

ROMANS 2:7-16 "Everyone Will Be Judged By God. How Will He Determine Your Case?"

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.

6 God "will give to each person according to what he has done."  
[Psalm 62:12; Prov. 24:12]

As I mentioned last week, many Jews during Paul's day thought simply because they were of the physical lineage of Abraham they would not be held accountable for their actions as it related to God's will for them.

The attitude with many of them was to ignore their responsibility to God and live any way they chose, thinking that their eternal reward was secure by being identified with the nation of Israel. But as we saw in last week's text in verse 6 God "will give to each person according to what he has done."

In other words, when it comes to the judgment of men, be they Jew or Gentile, God will look at what they did in this life with the knowledge of God that they had.

Keep in mind, that the judgment we're talking about in our text is a judgment, which is directed toward those who choose not to believe in the God who has made a way to overcome the penalty of sin by faith in Christ. Paul's point in all of this is that neither Jew or Gentile will escape that judgment if they choose not to embrace God's way of salvation.

If they choose their own way of salvation via identification with a particular group or any other means, outside of God's means, then their judgment will be sure and it will be a just judgment from God according to their works.

If you try to work your way to heaven through good works you will be judged according to those works or lack thereof, and they will always come up short of God's perfect standard, which is why Christ, our perfect representative, was sent to stand in our place.

This portion of Romans can be a difficult one if we don't see what Paul is trying to get across. Charles Hodge in his commentary on Romans says, Paul "is expounding the law, not the gospel. And as the law not only says that death is the wages of sin, but also that

those who keep its precepts shall live by them, so the apostle says, that God will punish the wicked and reward the righteous....."

.....This is perfectly consistent with what he afterwards teaches, that there are none righteous; that there are none who so obey the law as to be entitled to the life which it promises; and that for such the gospel provides a plan of justification without works, a plan for saving those whom the law condemns."

With all of that said, Paul goes on to explain the difference between the works of those who believe in Christ as their Savior, and the works of those who do not.

Rom 2:7 "To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life."

Now at first glance it may look as though these people, who fall into this category in verse 7, earn eternal life through their persistence in doing good.

But remember, whenever we come to the word of God we must view the bible as one book, which was given to many men over a period of many years. The Old and New Testament are God's word. The Old being a revelation of the Messiah to come; the New being the fulfillment of that promise.

God does not contradict Himself, and so we must compare scripture with scripture if we are to fully understand what God has to say on any subject.

So, who are these people in verse 7 who apparently are able to work their way to heaven? This group of people are those who have a righteousness which comes from Christ, not themselves. In other words, this group of people are Christians who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins.

Their good works are not earning them eternal life, but are coming from thankful hearts to Christ who has given them eternal life. And, because they have the Spirit of Christ, they persevere in loving the Lord by doing good and seeking to glorify Him.

We see this in what Jesus says in Luk 8:15 "But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop."

This is a crop which is the outworking of our great God, whose hand is upon us to produce the kind of works which lift up the name of Christ.

That's the one group in verse 7, who realize they have no righteousness in themselves, but totally rely on the righteousness of Christ on their behalf, and who look forward, as did Abraham by faith, "looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God."

But then Paul goes on to make a contrast in verses 8 and 9..... "But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile;"

Those who are self-seeking, who reject God's truth, and follow evil Paul says, will not escape God's wrath and anger as He will punish those who are seeking anything and anyone other than the Creator for eternal life.

Paul again reminds us that rejecting God and His grace and mercy, as found in Christ, who was sent to bring us back to a right relationship with our God, will result in God's righteous judgment and neither the Jew nor the Gentile will escape this judgment.

If it hasn't hit you up to this point that God is quite serious about sin, and its heinousness, then this is the time to put it all together.

In Christ, we are forgiven of our sin, but we are constantly reminded by God that sin is still sinful, and it dishonors God when we do sin.

Rom 6:1-7 "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. 5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, [Or be rendered powerless] that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin."

We have the power in Christ to live lives that turn from sin and its effects, to live lives that honor our Lord in everything we do. That doesn't mean we will ever be perfect in this life, but it does mean we no longer have to be enslaved to sin.

Back to our text. Paul goes on to contrast those in verses 8 and 9, who will receive God's wrath for their rebellion, by saying in Rom.2:10 "but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 11 For God does not show favoritism."

Those who do good are those who are good. Good in the sense that their goodness is not found in themselves, but has been put to their account by their perfectly good Savior; a Savior who exchanged the ugliness of their sin, and gave them His goodness and righteousness, as He accomplished salvation for us on the cross and rose victoriously from the dead giving us eternal life.

And part of that life is what Paul refers to in verse 10... "glory, honor and peace". Its ultimate expression will be realized in the new heavens and new earth, but we taste it even in this life, as Christ's glory shines through us, as we live unto His glory. We demonstrate His honor and we experience the peace which passes all understanding.

A peace which is real, where we are no longer at war with God because of unbelief, but we have a peace whereby we can cry out Abba, Father. That kind of peace didn't come cheap. It came at a great price through the death of a sacrifice on our behalf. The Lamb of God who came to take away our sin.

This peace is not restricted to any particular group of people but is extended to the world; "for there is no partiality with God".

Joh 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

But now, Paul goes on in this letter to the Romans to explain how God's impartiality is also very fair when it comes to His judgment.

Rom 2:12 "All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law."

Paul is speaking of two groups here. The Jew and the Gentile. The Gentile who sins apart from the Mosaic law will still be judged as a sinner who stands before a holy God who demands perfect justice.

Likewise, all who sin under the Mosaic law, those who have come under that law being the Jews, and any other who chooses that path, will be judged according to the Mosaic law.

The statement: "God isn't fair" is one which the world has expressed from day one, going back to the Garden of Eden when Satan tempted Eve and essentially accused God of not being fair by denying them a certain fruit to eat.

And the world-at-large today says the same thing. "How can God judge people who haven't had the opportunity to hear of Christ?"

I hear this all the time from people, (most of whom have heard the gospel, by the way), who want to find an excuse not to believe by trying to prove that God isn't fair because He would condemn some person in a third world country who has never heard of Christ.

They postulate that since Christ isn't fair with them, 'how can He justly judge me for my unbelief?' The problem is that no one is judged for sin because they have or haven't heard of Christ. All are judged because all are guilty of their sin, because all are sinners.

All men choose to rebel against God. If people in the most remote part of the world truly want to know their Creator to honor and worship and serve Him, as God gives them that desire, then make no mistake about it, Christ will make a way for them to hear and respond to the Gospel.

Joh 6:37 "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away."

All men everywhere in all ages have the witness that there is one true God who has given life and who must be sought. This is how Paul began this letter to the Romans.

Rom 1:18-20 "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

God is just and He is fair. All men will face their Creator, but not all men will be judged with the exact same revealed measure. If you have been brought up in a home which has given you the light of God's word and you have rejected that word then you will be more responsible than someone who has been brought up without such knowledge.

However, it should be pointed out, that though all will be judged on their knowledge of God, as either revealed in nature or by written law of God, the "ultimate measure" will never change and that is the perfect holiness of the One, true, everlasting and righteous God. He is always the final standard.

Rom 2:12-13 "All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous."

In other words, simply hearing of the law, or for that matter, simply hearing that Christ has died for the penalty of your sins, doesn't make you right with God. What makes you right in God's sight is obeying what He has revealed in Christ.

Obedying in this sense. In humble submission, acknowledging your sin and coming to Christ by faith and saying that I am a sinner and in need of Christ's atoning work on the cross for the remission of my sin. That's the kind of obedience where every person must start.

But Paul is trying to make a point here to the Jews who have the Law and yet are not willing to submit to the law, which by the way, points to Christ.

He says to the Jew, 'let me try to show you how your lack of obedience is contrasted with those who are pagans and unbelievers, without the benefit of the law, and yet many of them actually do what the law requires, even though they were not given the law, as was given to the Jews.'

Rom 2:14-15 "(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, 15 since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)"

Paul is not talking about a way of salvation through the law. He's talking about how men, who reject God, will still be judged by law, whether the law given by God through Moses or the law which God has implanted on the hearts of all men.

For example, the law of Moses states that you shall not murder. The Jew has the advantage of personally knowing what God says of such things. And yet, you look at the Roman Government of that day, and you find a similar law which they adhered to, so as to keep civil order.

Where did they get that law? Or you look at the commandment from God which says, you shall not commit adultery. And yet, you can find pagan cultures all through the ages which did not permit this practice, because it would affect their culture in an adverse way.

Now, Paul isn't suggesting that all Gentiles who do not have the law instinctively do the things of the law. His point is that there is a law of requirement which God has built into men which some obey, even though some do not.

The same is true of the Jew. The law was given by God on Mount Sinai and some obey it and some do not. Simple obedience of certain laws doesn't take away our sin, but keep in mind Paul isn't laying out a pattern for salvation here through the law, he's building a case that all men will be judged by a holy God according to the information they possess.

In other words, no one will escape God's judgment, based on their affiliation with a particular group or lack thereof. And the group Paul has in mind here is the Jew who thinks that, because he was given the law by God, that he will be exempt from God's wrath if he chooses not to come to God by faith and believe in the One God sent for their salvation; namely, Jesus Christ.

Again, the point I made last week is that a person who may grow up in the church who thinks he is guaranteed eternal life because of his affiliation with a particular church, will be sadly disappointed,

because God says you must come to Me by faith in My Son whom I sent for you.

Having your name on a church role won't save anyone. Having your name written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundations of the world, as you humbly come to Christ as Lord and Savior by faith, asking for forgiveness, will.

Whether Jew or Gentile, all men will be judged according to the law working in them. The more a person knows of the one true God, the greater will be their judgment. But neither Jew or Gentile can claim any remission from sin based on the law they possess.

No matter how good they may appear before men verse 16 says, "God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares."

Nothing is hid from God. We may be able to hide things from each other, but one day all will be laid bare before the light of God's sight. And in that day, every man's work will be judged. Those who believed in Christ will be saved, those who did not, will be judged according the law which they possessed.

The apostle John was given a revelation by Jesus Christ concerning this judgment.

Rev 20:12-15 "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

Will there be judgment for those who reject God and His Son? Yes! And though it may not be a pleasant subject, it is none the less true. God will judge and punish those who choose not to come to Him on His terms.

That's the bad news. But, that's what makes the good news as good as it is. Jesus Christ has taken our judgment for our sin.



2Co 5:21 "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

I can't think of anything more fair and merciful than a God who would be willing to come into this sin-filled world, and take my place, and my punishment for sin, and in return give me His righteousness and the promise of eternal life in His presence.

Can anyone truly call God unfair, knowing that He has made a way for our punishment to be taken away? There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

This is the message that you and I, as believers in Christ, have been entrusted with. We are Christ's ambassadors. This last week has really been wild for me. Last Sunday, as I often times do, I asked the Lord to give each one of us an opportunity to be used by Christ to be His witness by what we do or say.

With this new job that I have I had no less than 4 or 5 opportunities to share the gospel with at least 3 unbelievers who asked many questions about my faith. I also had the opportunity to encourage a young believer at work with some struggles he is having.

God just wants us to be available and willing to be used by Him for His honor and glory. And I know for a fact, that some of you are being used by God to honor His name in ways that you didn't expect.

Paul was not always received warmly when he extended Christ's love and His message of hope, but he still remained faithful. These guys at work who I've been sharing with haven't received Christ. But, they're still asking questions.

People you've run into may not have embraced Christ because of what you've shared with them. No matter. You let God do the work of changing hearts, and you continue to do the work of living and giving the truth of Christ Jesus.

And if you'll do that God will honor and bless you in ways you couldn't imagine. Just stay faithful and love Christ above all.

The apostle Paul, always contrasting for us the ways of the world with the ways of the Spirit, says this to all of us.

Gal 6:8-9 "The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit,

from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

As Yogi Berra said, "It ain't over till it's over." Be faithful to your God and Savior to the end and He will always be faithful to be there for you and to guide you in the path that He desires for you.

Give Him your best and glorify His name in this world.