

When Justice and Mercy Meet
Romans 2:1-16
Berean Baptist Church
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December 2, 2018

INTRODUCTION

Someone will sit and hear God's words in Romans Chapter One with smug comfort. They have never bent-the-knee to idols, they do not openly encourage wickedness, they do not follow perverse affections. But if you are comfortable with God's judgment on the wicked because you are not like them, then God has some words for you. In Romans chapter two, the eyes of the Lord turn to self-righteous and his withering judgment is pronounced.

God's judgment is not just on sinners who live a wildly shameful life. In this passage, we see that God judges *every person according* to the truth, *according to* the response of their heart, and *according to* their actions. And this judgment is all *according* to the Gospel!

God's judgment is fair and just; we must confess that it is good! Most importantly, we must see that the judgment is part of the Gospel. Sinners are not saved by ignoring the judgment of God and using words about grace to suppress their conscience, sinners are saved by accepting the judgment of God and being raised by His grace to new life.

Acknowledge God's true judgment of our hearts and our actions according to the Gospel. Seek mercy from Jesus and live as one who will give an account!

Romans 2:1-3 The Judgment of God Is in Accord with Truth

Paul has torn down the idols and condemned those who worship them, but now he turns to the self-righteous. The self-righteous, rather than escaping judgment by their moralism, are singled out for judgment. The spotlight is brought right down on the person trusting their good morals and Paul practically points his finger at them as he repeats “thou” (you) five times in the first verse.

Vs 1-2 The problem is not that these people judge. God's wants us to love good and hate evil; He wants us to tell right from wrong. The problem with the self-righteous is that they are hypocrites. They loudly declare what is good, while they themselves do evil.

Human judgment should always be humble and limited (1 Cor 4:5), and before we judge anyone we must examine ourselves (Luke 6:41-42). If we find it is appropriate to judge, we must commit all eternal judgment to God who judges according to truth.

Vs 3 If you have ever passed moral judgment upon another then you have opened yourself up for a whole world of judgment from God. And God's judgment is always according to the truth!

Know that you will be judged according to truth and your hypocrisy will be exposed; judge humbly and seek mercy!

Romans 2:4-5 The Judgment of God is in Accord with Our Stubbornness

Vs 4 Christians quick to condemn others despise God's mercy that saves them! God is so patient because He wants people to repent. When he finally judges it is only after much forbearance.

When you run out of patience with evil people when you don't understand why God doesn't just blast those wicked sinners, remember this: God's extraordinary patience with you is the only reason you are here today. You love His patience when He gives it to you, why do you despise it when He gives it to others? See Luke 9:51-56.

We must call sin what it is, but when you are at the end of patience with sinners, check your spirit and remember Jesus words: "the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

But God will not forbear judgment forever...

Vs 5 "after" Paul's first word in verse five "after" is the same word that is translated as "according to" in verses 2, 6, and 16. Here God's judgment is after/in accord with the darkened human heart. Chapter one taught us that the sinners "foolish heart was darkened (Vs 21)" and "God gave them over to a reprobate (counterfeit) mind." Now we see more fruit of this self-imposed blindness: they take God's mercy meant for good and turn it to evil.

God shows patience and kindness to the end that you would turn from your wicked ways. But the darkened heart of the wicked takes the mercy that was meant for healing and twists it into a tool for injury.

When people use God's mercy as an excuse to sin they store wrath up for themselves because God will judge according to our hearts!

Know that you will be judged according to your heart, your inner-self; seek mercy!

Romans 2:7-10 The Judgment of God is in Accord with Our Deeds

Vs 6 "Who will render to every man according to his deeds:" Paul may be thinking about Jeremiah when he said this because Jeremiah's message was so close to his own:

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings (Jer 17:9-10)."

Untimely, salvation is not according to our works but by God's mercy to those who trust Him. But Paul's point here is that God fairly weighs the works of every person. And unless we cry out for mercy, he will give us exactly what we deserve.

But if you trust Christ, you may be tempted to read this and say "oh, this 'according to his deeds' does not apply to me; I'm trusting in God's grace to save me."

The statement that God judges the works of "every person" appears at least five times in the OT (Job 34:11; Psl 62:12; Pro 24:12; Jer 17:10; 32:19), and at least eight times in the NT (Mat 16:27; Rom 2:6; 14:12; 1Cor 3:5-15; 2Co 5:10; Rev 2:23; 20:12; 22:12.) Consider Jesus message to the church at Thyatira:

Rev 2:19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which

callesth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

If you trust Jesus, your sins are forgiven and you will go to heaven. But you must not ignore the words of God. God's grace is not your license to sin! Your choices are significant and your good and evil deeds still carry eternal meaning "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. (2 Co 5:10)."

See the profound importance of your daily acts, and live as one who will give an account!

So, how do we live as one who will give account?

Vs 7 The worker of good must, above all be patient and faithful. Virtue has its own immediate rewards and it does generally lead to a better life (as Proverbs teaches), but as long as you are doing right you will face opposition in the world. The Christian turns their back on the World System and patiently works and waits for something better: "wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city (Heb 11:16)."

Vs 9 "every soul" Paul may use this phrase to point out the common judgment of Jews and Gentiles, or the fact that this judgment is more than just physical. As though he were saying "every soul of every nation will be punished for their own evil deeds."

Vs 9 With blessings come responsibility. The unbelieving Hebrews are first in punishment because they were also first in blessing; they had access to greater revelation. Those that believed God were most blessed, and those that disbelieved were most cursed. How much more are we, who have the ultimate revelation of God, responsible to do good with faithful endurance?

Vs 10-11 God expects and desires those who trust Him to do good works. And His judgment will be objective and fair. Jesus "died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again (2 Cor 5:15)."

If you do not trust Jesus for the forgiveness your sins, you must see the judgment coming! You will be judged fairly and condemned fairly, without any hope of appeal.

Cling to Jesus as your souls only hope! And know that even the forgiven will given an account of their works; do good patiently, continually, keeping your eyes on Jesus and seeking His mercy!

Romans 2:12-16 The Judgment of God is in Accord with the Gospel

All people have a certain moral knowledge written on their inner-beings by God and by this, they will be judged. People will not be judged based on what they do not know, but on what they do know. Those who have greater revelation have greater responsibilities, but nature provides sufficient revelation to leave all people without excuse.

Vs 12-15 God judges all people by their actions according to the light that they have available to them. Not by their background, intentions, or even church attendance. The Jews had a greater light given to them and are under greater judgment, but even the Gentiles were given sufficient light to be eternally judged by God.

Vs 16 “...God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ...” Jesus is the appointed judge of the World (Acts 17:31).

Vs 16 “...according to my gospel.” The judgment of God cannot be separated from the mercy of God. The gospel makes no sense at all outside of the context of God's wrath.

Part of the Good News is the redemption and restoration of justice. When Christ judges the world there will be perfect truth and justice. Every lie will be seen as ridiculous, even secret sin will be laid bare, and every victory of the wicked will be overthrown. This is good news because it means that every wrong will be addressed, and every perversion of justice will be overturned.

But it is also terrifying news for us sinners because it means that we can't run forever. Eventually, the Lion will catch up to us, and the wrath of the Lamb will overtake us. We need mercy!

Respond to God's judgment according to the Gospel. Be thankful that He will set things right, and seek mercy!

CONCLUSION

As sinners, we often take things out of proportion or chose to focus on the truth we like and neglect the truth we don't like. This picking and choosing of truths goes hand-in-hand with hypocrisy.

Jesus said “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone (Matt 23:23).”

We must fully acknowledge both judgment and mercy and live in the light of both. If you know that you have unforgiven sins, your judge is coming and the court will open in a day you do not expect! Seek mercy from your judge now! Pray to him now and ask for forgiveness! He wants you to repent so he can forgive and restore you.

And once you accept Jesus' forgiveness, do not forget about judgment. Remember that God judges both our hearts and our actions in truth and that this judgment is part of the Good News. Rejoice to know that God will set every wrong right, and work knowing that you will give an account.

Acknowledge God's true judgment of our hearts and our actions according to the Gospel. Seek mercy from Jesus and live as one who will give an account!