishment. Every generation has its famously wicked individuals, and every community has its vilified residents. We seem to have no problem identifying evil when it is worn by someone else. Whether it be on the international level or down the street, we know how to acknowledge the wicked heart. But what about us? What about our sin? Do we think because we have not committed the atrocities of the world’s greatest sinners that we are therefore righteous? Do we think that God is grading on a curve? Matthew 5:27-28 reminds us; “*You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit adultery.’ But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*” Suddenly we are all on the hot seat... “...*the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*” 1Sam 16:7

Certainly we are all aware that one of the most frequently used, but misapplied, verses in the Bible is Matthew 7:1, “*Do not judge so that you will not be judged.*” Men throw that out as some sort of final word to get them off the hook of responsibility. But if people would just keep reading, they would see that in verse 6 of that chapter Jesus tells us not to give what is holy to dogs or to cast our pearls before swine. We know that He was not talking about literal dogs and swine, but rather about people who are dogs and swine. To obey that verse, one must judge whether a person is indeed a dog or a swine. Then, in verse 15, Jesus warns about false prophets who come as wolves in sheep’s clothing. You have to judge carefully to conclude, “This isn’t a sheep—this is a wolf masquerading as a sheep!” The point is clear: if you don’t make correct judgments about others, you’ll be eaten by wolves! Also, Paul tells us clearly in 1 Cor. 5:9-13 that we are responsible to judge those in the church who profess to be believers, but who are living in sin. Indeed we are to get the log out of our own eye before helping our neighbor with the splinter in his. But the idea is to actually get the log out of our eye, not to fail in this call upon our faith-filled lives.

Yet when it comes to that final call concerning a person’s ultimate destination, heaven or hell, it seems the only individual that is fit to be the judge is God. Not only is our God the only one righteous enough to make **that** call, but moreover His judgment is based on actual truth. Meaning He is aware of everything...the public and the private! No evidence is lost. No more witnesses are necessary. “*all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do*” (Heb. 4:13). We blindly believe the lie that we can be good enough in ourselves to qualify for heaven. We don’t need a Savior who died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. “Maybe really terrible sinners need a Savior. But me? Hey, I’m a basically good person!” Make no mistake. When God looks to us we must realize that none of us are “good enough.”

Just like in the areas and subjects of love and morality, we can often tend to run this issue through the sieve of the secular worldview, allowing the conventional thought of the world at large to set the standard. Despite the commonly accepted understanding, God is not running things with a great cosmic scale to weigh our good against our bad! God does not deal with degrees of sin. It has always been all or nothing with our Lord. We are either righteous before our God or we are not. There is no “middle ground.”

It is man’s tendency to think that when our day in court comes we will argue our case like one of those TV tabloid court shows. We will plead our case before the jury of our peers! But in this situation, God is judge, jury, and if need be, the executioner! And certainly any attempt to defend ourselves only proves the old adage that “any individual that attempts to serve as his own attorney has a fool for a client.” I find it interesting that one of the descriptive titles that scripture gives Jesus is our “attorney.” (1 John 2:1)

2:4-6 “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who ‘will render to each one according to his deeds...’”

Despite prevailing winds of thought, God is not ignorant or uncaring about our sin. We often misinterpret God’s patience and grace as not caring or perhaps not even aware of our sin. But the truth is, He exercises His love in such a way as to allow us time to repent and grow. He doesn’t want to “cut us off at the knees!” So He pours out His mercy, and calls us to Him. But instead of recognizing that out of His grace He withholds His wrath and judgement, we think that He is aloof, passive, or more corporately focused instead of personally involved in my individual life and mission.

Paul is saying, “If you think that you can get away with sin because God is kind, tolerant, and patient, you’re greatly mistaken! His kindness should lead you to repentance, not to self-righteous complacency. If you go on sinning, presuming on His grace, you’re only storing up wrath for the day of judgment (2:5).”

In such displays of mercy each of us will go one direction or another. Sin is not static, and for that matter, either is life in general. We will always move closer in repentance, or we will slide deeper into sin. Our lack of repentance and our “hardness of heart” will deposit our sin into our own personal “bucket” ...a debt that will one day be in the hands of the Judge. If judgment is finally rendered against us, it is because we have failed to take advantage of God’s “sentencing diversion program.” God the judge has provided a forgiveness in which we not only do not pay for our sin, but He is willing to even “forget about it.” Hebrews 8:12 says “*And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins.*” But we are foolish to believe that God will not one day audit the lives of all those who reject His grace. Ezekiel 16:49-50 “*Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit.*”

2:7-9 “...eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;”

But all of this is not in any way meant to infer that we can by our own efforts acquire that right standing, in terms of salvation, before God. We cannot *earn* it, but we can *have* it! We must remember that this letter is addressing professed believers. Paul is not addressing the *lack of works*, but rather the *lack of fruit*. Those who were on the receiving side of this letter had plenty of good works, they just lacked the fruit of a transformed life. It is a fatal mistake to believe that we can be born again and can fail to produce the fruit of redemption in our lives. Jesus Himself was sighted on several occasions stating the exact opposite.(John 15, Matthew 7:17-20, Matthew 3:8, Luke 13:6-9, Mark 11:13-14, etc)

This issue in modern Christendom is huge. We so often fail to grasp what a profound metamorphosis rebirth actually is. Through such we become literally a “new creature.” We have “died” and have been “reborn” something new and something very different. If we are *not* new and we are *not* different, then we are not reborn. Upon rebirth, our lives, priorities, and passions profoundly change, being now deeply rooted in Christ. If we are indeed born again, we are far from perfect, but we will now have a deep drive for obedience, and a zeal to serve Christ and kingdom. “Good works” will be a reality in us! But they are because they take the form of “good fruit” naturally growing on a vine connected to Christ.

Paul simply clarifies our position by placing our faith in a quantifiable situation. If we are born again, we will “*persist in doing what is good, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality that God offers.*” This offers us the only real proof of our salvation which is change and “other-centered fruit bearing” that overflows our soul. There will be a sure difference in our life. Slowly at first, accelerating thereafter every day of our lives on this planet.

With salvation there is fruit. Without salvation there awaits only “tribulation and wrath.” Clearly Paul, and our God, expects works of righteousness from us. (NOTE: James 2:14-26) Note the word “continuance” in verse 7!

2:10-11 “... but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.”

This is what is waiting for those who serve the Lord! This is the bounty of our earthly service! Even beyond the redemption which brings eternal life and right standing with our Creator, we are given the “bonus’s” *if you will*, of glory, honor, and peace.

In reality, this is such a simple and basic premise! And yet the attempts to circumnavigate this truth are timeless and innumerable. We say we are too busy, occupied with family or career, don’t have any talents, or unwilling to serve in humble positions. But these are merely excuses and it is clear that God is not excusing anyone from play. For there is no partiality with God!

2:12-13 “For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified;”

If you have no law, you perish. If you have the law, did you follow it perfectly? No? So you perish. What Paul wants is the acknowledgment of the God that is innately known inside of each of us. This is what He seeks from us. It is not about rules and regulations, for we will fail such rules anyway. What does the Book of Galatians tell us is the purpose of the law? It tells us that it is a “schoolmaster.” It is to teach us the reality of our unrighteousness and our inability to gain such righteousness through our feeble attempts at legalism or religious ritual. When God is acknowledged, a simple obedience to a “greater law” comes into play; the “law of grace.” And that law moves a man profoundly...

2:14-15 “...for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them.”

So those of us without the “law”...those outside of biblical knowledge and even Jewish tradition have no excuse because we didn’t not have the Law that the Jews have. Scripture is clear: the Law made no man righteous. (Ga 3:11 “...no one is justified by the law in the sight of God...”) That doesn’t mean that the law is now “null and void.” No, it is *still* God’s holy standard. But if the reality of God is truly in each of us, we are aware of God and His righteous standard, with or without the Law. When our conscience is pricked, we don’t deny that some thing or some issue is wrong. We either turn away from such behavior or we just offer excuses for our failure to meet the standard. But no written code is needed for us to determine whether the action was right or wrong, for it was written on our hearts alongside the reality of God!

2:16 “...in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.”

Every man and woman will eventually stand before the Lord and be judged. Not just for his or her outward adherence to a written code or the lack thereof, but even for the “secret things.” The thoughts, the “closed door sessions,” all that we were never caught for. No shortcoming will be forgotten. No indiscretion will be over-looked. If there was any denying of one’s unrighteousness on earth, it will be clear that day before the Lord. All of it will be laid public before the Lord.

Unless... Unless God has “forgotten” all of your sins. Unless Jesus is standing today in your place at that judgement. Because then God sees His son, and not you. Jesus will stand and tell His Father, “*he’s with me dad....He’s one of mine.*” The bottom line is does He know you today? Because if He does not, His answer will be instead “*depart from me...I never knew you...*”

Psalms 103:8-17 *The LORD is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. He does not punish us for all our sins; he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve. For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west. The LORD is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. For he knows how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust. Our days on earth are like grass; like wildflowers, we bloom and die. The wind blows, and we are gone — as though we had never been here. But the love of the LORD remains forever with those who fear him...*