

Romans 2:1-29  
Judgment – Part 2

Introduction

1. Last week we began the first major section in Paul's letter to the Romans; it describes the wrath that all mankind faces as a result of God's judgment against sin
  - a. We learned that God's wrath is real
  - b. We learned that God's wrath is justified
  - c. And we learned that God's wrath is evident—meaning that we already see aspects of His wrath:
    - 1) He has given mankind over to his immorality
    - 2) He has given mankind over to a depraved mind
2. Paul continues his discussion of God's wrath in chapter 2 by correcting those who feel they will escape God's judgment because of their religious pedigree
3. He bases his argument on three principles:
  - a) God's judgment is according to truth
  - b) God's judgment is impartial
  - c) Genuine faith, rather than religious heritage or practice, is the only way to avoid God's judgment

A. God's judgment is according to truth (2:1-5)

1. In this passage, Paul uses a form of discourse known as diatribe
  - a. In English, when we think of diatribe we think of a long winded verbal attack on someone or something
  - b. However, in archaic use a diatribe was a form of instructional discourse where the author or speaker plays both the sides of the discussion—his side and that of the audience—in an attempt to win them to his side. In other words, he speaks on their behalf what he knows is going through their minds, and then responds to those objections.
  - c. In this passage, Paul uses diatribe by carrying on a discussion with a fictions individual who is intended to represent his audience (he uses the second person singular "you" rather than the plural which would be expected if he were directly addressing his audience)
  - d. This individual represents the self-righteous who apparently believe that God's judgment and wrath will fall upon others, but not themselves
2. He begins by informing the self-righteous Jew that he is without excuse and will not escape God's judgment (1):
  - a. He was in the habit of judging others, and yet did the same things himself (1): **"Therefore you have no excuse, every one of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things."**
  - b. But, like Paul, he should have known ("**we know**") that God judges those who practiced such things (2): **"And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things."**
    - 1) Most other English translations render this verse more literally: **"But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things."**

- 2) This means that God judges truthfully, not hypocritically, like the self-righteous do
- 3) This means that God would judge the Jew according to truth, just like the gentile—all those who practice such things will be judged, regardless of who they are, Jew or gentile
- c. He was naive to think he would avoid God's judgment (3): **"But 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?"**
- d. He showed contempt (think little of, think it worthless) for God's kindness, tolerance and patience (4): **"Or 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?"**
  - 1) The Bible tells us over and over that God is patient with sinners:
    - a) Psalm 78:38-39
    - b) Psalm 86:15
    - c) Psalm 103:8\*14
    - d) Psalm 145:8
  - 2) What Paul tells us here is that this patience, tolerance and kindness is God's means of leading us to repentance
  - 3) However, the self-righteous show contempt for God's kindness by continuing in their sin, all the while thinking God will only judge others:
- e. But Paul sets the record straight (5): **"But 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,"**
  - 1) **"In the day of wrath"** is a reference to the Judgment in Rev 20:11-15)
  - 2) **"righteous judgment of God"**: refers to a right or just verdict

<p>B. God's judgment is impartial (2:6-16)</p>
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- 1. God's judgment is impartial (v. 11) because He judges according to one's deeds (6-10): **"who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS:"**
  - a. Remember the underlying premise here: the Jews felt they were protected from God's wrath, in part because of their possession of the Law, but Paul argues against that notion because God's judgment was impartial—Jew and Gentile would be judged on the same basis—their deeds
  - b. **"render"** may be translated as "repay" or "reward" in your English bible—those are in fact good translations because that is what this word implies; it's the idea of paying someone what they are due
  - c. Paul tells us how this works by discussing two groups of people (he uses a chiastic structure: 6 & 11; 7 & 10; 8 & 9):
    - 1) The first group is discussed in vs. 7 & 10:
      - a) Paul describes this group as **"those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality"** and says they will receive **"eternal life"** (7)
      - b) In v. 10 he again refers to them as **"everyone who does good"** and says they will receive **"glory and honor and peace"** (10)
    - 2) The second group is those that do evil and they are discussed in vs. 8 & 9:

- a) Paul describes this group as those “**who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness,**” and says they will receive “**wrath and indignation**” (8)
  - b) In v. 9 he refers to them as those who “**do[es] evil**” and says they will receive “**tribulation and distress**” (9)
- d. This immediately causes us some uneasiness because we know that we are saved by faith and not by works, right? In fact, that’s the basis of Paul’s argument in chapter 3:
  - 1) Justification is certainly by faith (Rev 3:28)
  - 2) But the Bible also makes it clear that God judges mankind based on works (both believers and unbelievers alike):
    - a) Psalm 62:12
    - b) Proverbs 24:12
    - c) Matthew 16:27
    - d) 1 Corinthians 3:13
    - e) 2 Corinthians 5:10; 11:15
    - f) Colossians 3:25
    - g) 2 Timothy 4:14
    - h) Rev 2:23; 20:12; 22:12
- e. So how do we handle this paradox? The way Paul describes both groups gives us a key:
  - 1) Look at the way the first group is described:
    - a) They “**persevere in doing good**” which means their lives are characterized by enduring goodness (7)
    - b) They seek after the things of God: “**seek for glory and honor and immortality**”(8)—lit. “glory and honor and immortality they seek” (for emphasis)
    - c) Though not specifically mentioned here, in contrast to what he says about the next group below, this group obeys the Truth and flees unrighteousness
    - d) Paul makes it clear in the coming chapters that these things are not possible apart from faith in Christ so he is describing the works of believers which are the byproduct and evidence of their salvation
  - 2) Now, look at how he describes the second group:
    - a) They are those who are “**selfishly ambitious**” (8)
    - b) They don’t “**obey the truth**” but do “**obey unrighteousness**” (8)
    - c) They do “**evil**” (9)
    - d) These things describe the natural, unregenerate man so these are the works of the unsaved; they are the byproduct and evidence of their sinful hearts
- 4. Paul continues his defense of God’s impartial judgment by showing that God’s treatment of Jews and Gentiles is the same (12-16):
  - a. Those who do not have law (e.g. Gentiles), will perish without law (12a)
  - b. Those who have law (e.g. Jews) will be judged law (12b)--the implication here is that they will be found guilty for violating/not doing what they knew was right
  - c. So, contrary to what the self-righteous believed, God’s judgment isn’t a matter of whether one possess law or not, but rather whether one obeys that law: “**it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified**” (13)

- d. Gentiles can obey the spirit of the Law, even though they don't possess the Law, because God writes it on their hearts when they get saved and they do it instinctively (14-16)

C. Genuine faith, rather than religious heritage or practice, is the only way to avoid God's judgment and earn His praise (2:17-29)

1. Relying on religious heritage doesn't protect from God's judgment (17-24):
  - a. Paul paints a picture of the Jew who claims to hold the Law in high regard (17-20):
    - 1) He proudly calls himself a Jew (17)
    - 2) He relies upon the Law and boasts in God (17)
    - 3) He knows God's will and approves of right over wrong (18; lit. **"approve the things that differ"** likely meaning that he can distinguish between good/bad, right/wrong)
    - 4) He is confident that he is a spiritual leader because he knows the Law (19-20)
  - b. But, apparently this man doesn't walk the talk or practice what he preaches (21-23)
  - c. This man's reliance on his religious heritage not only doesn't protect him from God's judgment, but as a result **"THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU," just as it is written.**" (24)
2. Relying on religious practices doesn't protect from God's judgment (25-29):
  - a. Practicing the Law only has value if one could adhere to it perfectly, completely and without fail (25): **"For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision."**
  - b. However, someone who does not have the Law, but fulfills the spirit of the Law, actually serves as a judgment against those who have the Law but do not keep it (26-27)
3. Genuine faith is the only way to avoid judgment and receive God's praise (28-28):
  - a. Genuine faith is not external (28)
  - b. Genuine faith is an inward change, a **"circumcision of the heart"** performed by the Spirit of God, not religious practice (**"not by the letter"**)
  - c. This alone earns praise that is not from men, but from God (29)
4. This type of faith is only acquired through the Gospel (1:16-17): **"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."**

Conclusion