

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

November 23, 2022

Series - *The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul*

The Letter to the Romans

The Righteousness of God

Text – Romans 2 – *The Wrath of God Revealed Against the Righteous Man*

Introduction

In 2 Samuel 12, the prophet Nathan comes to David and tells him a story:

"There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him." (2 Samuel 12:1b-4)

David became enraged when he heard what the rich man had done to his poor neighbor:

"And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." (2 Samuel 12:5-6)

Of course, we know that Nathan's story was not a real account about a man and his ewe lamb, but rather was an allegory that pictured David stealing away Bathsheba, a poor soldier's wife, and then having the soldier put to death.

"And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon." (2 Samuel 12:7-9)

David was enraged when he thought the story was about somebody else, but when he found out it was about him, his tune changed from a demand of judgment to a plea for mercy.

We see something very similar here in Romans 1 & 2. In the last half of chapter one, we read about the wicked lost people out there in the world: the pronouns used by Paul are they, them, themselves, and their. Paul refers to the depraved men from chapter one in the third-person, plural. Notice Romans 1:18 – 32 for the many examples of this.

But something changes when we get to chapter 2, Paul uses the word “thou”. It is almost as if Paul painted the picture of the state of sinful men in chapter one, and the audience was saying, “Amen Preacher! – Get them reprobates.” But in chapter two, Paul changes his direction and says, “I am talking about you, religious man.” You may look good on the outside, but you are just as dirty on the inside.

Preaching Point

Be careful that you don’t look down your nose at somebody else, because you are no better flesh than they are. You are just as much a Hell-deserving sinner as everybody else on this planet, and if you are saved, it is only because of the grace of God.

At first, the reader might object to Paul’s blanket indictment of his or her character. Me? Practice the same things? I’m not guilty of Paul’s list of crimes! But let me ask you a question. Take your time and be honest; this is just between you and the Lord right now. How do you determine who is “good” and who is “bad”?

If you’re like most people—including me—you have in your unconscious mind at least three moral categories into which you place people. Some are, without question, undeniably “bad.” Adolf Hitler. Joseph Stalin. Charles Manson. Judas Iscariot. Nero. Nearly everyone would agree, I think. These people were clearly evil.

Then there are a few undeniably “good” people, like the late Mother Teresa. She’s often held up as the modern standard of “good” for most. Another would be Billy Graham. Someone might say, “Well, I’m no Mother Teresa or Billy Graham, but I’m a pretty decent guy.”

Then there’s a broad middle category containing the masses of somewhat-good-yet-sometimes-bad and other, yet-to-be-determined people. That’s where we usually place ourselves, isn’t it? And, within that category, we mentally rank people in order of observable goodness. Some are better than others ... clearly. Now, who do you suppose is the measuring rod? (Be honest. Remember, it’s just you and the Lord right now.) You guessed correctly: Self.

When driving on the freeway, people who go slower than us are jerks and idiots, and whoever drives faster is clearly a menace to safety! When people are asked whether they are going to heaven or hell, many will answer, "Well, I'm not perfect, but I've never killed anyone, so I guess I'm a pretty good person." Alcoholics often look down on "dope-heads," while drug addicts ridicule "drunks." Even in prison, murderers, rapists, and thieves have no tolerance for child molesters and have no compunction about mistreating, even killing them. Such honor among criminals!¹

Note – Paul may be specifically addressing this section to the legalist Jews who tended to think they were better than the Gentiles, even better than the saved Gentiles. In v. 17, Paul will begin to single out the Jews. However, the principles in the first half of chapter two apply to both Jew and Gentile alike. We are all condemned.

I. Judgmental People Refuse Mercy (vs. 1 – 3)

"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things." (Romans 2:1)

"whosoever thou art" – this phrase leads me to believe that this passage is applicable to more than just the Jews. It may be geared to them, but it applies to all of us.

"thou condemnest thyself" – the list back in chapter one contains all kinds of sins, and there is something, or more than one something on that list for all of us. If we are judging somebody else for doing something on that list, then we are only condemning ourselves.

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." (James 2:10)

"But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things." (Romans 2:2)

God can see clearly to make a righteous judgment.

"And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" (Romans 2:3)

¹ Swindoll, Charles R. (2010-03-24). *Insights on Romans* (Swindoll's New Testament Insights) (pp. 32-33). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

A judgmental person is judgmental against everyone but himself. He sees everyone else's sin but fails to acknowledge his own. For a person to escape the righteous judgment of God, he must first agree with God about his sin. Unless he repents of his own sin, he will eventually face the Great White Throne Judgment:

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:11-15)

Principles Regarding Judgment:

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." (Matthew 7:1-5)

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." (Matthew 5:7)

The converse is also true – if you have truly obtained mercy, you will be more likely to give mercy.

We are called upon to judge some things:

"Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?" (1 Corinthians 6:1-5)

We can judge what we can clearly see, and we can be called upon to make judgments between people. But we cannot judge what we cannot see, and we cannot see people's hearts.

II. Judgmental People Reject Repentance (v. 4)

"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans 2:4)

People who are judgmental reject repentance in two ways:

1. They reject their own need for repentance because they seek to justify themselves.
2. They reject the genuineness of anyone else's repentance. They make statements like, "That person cannot be saved", or "...cannot be a Christian." They see themselves as fruit inspectors.

III. Judgmental People Receive Righteous Judgment (vs. 5 – 11)

"But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;" (Romans 2:5)

Keep in mind; Paul is not speaking to any real person, or group of people specifically. He has never even been to this church, and he does not know most of the people. He is basically stating here in the early chapters of this Letter that everybody is guilty, and that no one will be able to stand in judgment over anybody else.

"Who will render to every man according to his deeds:" (Romans 2:6)

Notice very carefully that Paul is not advocating a works salvation here. Those that are lost will be judged according to their works, and those that are genuinely saved have had their deeds judged on the Cross of Calvary.

Warren Wiersbe states:

In Romans 2:6–11, Paul was not teaching salvation by character or good deeds. He was explaining another basic principle of God's judgment: God judges according to deeds, just as He judges according to truth. Paul was dealing here with the consistent actions of a person's life, the total impact of his character and conduct. For example, David committed some terrible sins, but the total emphasis of his life was obedience to God.

Judas confessed his sin and supplied the money for buying a cemetery for strangers, yet the total emphasis of his life was disobedience and unbelief.

True saving faith results in obedience and godly living, even though there may be occasional falls. When God measured the deeds of the Jews, He found them to be as wicked as those of the Gentiles. The fact that the Jews occasionally celebrated a feast or even regularly honored the Sabbath day did not change the fact that their consistent daily life was one of disobedience to God. God's blessings did not lead them to repentance.²

"To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God." (Romans 2:7-11)

God does not care whether you are Jew or Gentile; white or black; rich or poor; educated or uneducated – He is not a respecter of persons. (see Romans 10:9 – 13)

IV. Judgmental People Rate the Same Condemnation as They Judged Others Worthy Of (vs. 12 – 16)

(And some of the ones they judged received mercy)

"For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." (Romans 2:12-16)

Note – all sin was judged at Calvary, but those who reject the gospel, reject the mercy that was offered them, and will have to face the righteous judgment of God at the Great White Throne

² Wiersbe, Warren W. (2010-01-01). *Be Right (Romans): How to Be Right with God, Yourself, and Others* (The BE Series Commentary) (p. 36). David C Cook. Kindle Edition.