



Epistle to The Romans



Lesson 3: Romans 2, The Moral Man

Review

“The just shall live by faith” (Hab 2:4) put to death the heresies that grew during the early centuries of the church and the Dark Ages. There are three NT epistles that form a trilogy on “The just shall live by faith”: Romans 1:17 shows who are **the just**; Galatians 3:11 shows how the just **shall live**; and Hebrews 10: 38-39 shows how to live **by faith**. Romans 1:16-18 provide the summary text of the entire Book of Romans.

The ultimate irony in humanity’s refusal to glorify the true God is the insanity or stupidity of idolatry (Isaiah 44:9-20): *The worship of gods who are not and the demons who are*. The more you reflect upon the infinite glory and majesty of the eternal God, *the more hideous is the unspeakable insult to Him of any kind of idolatry*

Man’s refusal to acknowledge and glorify God leads to a downward path: first, worthless thinking; next, moral insensitivity; and then, religious stupidity as seen in idol worship. *And we become like the gods we worship!* (Ps 115:8, 135:15-18).

One thing that many people miss, and that there is a specific *judgment* of God on a culture for denying Him as *Creator*...(Cf. Romans 1:26-28). Most people view homosexuality as a personal choice, and in many ways, it is as it is born in human nature, but it is a judgement on the culture. God gave them over to a mind devoid of judgement.

The Righteousness of God Revealed

What is the greatest thought that ever entered the mind of Man? Daniel Webster responded, *“My responsibility to my Maker!”*

God created man “in His own image.” Since we are persons, so is God. Since we have personal feelings, so has God. If God be God, He must be the judge of all. You must meet God, and that as He is, not as you might wish Him to be. Let’s really understand how He sees things...

We now enter the greatest passage in all Scripture as to the Great Principles according to which God’s Judgment of Human Action must proceed.

God has made known in advance how He will decide and act, otherwise men would “imagine vain things” about the True God and hug their delusions to their own damnation.

Condemnation of “Pagan Man” (1:1-32) is now followed with “Moral Man.” In any generalization such as the preceding blanket indictment of pagan humanity (1:18-32), exceptions to the rule always exist. Obviously, some pagans had high ethical standards and moral lifestyles and condemned the widespread moral corruption of their contemporaries.

In addition, the Jews morally stood in sharp contrast with the pagan world around them and freely condemned the Gentiles. Both groups of moralists might conclude that God's condemnation did not apply to them because of their higher planes of living. But Paul insisted that they also stood condemned because they were doing the same things for which they judged others.

Condemnation of "Moral Man" (2:1-16)

[It is significant that in this chapter the general plural changes to the specific singular. The indefinite "they" now become "thou!" or you. It is interesting that in the NIV, 2,000 changes were made to the text, rendering what should be singular as plural! According to the statement of the translators, it was, in effect, to soften accountability!

Read Romans 2 verse 1

Never underestimate the human capacity to rationalize. It is astonishing to realize how people can justify what they are doing.

We now enter one of the greatest set of passages in Scripture. The Greek verb for "judging" does not mean to estimate a man's value but to condemn his person. Every man is naturally blind to his own state and sins. We will encounter seven great principles of God's Judgment. Here God lays out rules that He will cling to according to this nature.

Seven Principles of Judgment

① According to Truth

Read Romans 2 Verses 2 & 3

"Did you think that you would escape—You?" The death-chamber of self-righteousness is open to each of us...

We need to drive out our false notions and blindness of self-love and self-flattery. The only barrier to receiving truth is the assumption that you already have it. Have you ever tried to convince somebody of something when they think they have the answer? It is pretty tough! So, the principle that keeps us in eternal ignorance is condemnation before investigation. Coming to a conclusion before we have the data.

Read Romans 2 Verses 4 & 5

Not only do we feel we are innocent, but the riches of God should be leading us to repentance. Note God's progressive degrees—goodness, forbearance, longsuffering—in responding to our ingratitude...we are the ones who are ungrateful, yet God is patient to the extreme. God's judgment is according to real truth!

② According to Accumulated Guilt

God does not judge us until the end of our days. Not until the last evil result of a life of sin has been recorded can the final reward of the sinner be known. If you think you're in trouble now, just give it a little more time and you will dig the hole deeper.

“Behold, this was the iniquity of Sodom...” (Cf. Ezek16:49, 50). **Read Ezekiel 16:49-50**

What was one of the main sins of Sodom? It was _____ .

It was more than homosexuality. Like today, homosexuality was a cultural indicator of a much broader problem, God’s judgement. Pride is where sin entered the world in the heart of Satan. The fullness of bread—prosperity feeds pride. The abundance of idleness. (Lk 17:28-30).

If God doesn’t judge America, He will have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah.

Billy Graham

I tremble for my country when I recall that God is just, and that His justice will not sleep forever.

Thomas Jefferson, 1781

The phrase “the day of God’s ... judgment” (Rom 2:5) taken by itself may seem to lend support to the idea of a single general judgment of all humanity. However, the Scriptures do not support such a concept. This phrase must be interpreted in conjunction with passages which clearly indicate that several judgments of different groups occur at different times:

- ✠ The judgment of Israel at Christ’s Second Advent, Ezek 20:32-38;
- ✠ The judgment of Gentiles at Christ’s Second Advent, Mt 25:31-46;
- ✠ The Great White Throne judgment, Rev 20:11-15.

The focus of this passage is on the fact that God will judge all peoples.

How do we escape judgement? **Read John 5:24.**

The first few chapters of Romans deals with some pretty dark stuff. It will lighten up later in the book. Our anchor through this is, if you flee to the cross of Calvary, you will escape judgement.

③ According to Works

Read Romans 2 Verses 6 & 7

Verse 7 does not a way to salvation, but a general description of the character of those who are saved.

In every age there have been those—like Abel, Noah, Abraham, Job, Joseph—separated from their brethren and choosers of God.

Read Romans Verse 8

Examples would be, Cain, Esau, Pharaoh, Saul, Jehoiakim, et al.

Read Romans Verse 9

Unrighteousness, indignation, wrath, tribulation, and anguish: the sweep of the fruits of ingratitude...

Read Romans Verse 10

Doing good does not save them. Doing good examples, a heart that is right with God.

④ Without Respect of Persons

Read Romans Verse 11

This just recompense by God is without regard to ethnic background or any other consideration except what each person has done. It does not matter who you are, who you are related to, who your friends of, how many degrees you earn, asset do not matter.

Read Romans Verse 12

“The Law was given through Moses” (Jn 1:17), which marks the beginning of the dispensation of Law. “Sinned” in this tense means once and for all. This cannot refer to simply that they committed sin; “for all have sinned” refers to the general choice of sin as against righteousness and holiness; therefore, a lifechoice of sin.

⑤ According to Obedience, not Knowledge

Read Romans Verse 13

There is no form of the “deceitfulness of sin” more insidious or more prevalent (because of its subtle power over the self-righteous hear) than that of the false comfort or false peace because of merely knowing God’s truth. We shall find that the Gospel speaks of the “obedience of faith,” whereas disobedience and unbelief are interchangeable words.

Bottomline, you can know the words of God and still not accept what Jesus did on the cross!

A person’s habitual conduct, whether good or evil, reveals the condition of his heart.

Eternal life is not rewarded for good living; that would contradict many other Scriptures which clearly state that salvation is not by works, but is all of God’s grace to those who believe (e.g., Rom 6:23; 10:9-10; 11:6; Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). We will build on this through Romans.

A person’s doing good shows that his heart is regenerate. Such a person, redeemed by God, has eternal life. Conversely a person who continually does evil and rejects the truth shows that he is unregenerate, and therefore will be an object of God’s wrath.

Read Romans Verse 14

Gentiles here means nations foreign to Israel. This refutes the claim that God gave the Law to all nations, on the contrary he gave the law to Israel.

The Jews looked down on the Gentiles partly because they did not have the revelation of God’s will in the Mosaic Law. They used it as a point of pride, which was a big mistake. But, as Paul pointed out, there are moral Gentiles who do by nature things required by the Law.

Such persons show that the Law is not to be found only on tablets of stone and included in the writings of Moses; it is also inscribed in their hearts and is reflected in their actions, consciences, and thoughts.

Conscience

Read Romans Verse 15

Moral Gentiles by their actions show that the requirements (“the work”) of the Law are written on their hearts. This is confirmed by their consciences, the faculty within human beings that evaluates their actions, along with their thoughts that either accuse or excuse them of sin. This is why Paul called such Gentiles a law for themselves.

Missionaries have many tales when encountering savage tribes that practice some moral actions.

Conscience is an important part of human nature, but it is not an absolutely trustworthy indicator of what is right. One’s conscience can be “good” (Acts 23:1; 1 Tim 1:5, 19) and “clear” (Acts 24:16; 1 Tim 3:9; 2 Tim 1:3; Heb 13:18), but it can also be “guilty” (Heb 10:22), “corrupted” (Titus 1:15), “weak” (1 Cor 8:7, 10, 12), and “seared” (1 Tim 4:2).

All people need to trust the Lord Jesus Christ so that “the blood of Christ” might “cleanse [their] consciences” (Heb 9:14). [vv. 14 & 15 are a parenthesis explanatory of vv. 12 & 13.]

⑥ Reaching the Secrets of the Heart

Read Romans Verse 16

Continues the theme of vv. 5-13, God’s righteous judgment. The Agent of divine judgment is Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 5:22, 27; Acts 17:31). This judgment will deal with men’s secrets (lit., “the hidden things of men”) and will reveal those things and prove God’s judgment right (cf. 1 Cor 4:5).

In this section (2:1-16) God is seen as the Creator-Sovereign of the universe conducting the moral government of His human creatures. God’s absolute standards are known. God punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous impartially according to their works, which reveal their hearts. Since no human being—Jesus Christ excepted—can be declared righteous (justified) by God on the basis of his own merit, every human is condemned by God. Every person must understand this.

At this point in Paul’s argument the way a person can secure a righteous standing before God has not yet been presented. Here the emphasis is on the justice of God’s judgment, leading to the conclusion that nobody on his own can be declared righteous by God.

Paul’s gospel is not the standard of God’s judgment. The righteous judgment of God is an essential ingredient of the gospel Paul preached and the reason for trusting Jesus’ finished redemption. **It does no good to present the solution if there is no apparent need for the solution.** Paul is presenting the need, building his case that all men need the coming solution.

Paul starts by making clear that all of us, whether good, bad, or indifferent, all stand condemned before the applied standard; Jew, Gentile, Pagan, Moral Man, Religious Man (Next lesson), etc.... Once we grasp that we are sinners and dealing with a Holy God whose

righteousness and justice cannot be compromised, then we can begin to understand and accept the solution God has provided.

7 According to Reality

Not religious profession as religion is bankrupt. Religion is man's attempt to cover himself with God. Verses 17-29 use the Jewish man as an example of a religious person. Proud of the law but not keeping it.

Read Romans 2 Verses 17 & 18

Verses 17-18 include the five bases of Jewish religious pride:

- 1) Being called a Jew;
- 2) Relied on the Law;
- 3) Boasting of God;
- 4) Knowing God's will;
- 5) Instructed (in the minutia) of the Law

Read Romans 2 Verses 19 through 24

In verse 22, to "Commit sacrilege" means to "traffic in idols." Paul was Quoting Isaiah 52:5. Even today (Ezek 36:16-24ff). Israel had a calling but failed. Paul has nailed the Pagans and the Gentiles. He wants to make sure there are no misconceptions on the part of his Jewish readers, who had their pride in their Law and culture.

Read Romans 2 Verse 25

Circumcision, here used, is the mark of the nation's separation to God, valid only if one were thus really separated to God.

Read Romans 2 Verses 25 through 29

"Whose praise..." = It is reality that counts with God. The true Jew (a contraction of "Judah," which means "Praise") is one who is circumcised in heart, who has judged his sinfulness in the sight of the Lord, and who now seeks to walk in accordance with the revealed will of God.

For the Christian, the same searching questions apply... If we glory in the gospel, our disobedience to the gospel dishonors God. Let us not confuse Romans 2 with Revelation 20: at the Judgment Day there will be no reasoning or preaching: only condemnation "according to their works—the things written in the books."

God's great announcement of these principles of His Throne is here given to awaken us out of any false hopes about ourselves. If we understand Paul here, we should be totally free of delusions about ourselves. Paul is laying a foundation that he will build upon in subsequent chapters. Having cut through the rituals, there is now no cover to hide behind.

Next Session

Read Romans Chapter 3: The "Religious Man."