

Romans 2:1-16

“The Revelation Of The Righteous Judgment Of God”

Which, if you keep with the context and follow along with the flow of Romans it's the natural result of where we'd wind up as we simply follow the points Paul has been making. If you've been with us over the last couple of weeks you recall that as you come to vs 17 of ch 1, the thrust of that particular vs is God's righteousness revealed, of course the key there being “By faith,” “The just shall live by faith,” and therein is God's righteousness revealed. But progressing on Paul takes a turn from God's righteousness to expose our need for that righteousness to be imputed to us by exploring the depths of the depravity of man apart from Christ. So 1st of all we have God's righteousness coming into view, then in contrast to that, the focus becomes man's sinfulness, the next topic then that's sure to surface is what? God's judgment; God is righteous, man is sinful, therefore God must judge man. But He doesn't grade on the curve, He doesn't have any class pets, or personal favorites, the judgment of God is completely righteous and according to truth.

Well, last week (as you know) we left off sort of wading around in the toxic soup of the sin of mankind, Paul pressing down hard upon humanity, leaving us with out excuse before God, exposed, undone, defenseless before our Creator as to our guilt before Him. But he's not finished yet; we're wading in it now, but by the time we make it to vs 20 of ch 3 it'll be a full-fledged swim. Because the Holy Spirit wants to make sure that no one feels left out in their unequivocal obvious guilt before God, no one is going to slip through the cracks and think, “Well I didn't fit into any of *those* categories so I must be ok, apparently I don't need Jesus.” No, all have sinned, therefore *all* need a Saviour. Paul spoke to the obviously immoral in ch 1, in ch 2 he covers both the moral and the religious community, your morals won't make you right with God, being religious won't make you right with God, the only thing that'll make you right with God is receiving Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour, by faith trusting in His work upon the cross on your behalf paying in full the wages of your sin, of my sin.

Now before we jump in with both feet, I do want to back up just briefly, not so as to *explain* what the words in vs 29-31 mean there at the end of vs 31, I think that's pretty self-explanatory. But more to just highlight some of the sins, or “Things which are not fitting” that are listed right there in league with that which is obviously heinous. Because we have a tendency to lessen the load weight of certain sins in the light of others, but we need to understand that God sees it all the same. For example in vs 29 I want you to notice that the sins of covetousness and envy are right there beside sexual immorality, wickedness and murder. What is coveting? Well put plainly its greed, it's the sense of not being content with such things as you have, but you want more. You see your neighbor's boat, or house, or spouse, and you think, “Man, I'd I wish I had that particular thing, or person as my own.” Then the Rolodex of your mind begins to spin, the hard drives starts computing, trying to plot and plan as to how you might obtain it, God says, “That's sin.”

Closely connected to that is envy, “What’s little jealousy hurt now and then?” Envy put Jesus on the cross, that’s what the bible says. In regards to Jesus being given over to Pilate we read in Matt 27:18, “*For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.*” The sin of envy can be deadly, covetousness, and envy can invoke radical responses *from* us out of the inner depravity *of* us. People murder, rape and steal because of covetousness and envy. Notice, “Strife,” contention, quarreling, it’s a problem, it’s sin before God, “Whisperers” or backbiting, gossips, Vs 30 you see “Pride”, “haters of God” and “inventors of evil things,” right there in the list with “disobedient to parents.” Pretty wild isn’t it?

So you don’t have to be a serial killer, or some sort of molester or thief to be guilty before God. If you’ve ever been envious, or covetous, if you’ve ever absorbed yourself in pride, or been disrespectful to your parents, said something about someone behind their back, than you stand before God as a sinner, and God *judges* sin.

Vs1-3

You see undoubtedly there are those who would read the list of obviously immoral acts that Paul mentions there in ch 1 and say, “That’s right, anyone who would do those things *should* be punished, *should* be judged. I’m sure glad *I’ve* never done any of that.” So whether Paul is speaking here to the moral upright individual or perhaps the Jew who thought that they were by nature in greater favor with God than the Gentiles, (which seems to be the more accurate) the same truth applies either way. Whether you abide by a moral code, or are obviously immoral, the point is that you’re still a sinner, whether I abhor sin, or approve of sin isn’t the issue, the problem is my *practice* of sin. He says, “Those of you who stand on your pedestal thankful that you’re not like others, standing in judgment *of* others, all you do is condemn yourself because though you’re able to see the error of it, the problem is that you still practice it.” It may seem a bit more *refined* in your life, (maybe) but it’s amazing how I’m able to see the atrocity in the sins of others, but somehow with me it seems justifiable.

Perhaps you recall the account of David and Bathsheba, how that David took her, committed adultery with her, and had her husband Uriah murdered on the battlefield. Operation “Cover up” was in full effect and for all intents and purposes he’d gotten away with it. The problem is that we never get away with sin, sooner or later it always catches up. One day Nathan the prophet comes to visit him. Says, “David, there was a man who had a little ewe lamb, he loved the lamb, took care of the lamb, even let the lamb eat from his dish, drink from his own cup, and lie in his bosom, it was like one of his kids. Now there was a rich man who lived beside him who had more herds, more flocks than he could shake a stick at, a traveler came to the rich man but he refused to take from his own herd, his own flock and prepare for the man, but rather he extracted that poor man’s little ewe lamb by force and prepared *it* for the man who’d come to him.”

David got enraged. Said, “As the Lord lives the man who’s done this thing shall surely die! and He shall return 4 fold for the lamb because he’s done this thing and because he’s shown no pity.” It was obvious to David the atrocious nature of such sin, it was deserving of death! Then Nathan said to him, “You are the man!” Thus says the Lord, “I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more! Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon.” You see the sin in David’s life didn’t seem like near as big of a deal to him as the same kind of sin in another man’s life. He condemned the man for the same sin that he’d justified in his own life. Or as Paul says here, “In whatever you judge another you condemn yourself for you who judge practice the same things.”

The hook with that word, “Same” is that it means, “Same kind” perhaps you have never murdered anyone physically, but the point here is that sin is sin, and all sin is condemned before God. Disobedience to parents and sexual immorality are equally condemned. But it gets deeper still, because later on Paul’s going to tell us (ch 7) that the law is spiritual.

Which is a basic reiteration of the whole point of the sermon on the Mt, you might *never* be sexually immoral physically, but if you’ve lusted on another person in your heart, than that immorality, or adultery has taken place in your heart. You might *never* murder someone, but if you’ve ever been unjustly angry with someone, you’ve cut them off in your heart, you’ve murdered them in your heart, you’re guilty. So even if you’re not outwardly guilty on *any* point, odds are you’re inwardly guilty on *every* point, if not the vast majority. That’s why Jesus said, *“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.”* Matt 7:1-5 You’ve heard it before, whenever I point one finger at you, I’ve got 3 pointing back at me. I *magnify* the sin in your life, but *minimize* the sin in mine. That’s called hypocrisy.

Vs2

God’s judgment isn’t like our judgment, tainted by sin, not according to all the facts of the heart of the issue, you see I might be able to lead a pretty clean life before you, but God sees the blackness of my heart. Remember this vs? *“For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”* 1 Sam 16:7

Now a word before we move on with regards to judgment, there is a difference between judging for the purpose of *identification* and judging for the purpose of *condemnation*. I'm not to just hang my brain on a coat rack, check all my discernment at the door and turn a blind eye to right and wrong saying, "Well I'm not to judge them so who's to really say?" and in so doing allow *whoever* to do *whatever, whenever* with no repercussions or ramifications. Jesus said, "*You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.*" Matt 7:16-18 So identifying godliness and ungodliness, righteousness, and unrighteousness is biblical protocol. If some guy comes to your home wanting to take out your daughter and beer cans come rolling out of his truck, a cigarette is hanging out of his mouth, and a playboy magazine is laying open on his dashboard, I hope you'll make a judgment that identifies him as someone you're not about to let her leave with and keep her home. So though the line may be fine, we all distinctly know the difference between making an identification and self-righteously standing above someone in condemnation over who they are vs who I am.

But God sees the sin of your heart and the sin of their lives just the same, His judgment isn't hypocritical, it's according to truth. Which is to say that God knows all your dark little secrets that would send you into cardiac arrest if they were to be flashed on these screens in front of us. He judges according to truth.

Vs 3

Do you think, "Sure *they* deserve it, but I'll be delivered from it." ?

Vs4

Obviously that last phrase there is one that you would do well to have underlined in your bible. "The goodness of God leads you to repentance." Notice that it's a leading, or a "Drawing" we don't serve a God that "Drives" us, but rather one who "Draws" us by His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering. The idea here is that just because you have your moral code, and the obvious effects of God's judgment haven't been poured out on you, that doesn't mean that God is ok with your life. So often people slip into the deception, "Well if I'm so bad, why doesn't God do something about it, why do I have good job, good health, I'm excelling in life and all the rest?"

In that frame of mind there's a flippant disregard, or a despising of God's goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering. You've misinterpreted God's heart and His goodness toward you, He's not in approval *of* you, but rather He's seeking repentance *from* you. You *know* the wickedness of your own heart, the way you've lied, or cheated, or stolen in the past, the way you connive in business in the present, and yet God has continued to be good to you, be patient with you, show forbearance towards you, that should take you to your face before God in repentance, to think that knowing what you deserve, yet God shows you goodness.

That's what did it for me, sure some are saved by fear, praise God for that. But for me it wasn't so much the idea that I would go to hell that (though I didn't want to) it didn't cause me to do an about face. But when I realized in my own heart, and got a glimpse into the depths of my own depravity, how I'd violated God and man, done all sorts of things to wound the heart of God (even if they were inadvertent it was damage done) yet for all that, "God loves me? and Has been so good *to me...*" and I gave my heart to Jesus Christ

We might understand these 3 words, "Goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering" to have past, present and future application. God's goodness displayed in not judging us in all our sins in the past even though we've deserved it. God's forbearance, or self-restraint has present application, even in this day, in this very hour we fall short of His glory yet He holds back His judgment from us. and His longsuffering towards us, or patience with us in knowing that we'll sin again tomorrow and the next day and on and on, yet He with holds His judgment from us. Don't misinterpret God's goodness, respond in repentance. Peter put it like this, "*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*" 2 Peter 3:9 That is, a turning away from a life of sin, and turning towards a life set apart to God and to His purposes for your life.

Vs5

You guys this is a heavy vs. What this is saying is that when we despise or disregard God's goodness, not turning to Him in repentance, but continuing on in the rebellion of our hearts, that far from getting away with it we're actually accruing compound interest in the money market of God's wrath. It's like God acts as a dam, and He's holding back the waters of wrath, but as we refuse to repent in the face of His forbearance it's like we just keeping adding to the waters, and adding to the waters, and the day will come when the flood gates will open, the dam will give way and we'll be swept away in the waters of God's wrath of the lake that we ourselves have filled. We can relate to the idea of storing up treasure, we like the thought of a good retirement account, or making wise investments for the future, but in God's economy it's quite possible to store up wrath. He gave the Canaanites over 400 yrs to repent before He brought judgment to them via the nation of Israel. In Jeremiah God speaks of the wine cup of His wrath that nations fill to the brim and as they fill His cup, He presses it to their lips and makes them drink. Of course this is pointing to the ultimate judgment of God on the day the nations small and great stand before Him, but the idea is the same. and That is that no one gets away with sin, but that God will settle all of His accounts rendering to each one according to his deeds. Notice

Vs6-10

Now I'm going to be honest with you here, at this point the scholars split and take 2 different perspectives. But personally I don't have problem regardless of which position you take because both are equally true. There are those who say that the context here is that of judgment, not salvation (which is true) so that when Paul starts speaking of God rendering to each one according to his deeds, that's not good news.

They will look at vs 7 through the lens of, “Yes God will give eternal life to the one who by patient continuance, persistently, consistently does good with out fault, but the problem is that none are good, and Paul is going to great lengths to demonstrate that.” So that if you want works righteousness God will give it to you if you can obtain it, but the fact is that none of us fit (in and of ourselves) in the category of vs 7, instead we all fit in vs 8, self seeking, not obedient to the truth, following after unrighteousness. Therefore apart from Christ we’re doomed to tribulation and anguish, being evil at heart, destined for eternity in hell. and That may be the more accurate assessment of this passage.

But still others say, “We agree we’re not speaking here of salvation, but of judgment, and the fact that God will judge us by our deeds (not save us by our deeds, but judge us by our deeds) is evident all throughout scripture.” For instance, “...to You, O Lord, belongs mercy; For You render to each one according to his work.” Ps 62:12 Jer 17:10 “I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.” and Again Matt 16:27 “*For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.*”

On and on we could go, but the point is that the judgment of God and the works of man is not a biblical mystery. Again we have to be clear that it’s not salvation by works, but God will judge our works, so those in the other category will view vs 7 and 10 through the lens of not obtaining salvation, but the subsequent results of salvation in my life. So that the evidence of salvation in my life is not lip service but lifestyle, patient continuance in doing good, seeking for glory (that is the glory primarily of God) seeking to bring honor to God, and this word “Immortality” might be better rendered “Incorruptibility” speaking of a genuineness or perpetual purity. and We’ve spoken of this quite a bit lately, not saved *by* good works, but *unto* good works. Even in that famous passage found there in Eph ch 2 regarding being saved by grace through faith and not of ourselves, not of works lest any man should boast, the apostle went on to say, “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*” Eph 2:10 Paul told the Philippians, “*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*” Phil 2:12-13 The scriptures are replete with the reality of the fact that saving faith produces change in my life and that good works will follow saving grace. and That God will reward the work, the fruit of His Spirit in my life, so if you want to go down that line you’re on safe ground there as well.

One major road bump you might encounter is that there in vs 7 Paul seems to be speaking of eternal life as a reward for good works, which begins to lean us back to the premise that he’s speaking rhetorically, yes God would reward the one who does good with eternal life, but there’s only one good and that’s God, so the rest of us need to look outside ourselves for salvation. and That’s the ultimate aim of the apostle here anyway, to lead us to Christ.

As we spoke a couple of weeks ago, the Jew being 1st in privilege is also 1st in penalty, but ultimately the reward for good or bad comes to all men in the same way for the judgment of God is according to truth, vs 9 includes every soul. (Vs 11, underline it)

Vs11-13

Coming to church and hearing God's Word won't justify you before God, is God's word *active* in your life? But the next premise Paul is developing here is the fact that not having the law won't excuse you before God any more than having the law will justify you before God. Just because you don't have God's Word doesn't mean you don't sin, there's a moral compass that God has placed in the heart of everyman called a conscience and when we violate our own conscience, that constitutes sin. The bible says, "...to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." James 4:17

Remember we spoke last week of the witness of God in creation *around* man, here Paul is developing the reality of the witness of God in the conscience *with in* man.

Vs14-15

You see God has placed within the heart of all men an innate awareness of right and wrong. There is no culture where murder is approved, where rape is seen as a good thing, where stealing from one another is commended, why do you think that is? How did someone on the other side of the planet come to the same basic moral conclusion as someone thousands of miles away and multiple cultural differences removed? Because God instilled it in the heart of man, their conscience bears witness of right and wrong. Now having said that man can sear his conscience, conscience alone can't commend us to God, but on the plus side neither does it have the power alone to condemn us.

John said if our heart condemns us God is greater than our heart, He knows all things. But Paul's point here is much like that in vs 7 if you take the 1st perspective we discussed. That no one's conscience can in reality justifiably excuse them before God, but rather they'll only accuse them before God. Because even apart from the written word, every person on the face of the earth has at some point violated the convictions of their own conscience. You show me someone who's never violated their conscience and I'll get you some psychiatric help because you've befriended a figment of your imagination. We've all violated even the conscience of our own standard. So with the law or without the law, sin is sin, man sinned before the law was ever given, it's not a matter of law. It's a matter of my heart not being right with God on my own, nor can it be, even if I've done all I can morally I still fall radically short because the problem of sin lies in the heart. and So along with the obvious immoral actions of the unrighteous there at the end of ch 1, that's what God will be dealing with...

Vs16

There it is, mark it well, “God will judge the secrets of men.” Jesus put it like this, “... *there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.*” Luke 12:2-3 Paul told the Corinthians, “...*judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts.*” 1 Cor 4:5 God will judge the secrets of men. Thank God that in Christ all of our sin has been washed away, that Jesus bore the judgment that was due me, and due you on the cross and God remembers *my* sin, no more. and I pray that’s your position as well, “In Christ.” Because make no mistake, judgment is coming and the judgment of God is according to truth, dealing with the inner recesses of the heart of man. If you know the Lord today, praise God for that. If you’ve never received Christ, let me encourage you to do that today, God loves you with an everlasting love, don’t misinterpret God’s goodness towards you for approval *of* a life of sin, but rather allow it stir repentance in you that you might come to Christ and find forgiveness, a washing away of your sin, and everlasting life.

Prayer Points:

Jesus thank You for bearing our judgment, with out You we’d be lost, eternally separated from God in indignation, wrath, tribulation, and anguish. But because of Your goodness, Your grace, glory honor, immortality, and peace... forgiveness of sin. Be there anyone here who needs that same forgiveness may they find it in You today.

If you’ve never received Christ we’re not here to point the finger of *condemnation* at you, but we are here to plead and reason *with* you the need for *reconciliation*. Be reconciled to God through Christ, Jesus bore your judgment, there’s no need for you to endure God’s Wrath when through simple repentance towards God and faith towards Jesus Christ you can receive forgiveness, becoming a new creation, being made brand new. If God is tugging on your heart today, than don’t resist Him, receive Him, today is the day of salvation, don’t harden your heart.