

ROMANS 2:1-6 "God's Righteous Judgment"

Paul has just spent the last part of the first chapter painting a picture of the unbeliever who has rejected the one true God. He has described how only the righteous will live by faith in Christ.

But despite this hope in Christ, all men who are outside of the faith, and yet who have clearly seen the work of God in His creation, have turned to worshipping the creature rather than the Creator. And so Paul makes the case that, even though the Gentiles were not given the special revelation from God, as found in His written word given through Israel, they are still without excuse.

And yet, as we come to chapter 2, Paul makes it perfectly clear that despite how ungodly the Gentiles may be, the Jews do not have the excuse that they are somehow exempt from God's wrath simply because they possess God's special revelation, His written word.

The Jews felt as though God was partial to them simply because they were of Jewish descent and that Abraham was their father. Jesus dealt with this on several occasions, one of which is found in John.

John 8:31-45 ³¹ So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." ³³ They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free '?" ³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. ³⁵ "The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. ³⁶ "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. ³⁷ "I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. ³⁸ "I speak the things which I have seen with *My* Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from *your* father." ³⁹ They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. ⁴⁰ "But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. ⁴¹ "You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God." ⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. ⁴³ "Why do you not

understand what I am saying? *It is* because you cannot hear My word. ⁴⁴ "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ "But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.

In a very dramatic way Jesus tells the unbelieving Jews that He shows no partiality when it comes to salvation. And this is exactly what Paul states in verse 11 of Romans chapter two. "For there is no partiality with God."

This is why in chapter 2 Paul begins to address the Jew, who attempts to use their Jewishness as a blanket to cover their sin, and yet are unwilling to turn from their sin and in unbelief do not follow their God.

Joseph Fitzmeyer in his commentary on Romans makes this observation: "Paul's indictment of his gospel-less contemporaries moves to another dimension. He turns to an imaginary listener, who loudly applauds his description of the pagan's moral failure."

You can picture a Jew in Paul's day reading this and being in total agreement with how the pagan will not recognize the one true God. 'Yeah, Paul.. get 'em.' And yet his own life is out of accord with God.

Fitzmeyer goes on to say. "Paul reacts and insists that such a person is no better than the pagan, for in spite of a superior moral culture, which may enable this imaginary listener to agree with Paul's indictment of the pagan, he does not do what is expected of him by that superior status. He does the same things, evil in all its forms. As a result, he will not escape the outpouring of divine wrath either."

This is why Paul says in Rom 2:1 "You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things."

Often times people will take this verse out of its context and say, 'see, we have no business judging anything anyone else does. And don't even think about judging my life.'

And yet God's word is very clear that if you see your brother or sister sinning you are to go to such a one and call him or her to repentance and direct them back to God that they would ask for forgiveness.

To do such a thing a judgment must be made. Now if all of this sounds a bit confusing let me try to clear it up. In English the word judgment can carry the meaning of making a decision for or against someone. It can also carry the meaning of condemnation.

The only way you can know for certain which meaning is intended is to know the context in which it is given.

The same is true of the Greek language in which Paul wrote. But the advantage of the Greek language is that it is much clearer as to its meaning because of its variety of words which describe a particular thing.

That's the case before us in verse 1. When Paul uses the word judgment here he uses the Greek word *krino* which includes the meanings: to distinguish; decide; try; condemn.

It's a stronger word than the Greek word *krisis* which means: decision for or against; justice.

Therefore what Paul is talking about in the opening verses of Romans two is not people making judgments according to God's truth, so as to help a brother or sister turn from a sinful practice, but rather he speaks of people making a self-righteous judgment with the idea of condemning someone else.

Listen to verse one again. Rom 2:1 "You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment (*krino*; condemnation) on someone else, for at whatever point you judge (condemn) the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment (condemnation) do the same things.

Do you see what Paul is doing? He's qualifying the kind of judgment going on here. A judgment which is not according to truth. A judgment that has a double standard.

On the one hand they applaud Paul's description of the pagan and their just judgment from God, and yet they are doing the same things, thinking that God looks the other way simply because they are one of the "chosen people."

Paul goes on to address these foolish people who have an unbiblical perspective on this. Rom 2:2 "Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth."

Paul states two things here. 1) God makes judgments. But 2) His judgments are according to truth; His perfect truth and standard. A standard He doesn't just talk about, but a truth which is according to His character. He doesn't state one thing and do something out of accord with that truth, as many Jews were doing.

Unfortunately, this is true of even the church of Christ in the world today. There are people who name the name of Christ and who claim to be Christians and yet in a sort of condescending or condemning way they look at those outside of the church as nothing more than pagans who deserve everything they get.

And yet some of these same "Christians" are living lives Monday through Saturday which, if you didn't know they were "Christians", you'd swear they were the pagans they were condemning.

But, even if one is truly born-again, we have no room to condemn anyone when it comes to their eternal future. That's God business. We aren't to be condemning, we are to be showing people that they don't have to face condemnation from our Just God who must punish sin, but rather point them to Christ who gives life and forgiveness and in whom there is therefore now no condemnation. (Rom.8:1)

I might add however, that God has given authority to civil leaders to administer condemnation in this world, when it comes to lawlessness, which God deems worthy of such punishment.

I remember during the sixties seeing young people protesting the war in Vietnam carrying signs with the verse from Exodus which was a quote of one of the 10 commandments. "Thou shalt not kill", as if to show our leaders that under no circumstance, including war, should anyone ever take another human life.

The Hebrew word for kill in Exodus 20:13 is *ratsach*, which literally means to murder. "Thou shalt not murder." God was qualifying what He meant when He gave such a commandment.

Paul continues his thought. Rom 2:3 "So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment?"

Now someone might think, why is Paul ragging on his fellow Jews here when most of the pagans are Gentiles? He's not ragging on anybody. In fact, when you look at the life of Paul you always see him going to his Jewish brethren first with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What he's doing here is an act of mercy; but this is not just from Paul, but more importantly from God. Paul didn't want the Jew deceiving himself by a false sense of security, thinking that his heritage was enough to put him in a right standing with God.

Paul loved his Jewish brethren enough to want to shake them out of their complacency with some very strong words. But under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Paul felt compelled to give them a message which left no doubt as to their spiritual condition, which is really the condition of all men outside of Christ. Remember, with God there is no partiality.

The unbelieving Jews were making judgments, or condemning the Gentiles, and yet they were still practicing many of the things the unbelieving Gentiles were practicing.

Why Paul would address unbelievers in a letter to the church in Rome can only be speculated upon. There was a very large Jewish population in Rome.

Undoubtedly, every Gentile believer had felt the wrath of the Jews at one time or another and maybe this message allowed the Roman Christians to find comfort in knowing that being of a particular ethnic group didn't automatically make you right with God.

There is also the possibility, which exists in today's churches, that there were unbelievers in the midst of the Roman church who were either pretending to be believers or just checking this group out to see if this is what they wanted.

Either way the Holy Spirit addressed the problem of nationalism with regards to salvation and made it clear that God extends salvation to all people and that all people who reject the Messiah, be they Jew or Gentile, will be judged by God according to His truth.

By the way, God's mercy being extended to Gentiles as well as Jews is not just a N.T. concept. You'll remember the story of Jonah who was a Hebrew. He was sent by God to the Gentile city

of Nineveh with a message for them to repent and turn to God and find mercy at the hand of the Lord.

Jonah didn't want to do this and he fled from the Lord and we know the incident where he was swallowed by a great fish. The Lord delivered Jonah to Nineveh and reluctantly he brought the Ninevites this message from God where in turn they did repent of their wicked ways.

But, here's the reason why he was so reluctant.

Jonah 3:10 - 4:2 ¹⁰ When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do *it*.

^{NAU} **Jonah 4:1** But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry. ² He prayed to the LORD and said, "Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my *own* country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.

Jonah, in his pride and in his self-condemnation of the Ninevites, wanted them to receive wrath, not mercy. 'These dogs should die, not live.'

Jonah lost sight of the fact that these people, though ungodly, were still made in the likeness and image of God and were in need of God's mercy, just as was Jonah.

In fact, after Jonah brought the message to the Ninevites and they repented, he went in to a pity-party for himself. But look what God does for him and how He teaches Jonah through Jonah's selfishness.

Jonah 4:6-11 ⁶ So the LORD God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant. ⁷ But God appointed a worm when dawn came the next day and it attacked the plant and it withered. ⁸ When the sun came up God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with *all* his soul to die, saying, "Death is better to me than life." ⁹ Then God said to Jonah, "Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "I have good reason to be angry, even to death." ¹⁰ Then the

LORD said, "You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and *which* you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight. ¹¹ "Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know *the difference* between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?"

Sometimes Christians lose sight of this as well. They become self-centered and see only their needs and become angry with the world because those of the world inconvenience them or hurt them with their wicked ways.

And often the response is like the disciples who came in to the region of Samaria with Jesus.

Luk 9:52-55 "And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; ⁵³ but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" ⁵⁵ But Jesus turned and rebuked them,..."

Jesus didn't come to destroy, but to save that which is lost. We as children of God must realize that people in this world are enemies of God, and that will spill over to us as well at times. But that does not mean we are to relinquish our responsibility to bring them both the bad news of God's righteous judgment as well as the good news of Christ who extends mercy.

Paul goes on to say in Rom 2:4 "Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?"

How did the Jews show contempt? Well, while God was extending His mercy to the Jews by sending His Son through the Jews they were not willing to turn to Him. In the process God was gently trying to lead them to Himself like a Shepherd leading the sheep.

His kindness and tolerance and patience were ever present and yet they refused to acknowledge Him by faith as their Messiah. That is contempt to the max.

They were willing to receive the mercy of God as He was longsuffering with them, but they were not willing to honor God with their obedience born from faith.

Again, people who call themselves Christians, and yet who are unwilling to live lives that honor God, are those who will accept his kindness, tolerance and patience and yet show their contempt of God through their continued disobedience.

Here's how God addresses this attitude found with the unbelieving Jews of Paul's day, and found today with many people.

Rom 2:5 "But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed."

No one will get away with his or her rebellion against our Creator. God is just and sin must be judged and punished. God's warning has been going out for a long time. Solomon wrote in Pro 29:1 "A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed--without remedy."

This is Paul's point to the Jew who thinks that simply because he is a Jew he is exempt from God's wrath. Being stiff-necked or rebellious only produces one thing. God's displeasure.

In verse 5 Paul reminds us that God's judgment is a righteous judgment. But in verse 6 we see that it is a judgment where "God will give to each person according to what he has done." [Psalm 62:12; Prov. 24:12]

The Jew felt that since he belonged collectively to the nation of Israel he would not be denied eternal life, no matter what he may do in this life, including turning from God.

William Barclay in his commentary on Romans quotes from an ancient work and says "When Justin Martyr was arguing with a Jew about the position of the Jews in the "Dialogue with Trypho", the Jew said, "They who are of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh shall in any case, even if they be sinners and unbelieving and disobedient towards God, share in the eternal Kingdom."

This is how strongly the Jews felt of their national heritage. They did not get this attitude from the scriptures. In their pride they created it in their own minds.

Being part of a collective group does not save, whether that group is Israel or the Church of Jesus Christ. Identification alone with a

group won't do it. Identification with the risen Savior, by faith in Him alone, will.

Lots of people today have the notion that if they go to church they will be saved. Granted the church has the message of eternal life, but each individual must accept that for himself.

This is part of what Paul means when he says in Rom 2:6 God "will give to each person according to what he has done."

The responsibility falls on the individual and his individual choices. Next week we'll look at what those choices involve and how the Jews and the Gentiles will be found responsible for the deeds they did with the information they had.

Men are without excuse whether they had the law of Moses or not. And every man will give an account of his life here on this earth. For the unbeliever what he has done will be measured against the perfect righteousness of a holy God, and that person will be found wanting.

For the believer, he too will be judged but not according to some righteousness he brings before God for some sort of approval. He will be judged on the basis of what Christ has put to his account, which is the perfect righteousness of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:21 ²¹ He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

2 Peter 1:1 ^{NAU} ¹Simon Peter, a ^abond-servant and ^bapostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received ^ca faith of the same ²kind as ours, ³by ^dthe righteousness of ^eour God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

1 Corinthians 1:30-31 ³⁰ But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, ³¹ so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

So, how do we treat this gift we've been given in Christ? Do we show our thanks to God with lives of faith and love and a desire to be more like the One who has given us His righteousness and the hope of life eternal?

Our God has loved us with an everlasting love and calls us to love Him with all of our hearts, with all of our souls and with all of our minds, and our neighbor as ourselves.

Let's always keep our salvation in perspective, knowing we didn't earn it, deserve it or obtain it through fleshly means, but we obtained it by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and we must live it by that same grace through faith in Christ.

Let me end with an encouragement from Peter, who puts our salvation into perspective, and the attitude we should have toward our God in thanks and gratitude.

1Pe 1:3-9 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls."