

**Romans Chapter 2
Verses 1-16**

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The Impartiality of God

¹Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. ²And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. ³But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? ⁵But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶who **WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS:** ⁷to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; ⁸but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. ⁹There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, ¹⁰but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹For there is no partiality with God. ¹²For 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; ¹³for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. ¹⁴For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, ¹⁶on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

Many who are not Christians have fervent objections to the use of the word "saved" when they hear it coming from the mouth of a committed evangelist. In their minds and for a variety of reasons they simply believe (have convinced themselves) they are not lost. In the lives of these people, the redemptive work of Jesus Christ does not yet apply. For them, Jesus has nothing to offer.

Why make such an absurd statement?

Look at the words Jesus used.

"I am come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10 KJV).

Jesus made it plain that the reason he came was to save the lost. Without knowledge of our "Lostness", followed by a desire to change our condition we have no need for the redemptive power of Jesus. Granted, there are many ways

to introduce the “not yet reborn” to Jesus, so that a dialogue leading to salvation may begin, but the fact is, until we recognize our “Lostness” and the need for redemption, we will remain separated from the Father in our sin.

Paul has introduced this subject in Chapter 1 of his letter to the Romans. Having established this proof of our need to be saved, Paul goes on to address our “Lostness” (Where we are in God’s sight, why we are there and what makes us act the way we do, all of which lead to the reason why Jesus came and why we need him) in Chapter 2 of his letter to the Romans.

The Impartiality of God

¹Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

Paul wrote his letter to the church in Rome during a time when violence and disregard for the rights of humanity was at an all time high across the first century world. Home life in the Roman Empire had deteriorated due to sexual immorality and perversion. These were the conditions of the world Paul addressed, then and remarkably similar now.

It is not surprising to see that as with those days, there are many people today who would quickly tell us that they do not belong with the group of people Paul writes about in his letter. There were (and are) many who would say, “Paul isn’t referring to us. I am not like that. He may be describing them perfectly, but what he writes does not describe me.”

It seems reasonable to ask what are people inclined to do when faced with our condition. We say, “He is / they are much worse than I am. You should focus your indignation on them since they are the really bad ones!” It is the human condition to divert criticism to others if possible and much of our effort when we consider the human condition is to avoid our condition by judging others. Almost everyone alive has carefully analyzed the rest of humanity and stored away a full list of people who are less ethical, less moral and more rotten than they are. In fact, our ability to evaluate and catalogue the faults of others is one of our best developed skill sets. At one time or another, all of us seek a way to divert God’s attention from our condition to the “lostness” of others.

Paul points out that when we do this, we condemn ourselves since we usually are guilty of the very same offense we point out in others.

In this verse, Paul addresses those who pass judgment on others. This group of people, at one time or another likely includes all of us. In his statement, he makes two points:

1 – People who judge know the difference between right and wrong. If not, how could they be in a position to judge? Knowing right and wrong, surely they know what would make the Wrath of God justifiable against those who do wrong in God’s eyes.

2 – Paul says that even though these people clearly know right from wrong (allowing them to judge), they still do what is wrong themselves. When they do this, they are as guilty and deserving of God’s wrath as those they judge.

All of are blind to at least some degree with what we do and how we act, failing to see our own faults, although we have 20/20 vision when observing the faults of others. It could also be said that we have a very poor memory when it comes to recalling the things we do that are bad, even though our memory is very good (o the point of total recall) when it comes to our ability to bring back the faults and errors of others. Perhaps we think that when we forget our sins, God will forget them too. That is not the case, since Paul has already pointed out that God’s wrath builds up with each of our transgressions.

From Pastor Ray Stedman:

We may think these things will go unnoticed, but God sees them in our heart. He sees all the actions that we conveniently have forgotten. He sees it when we cut people down, or speak with spite and sharpness, and deliberately try to hurt them. He sees it when we are unfair in our business tactics, when we are arrogant toward someone we think is on a lower social level than ourselves. He sees it when we are stubborn and uncooperative in trying to work out a tense situation. All these things God takes note of. We, who condemn these things in others, find ourselves guilty of the same things. Isn't it remarkable that when others mistreat us we always think it is most serious and requires immediate correction. But when we mistreat others, we say to them. "You're making so much out of a little thing! Why it's so trivial and insignificant."

So, how does God Deal with men?

In the verses 2-15, Paul shows us five ways God deals with us.

1 - God judges, according to the truth (v: 2-5)

²And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. ³But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? ⁵But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

Paul's use of the phrase "rightly falls" can also be translate as "is according to truth". If translated this way, Paul is saying "... the judgment of God is according to the truth upon those who practice such things."

All of us have a personal opinion regarding our condition. Our friends look at us and form opinions about us also. In the final evaluation (before God), the only thing that matters is God's opinion of our condition. God sees us as we actually are – truthfully. In scripture, we have the opportunity to see ourselves as God sees us. So, what is the truth? We distort his divine intent for our lives. We hurt even the ones we love. We use the gifts he gives us for wrong. We take the opportunities he gives us to do God like things and waste them on selfish self centered acts. We waste and destroy.

God shows us these things in His scripture and we refuse to see them – certainly we refuse to acknowledge them. In fact, we ignore them, usually pointing out in our willingness to judge others that they exist in them but refusing to consider our own lives. When we do this, we perhaps foolishly believing that we will "**escape the judgment of God**".

The God who loves us waits for us to see through our delusion and act. He is tolerant and patient with us, wishing that we would open our eyes and eventually see how we are so that he might see repentance in us. So, what does God's tolerance and patience with us accomplish? We do not change and only store up his wrath against us. Each day we are ever more guilty of "**storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God**". Eventually we discover that all along we were not fooling God one bit -- he sees us for exactly what we are.

God's judgment is according to truth, according to things as they really are.

2 - God Judges, according to works (v: 6-8):

⁶who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: ⁷to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; ⁸but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

Some believe that there exists a "Great Balance Scale", where our actions will someday be placed, good on the left and bad on the right (may be the other way) and that if our good is greater than our bad, we will "make the grade" and be admitted into Heaven. If the bad out-weighs the good – they go in the other direction. In their minds, God is the great keeper of the scales. If they are readers happen to be readers of scripture (probably not) they may cite these verses to support their belief.

These verses need to be read carefully;

God says he "will render to every man according to his deeds; to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, (there will be) wrath and indignation."

Paul is only pointing out that the deed reveals the heart. God will judge men according to the result of their obedience to the truth, or their lack of obedience, expressed by what they do in life. To measure us, God goes back to what we do, into our hearts and belief. God knows that men are what they believe.

It is true that there are others (non Christians) who do good.

It is foolish to believe that only Christians are good people. There are many people with fine moral lives, men who are as honest as the day is long -- but who are opposed to the Christian faith. This speaks to the fact that when men obey truth, they do what is right (good), even though they do not yet know Christ.

There is a more important question that must be addressed. "Will God save a man who lives a good life but never hears of Christ?" No single question about Christianity is asked more frequently than this.

From a Favorite Pastor

"The answer is, in the light of this statement in Romans: "It is impossible to live a truly good life and never hear of Jesus Christ!" Paul states clearly here that if anyone seeks to do good, and is looking for the truth, God "will give him eternal life." Now, "eternal life" is but a synonym for "Jesus Christ." Christ is eternal life. As John says, "This is the record, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son," (1 Jn 5:11 KJV). A little farther on in this same letter to the Romans, we read, "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life ..." How? "... through Jesus Christ" (Rom 6:23 KJV), his Son. Therefore, if God gives anyone eternal life, it is only by the knowledge of Christ, his Son. But truth obeyed leads to the knowledge of greater truth, until it leads at last to Christ.

So, what Paul is saying here is that it is God's responsibility to bring those who are seeking good to the knowledge of Christ. And this he does -- we have accounts of it in Scripture: Cornelius was one like this. As we read in the tenth chapter of Acts, this Roman centurion was a good man -- he was devout, but a pagan nevertheless -- seeking to know the true God. An angel was sent to tell him to send men to a nearby town and follow their noses to the house of a certain tanner. There they would find a man named Peter, who would come and tell him the gospel. In the Old Testament, you have Rahab, the harlot (see Josh 2:1 ff), and others. There is also the example of the Ethiopian eunuch, in the eighth chapter of Acts (Acts 8:27-39). These were eagerly obeying the truth that they had. And, you see, the test of whether a man is really obeying the truth and doing good is to offer him Christ. If that man is good, in the sense that God

recognizes, then he will eagerly receive Christ. If he is only a respectable sinner, trying to appear good, he will reject the offer of grace."

3 - God Judges without Partiality (v: 9-11):

⁹There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, ¹⁰but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹For there is no partiality with God.

God shows no partiality to any race, nationality, sex or other designator we might choose to claim. The Jews were (and are) God's chosen people, but they are not held to any special status when tribulation or reward is considered by God. Scripture has always been very clear that all responsibility and reward is provided to the Jew first and then to everyone else. God is without partiality. He is not impressed by breeding, or by ancestry. He doesn't care whether our ancestors came over on the Mayflower, or whether they met it when it arrived -- it makes no difference to him. It makes no difference whether our sins are notorious or respectable. They are all treated the same in his sight.

A good example of this is found in Revelation, Chapter 3, where Christ is speaking to the seven churches, and he calls one of them "lukewarm" (Verses 15-17)? He says,

"I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked." (Rev 3:15-17 RSV)

Another Pastor's comments:

The thesaurus shows synonyms of the word "lukewarm." One synonym is, "to be indifferent," another is, "to be respectable." What is it to be lukewarm? It may be when one says "I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing." This is what it is to be respectable - to think you have no needs. The man who thinks he has need of nothing is the one by far the worst off, for, as God sees him, God says, "You do not know that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked." And God treats the respectable sinner just as he does the notorious one.

4 - God Judges according to Opportunity (v: 12-15):

¹²For 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; ¹³for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. ¹⁴For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,

Men constantly accuse God of being unjust because they say he condemns men to hell who have never heard of Jesus Christ. This is the most frequently voiced charge against the Christian gospel. Someone always says "What about the bushman who has never been told about Christ? How can a just God condemn them to hell without their hearing about Christ?"

From my Favorite Pastor source:

God never condemns anybody on that basis. The scripture is plain. "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." That is, if you disobey the truth that you have, even though you have never heard of Moses or of Christ, you perish, not because you didn't hear of Moses or of Christ, but because you have disobeyed truth that you already know -- that is the whole point. If you know of Moses and of Christ, and you still disobey the truth, you perish also, because your condemnation is even greater -- because of the greater light involved. But, as it says here, even pagans have a form of basic law written on their hearts, and this is the basis of God's just condemnation of man. It is because they are not what they themselves know they ought to be. In other words, God judges you, not by some artificial standard of his, but by your own standard.

Recently, I was down in Newport Beach, teaching a Bible Class in a home. Quite a number of non-Christians were there, and one of them was a man from just across the street. He was a very charming individual, but he had made it known in the neighborhood already that he had no use for Christianity. As he came in the door, the first thing he said was, "I have come to be the Devil's advocate. I think the Devil needs a representative here tonight." We welcomed him, and told him to curl his tail around a chair, and sit down. As I began to speak on the opening chapter of Genesis, dealing with God's word to man, I could see in his face that this man had let down his guard. I don't think he was aware of how much he was revealing, but in that man's eyes I saw hunger written like I had never seen it before. At the question time, he, of course, came up with the usual question : "How about those that God condemns who never hear about Christ?" I answered (to all in the room), "Let me ask you this: Which of you has lived up to your own ideals? -- because God won't judge you on the basis of something that you have never heard, but on the basis of what you already know. Now tell me: Who of you has lived up to his own ideals? Which of you has never deliberately done wrong? Which of you can say that you measure up to your own standard of what you ought to be?" You could just hear the silence in that room!

You see, it is not by some artificial standard that we stand condemned before God; it is because of what we know in our hearts about ourselves. This indicates that God measures us by our own yardstick.

5 - God judges according to the secrets of men (V: 16)

¹⁶on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

Christ will be the judge. The gospel will be the prosecuting attorney. The charge will be the secrets of the heart that no one knows about but you and God.

Samuel Johnson once said, "Every man knows thoughts of himself that he would not tell to his dearest friend."

It is not so much the thoughts that come to our mind, because these are often temptations we are powerless to stop, but it is the reception we give them. Sadly, we sometimes open the door, invite them in and hold them close. Instead of pushing these thoughts and temptations away when they pass by we keep them with us and go to them time after time again. When they come to us we keep them with us and eventually they become a part of us. These are the secret things that we don't want to tell anybody about -- even our dearest friend.