

The Judgement of God

Romans 2:1-16

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In chapter 1 of Romans Paul had warned of God's wrath against those whom he said exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images and idols instead.

His wrath is seen in giving them over or abandoning them to their sin.

Now as we turn to chapter 2 Paul warns of God's judgement against those who put themselves in his place by judging and condemning others.

"You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?" (Romans 2:1-4)

One evening during a violent thunderstorm, a mother was having some difficulty trying to calm her young son enough to fall asleep. The lightening flashed and the thunder pounded, the house rattled and the small boy shook in fear each time. She spent some time just lying next to him, rubbing his back and talking and singing softly trying to get him to calm down.

Finally, as the storm began to move away and the tremor in his voice began to ebb, as she reached over to turn off the light, he asked, “Mommy, will you sleep here with me tonight?”

The mother smiled and gave him a big hug and said, “I can’t dear, I have to sleep with your daddy.”

After a long moment of silence, as she began to get up to leave he said, “The big sissy.”

It's so easy to find fault with others while we ignore and excuse our own failures.

To criticize and condemn things we don't like or agree with in others while we remain blind to our own mistakes and missteps.

To pass judgement and make disparaging remarks about those who are different while turning a blind eye to our own blunders and weaknesses.

We excuse in ourselves what we condemn in others

And what about the double standard we sometimes have between those we like and those we don't?

how much more likely we can be to be critical of certain people or groups but patient with others even when they do the same things and make the same mistakes.

Or how much more severe we can be in judging those who we don't like versus those we do?

How much easier to find fault and point out the mistakes in some that we ignore in ourselves and those we like?

We can ignore and tolerate things in our friends that we criticize in others.

And then, what about that smugness and self-righteousness and feelings of superiority we might feel when someone we disagree with or don't like runs into trouble or fails at something.

Putting down and pointing out the problems and failure of others can make us feel better about ourselves.

We can denounce the sins of others while ignoring our own.

Yet Jesus warned, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?” (Matthew 7:1–3)

Mother Teresa said if you spend your time judging others, you won’t have any time left to love them.

And we are commanded to love not judge our neighbor

To judge means to condemn, to make a decision and evaluation of another and it often doesn't matter if you have all the facts before you make your determination because it is often based on our biases and prejudices, grievance and fear, hatred and stereotype, things like what they look like, how they dress or behave, something they did we don't like or agree with.

In contrast to this, Paul says,

I. God’s judgement is based on or in accordance with truth

Unlike us, He doesn't jump to conclusions or rely on preconceptions, he is not poisoned by partisanship or caught up in the moment, influenced by prejudice and bias

He doesn't base his judgements on what everyone else thinks or what happens to be pushed in the corner of the internet we inhabit or stations we watch.

His judgement is always in accordance with truth for as Jesus said, I am the truth, his word is truth, and he seeks to impart to us His Spirit of truth

When his readers first heard Paul's words about God's wrath in chapter 1, some would have been quite smug, feeling self-righteous and superior.

Thinking things like, he's not talking about us, he's talking about those people out there who aren't like us, those people who don't share our values and live an alternate lifestyle, who don't share our God but have rejected him and worship idols instead.

They were like the Pharisee in Jesus story about the Pharisee and tax collector in Luke 18.

Jesus described him as being confident in his own righteousness and looked down on everybody else.

So when he prayed, he pointed at the tax collector next to him and said thank you God that I'm not like him and all those other bad people. He was convinced he was better than them and therefore felt free to condemn and judge them

In Romans 3:9 Paul confronts this attitude when he asks, are we any better. Not at all for all are under sin, as it is written there is no one who is righteous, not even one.

We are to be a people of caring and compassion not judgement and condemnation, put downs and snide remarks.

This doesn't mean we excuse or ignore sin in ourselves or others, but in the midst of sin, we point people to the only one who can do something about it, the one who took our sin upon himself at Calvary

In 1:20 Paul had said the world has no excuse for its sin and wickedness and rejection of God

Now here in verse 1 of chapter 2 he says those in the church have no excuse for judging and condemning others either.

Passing judgement and condemning those who are different, that look different, dress different, talk differently, behave differently, all that is so common our society today, and Paul says, church, THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR THAT SO STOP IT!

In John 16:8-11 Jesus said, “And when he comes, he, NOT US, will convict the world of its sin, and of God’s righteousness, and of the coming judgment. The world’s sin is that it refuses to believe in me. Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more. Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged.”

So as Jesus also said in the face of the woman caught in the act of adultery, Let he who is without sin, cast the first stone.

John Courson pointed out that the Greek word *krino*, translated “judge,” means to judge to condemnation. In other words, it speaks of judging with a sneer on one’s face and a finger angrily pointed at him, or her, or them. That kind of judgment is wrong because, although it might appear in a different form, the same sort of sin is going on within us whenever we judge condemningly.

We have no excuse, the only difference between believers and nonbelievers here, is that we have found Christ who has born the penalty for our sin and now have the Spirit of God living within us to strengthen and transform and guide us so that we can face our sin.

Yet isn't it tragic that despite God's word to the contrary, according to recent studies and surveys, when asked what words come to mind when they hear of the church or Christians, between 80-90% of unchurched adults use words like judgmental, intolerant, and hypocritical. And these same surveys find that among those within the church, about 50% feel the same way.

The world desperately needs people to point them to the savior not people to judge and condemn them.

And the only way this can change, is if we break out of our bubbles and make the effort not to condemn but build relationships with those separate from Christ.

To care for those who are lost and hurting rather than stand in judgement of them.

The very ones Jesus spent most of his time with instead of those who felt self-righteous and superior

It's like the old story of the minister of a large church who became very concerned about the moral and doctrinal laxity of some of the more fringe members. So one night, as he was praying for church members by name, he felt God clearly telling him to call together the leadership team and purify the membership in order that the church might be blessed and grow. Everyone whose beliefs or behavior failed to live up to the mark would be expelled from the church. The following night they met and, after long discussion, agreed to disbar almost half of the church's members.

Not too long after this, he was again praying for all the members of the church, a much shorter process now, and the minister once more felt God telling him to call the leaders together again

and purify the membership still further. Again they met, and again after much discussion they resolved to excommunicate about half of the remaining members.

Several weeks later, the minister again felt this same leading and the leaders culled the membership even further. Eventually, the concern for purity had reached such heights, and the standard of excellence had become so strict, that only the minister and two very elderly ladies were left on the membership list. The following month, the ladies fired the minister for compromise and confidently declared that the church was finally and entirely pure. But that winter was a severe one, and the two saintly elderly women both caught a chill and died.

Do not judge others, Jesus said, or you will be judged by the same standard you use.

Ultimately man's judgment tears others down while trying to build itself up.

Gods' judgement is always in accordance with truth

What's ours based on?

II. Not only is God's judgement based on truth, as he continues, Paul says it is also based on our deeds

“But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself. For a day of anger is coming, when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed. He will judge everyone according to what they have done. He will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality that God offers. But he will pour

out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and instead live lives of wickedness. There will be trouble and calamity for everyone who keeps on doing what is evil—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. But there will be glory and honor and peace from God for all who do good—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism.” (Romans 2:5–11)

This passage can sound so strange to us when he writes God will judge everyone according to what they have done.

At first glance it seems to contradict God's word that it is by grace we are saved through faith not by works or anything we can do

but there are three points to consider here

1. First and most important is Paul is talking about judgement not salvation, there is a difference

as Kenneth Boa wrote, here the issue is not salvation it is how God evaluates all people

John Stott said what Paul is affirming is that although justification is indeed by faith, judgement will be according to works.

And Warren Wiersbe said of these verses, what we need to keep in mind is that these verses do not tell us how to be saved. They describe how God judges mankind according to the deeds performed over the course of their life.

This passage is about what God bases his judgement on.

2. A second point is that Paul is not referring to any particular sin or deed we commit

Nor is he talking about our missteps and stumbles

Because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God we have already been judged guilty

However, Jesus has already taken care this, as Paul will say in chapter 6, the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord

There is no fear of judgement for those who have received Jesus as their savior

What he is talking about is our life orientation not particular actions and behaviors

Our character and conduct over the long haul not just momentary failures

Are we directed toward Christ or ourselves and our sin?

So he writes

“God “will repay each person according to what they have done.” To those who by persistence (steadfastness, patient endurance) in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.”
(Romans 2:6–8)

He is speaking of an overarching desire to know and follow God which then guides our actions

3. A third point Paul makes here is that God doesn't have a double standard

Jews believed since they were his chosen people, they were special and therefore received preferential treatment

Hell and judgement held no fear for them because they believed those were reserved for Gentiles

yet Paul says clearly in verse 11, God does not show favoritism

All have sinned and broken his law and therefore are declared guilty

The question is what is to be done about it.

Christ died in our place so that our sins might be forgiven. We can choose to accept his sacrifice that he faced the consequence of our sin for us. Or we can choose to face the consequences ourselves.

God's judgement is based on truth, on deeds, and

- III. One final point about God's judgement which I'll end with is that God's judgement is not based on how much we know but living up to what we do know, the light we have

Paul says beginning in verse 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. 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. (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. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.) This will

take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares." (Romans 2:12–16)

Some think merely having and knowing the law or God's word is enough to set them apart and protect them from God's judgement

Others could claim ignorance and therefore believe they could not be held to account or judged for it since they didn't know and perhaps had never seen or heard of God and his word

Yet Paul had already said in chapter 1 that God nature and power are clearly evident from creation itself

Here he says his law, that awareness of right and wrong is present in our hearts, our consciences and bears' witness

We may not have a great understanding of God and His word but Paul says deep down, in our conscience we know he is there and we know right from wrong

Just it takes only a small candle to light up a room, it only takes a little light to show us the way we are to go

And when we go against our conscience, we are accountable and judged by that

So too, we may not know a lot about Jesus and may have many more questions than answers about his word but this shouldn't stop us from coming to him

It's not how much we know but what we do with what we know that matters.