

ROAMING THROUGH ROMANS

“What About You and Me?”

Romans 2:1-16

Open your Bibles to Romans Chapter Two. We are going to look at the first 16 verses at this time. Let's read our text and then we'll do what we do — go verse by verse through it. Paul writes:

¹Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. ²But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. ³And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? ⁵But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶who “will render to each one according to his deeds”: ⁷eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; ⁸but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, ⁹tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; ¹⁰but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹For there is no partiality with God.

¹²For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law ¹³(for not the hearers of the law *are* just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; ¹⁴for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*) ¹⁶in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

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In chapter one Paul built a compelling case against man proving “the rightness of God’s wrath.” God is right in judging man, because man has rejected what God has revealed to him. God has revealed to man both His righteousness and His wrath — *the good news AND the bad news*. He has given man witness of His power in His creation. And He has placed the knowledge of Him in man’s heart. But man has chosen not to glorify God or thank Him for His grace and mercy.

Because of this, the heart of man has become darkened; and, in foolishness, he worships anything and everything but God. And this has led to all kinds of vile passions and lusts being exhibited. We went through them extensively last time, so we don’t need to revisit the list of sins man has committed. But we do need to remember how Paul ended the chapter. Listen to verse 32 of chapter one:

who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Did you know that Paul’s letter to the Romans has at times been required reading in many law schools in the U.S?

The case he presents against man is ironclad. It is difficult to come away from chapter one without realizing that man is guilty of all charges. But that was all about the heathen, the sinner, *the lost*.

Or was it?

You see, the Lord said something very convicting to the prophet Samuel when He was choosing Israel’s king. He told Samuel that man looks at the outward appearance, *but He (God) looks at the heart*. And so, later in the Book of Romans, Paul will write this:

Romans 3:10: **As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one...**

and,

Romans 3:23: **...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**

Since God is infinitely holy, His standard of righteousness is absolute perfection. So it doesn’t matter in heaven whether one man is better in some ways than others. We all still fall short. James said that if you break one law, you have broken them all! So man needs a Savior, a perfect sacrifice made in his place in order to get to heaven. And that is a big problem: one that Paul is going to address in this chapter.

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We don't see things the same way God does. Looking around we can see the obvious differences between the righteousness of men. Not all men are as bad as they can be. Some are better than others. And we usually see ourselves as better than most.

But from God's vantage point, there is no difference. We are all sinners in need of a Savior.

And the only difference between the lost and saved is His grace, mercy and forgiveness.

So just in case someone that reads this thinks they are holier than others, Paul begins by writing this (verse 1):

Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

Once again Paul uses the word "therefore" to begin a new section of the letter. So we need to think about what it is there for.

Paul has just taken us on a tour of what Calvary Chapel (Stone Mountain, Atlanta, GA) Pastor Sandy Adams calls "Skid Rome." Paul has filled us in on all of the vile and disgusting things that the men of the world do. But now he turns his attention to a new group — *the judges*.

How many times does he use the word "judge" in this first sentence?

Three.

So it must be important.

Who are these judges?

They are people who feel they are generally moral in their conduct. I call them "religionists," because they rely on their man-made religion to reach up to God.

Paul assumes, after reading chapter one, they are congratulating themselves that they are not like "*those people*" that he just spoke of. And this makes a lot of sense, because Paul is a Jew and he was a Pharisee. So he would know all about how self-righteous people can be. Remember the illustration Jesus gave of the Pharisee and the publican (tax collector)? Luke 18:10-14 recounts this story:

¹⁰Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' ¹³And the tax collector, standing afar

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off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

The Pharisee only talks about how bad other people are and then all the things he has done to please God. But the publican admits he is a sinner. Then he places his trust and hope in God’s mercy.

Who gets the grace in this story?

The publican.

God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

But this is not just about the Jews. It applies to all who think they are morally superior. Paul will get to the Jews more specifically at the end of chapter two.

Remember, we talked about how the phrase, “**the just shall live by faith,**” is a trilogy. It appears in Romans, Galatians and Hebrews. But listen to where Paul got this doctrine from (Habakkuk 2:4):

**Behold the proud,
His soul is not upright in him;
But the just shall live by his faith.**

The point is we cannot be the judge, because we all do the same things. Either that or we would like to and might if we got the chance.

What do we all want to do when we see the “Wet Paint” sign on the wall?

Touch the wall to see if it is still wet!

That makes us just as guilty before God.

Isn’t that what the Sermon on the Mount was all about?

Isn’t that what James, the brother of Jesus, meant when he said that if we break one law, we break them all?

So what do the moralists (the judges) deserve?

Judgment.

Look at verse 2:

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But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.

God's judgment is "according to truth." Now, there are some times when we can and should be the judge.

1 Corinthians 5 is a good example of this. A man was leavening the lump by sleeping with his father's wife. Paul told the Corinthians to kick his sin out of the church. And if he chose to follow it, the hope was that his flesh would be destroyed but his spirit saved.

We can and should pass judgment on actions like that. But most often, it is best that judgment be left up to God. The biggest reason for this is we, quite often, don't know the whole story. Things are not always as they seem.

You see the word that Paul used here for "judge" in verse one means to "condemn or damn to hell." And that is not our call. Hebrews 4:13 says:

And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give account*.

Our job is to love people and leave the judging to God.

Why?

Because He always does so in truth. Look at verse 3:

And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?

We all have times where we think we are the exception to the rule. We think that God will judge everyone but *me*. I hate to be the one who tells you this, but that is not true. We all deserve the exact same judgment.

What are the wages of sin?

Death.

But God has provided the escape clause. His name is JESUS. And it is what He has done that brings us to repentance. **For God so loved the world....** Look at verse 4:

Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

Non-believers like to point out that it seems as if God doesn't seem to be doing anything about the sin problem man has. They ask the question, "Why is there such evil in the world?" As if it is God's fault. But the sin and evil in the world is not caused by God. It

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is the result of the fall of man. And in the end, God will take care of it. But in the meantime, His desire is that none should perish.

He wants all to come to repentance. He is not delaying, as some think. He is waiting—maybe for you??

You see, a person is more likely to repent and turn to God when he learns how much God loves him or her. That is what is happening in the Muslim world. Their God “Allah” is capricious and unknowable. Because of this, they have no assurance of their fate. That is why so many will die by suicide bombings and the like. This “assures” them a place in paradise, according to the Koran. So when they find out what Jesus has done for them, they come to Him. 1 John 4:19 tells us this:

We love Him because He first loved us.

His kindness and goodness leads us to repentance.

But man...

Look at verse 5:

But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

Everyone can relate to storing up for the future. But we need to take care of the treasure we are keeping.

The word “**hardness**” is the Greek word “sclerosis.”

What do we call the hardening of the arteries?

Arteriosclerosis.

This can happen to us spiritually. We can harden our heart against God.

Isn't that what Pharaoh did?

Sandy Adams recounts a story he once read that illustrates this well:

In the 1880's a Wells Fargo clerk figured out a way to steal one silver dollar every day without getting caught. Every day for 30 years this man put one more silver dollar in his attic trunk. Finally, the trunk became so heavy that one night it broke through the boards of his ceiling and fell on the man while he was lying in bed asleep.

You don't want to be storing up God's wrath. One day (soon?) it will come crashing down on you.

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When is that day?

Paul tells us. Look at verses 6-10:

⁶who “will render to each one according to his deeds”: **⁷eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality;** **⁸but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath,** **⁹tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;** **¹⁰but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.**

These verses need to be understood in their context. Taken by themselves, it almost sounds like you can perform good deeds and earn salvation. But we know from Galatians 2 and other places in Scripture that this is not the case.

So what is Paul talking about?

Look at verse 6. Paul says God is going to render each person **“according to his deeds.”** In other words, there is a time and place where God will review your life. That time and place is eternity. God looks back to reward you for your works. But only believers have any works that are “rewardable.”

Good works do not begin until a person is saved.

What did Jesus say was the first good work we could perform?

Listen to what He says in John 6:28-29:

²⁸Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”

²⁹Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”

Before and until you get saved, you cannot do any good works. After you get saved, you are empowered to do things that are pleasing to God. And there is no way you can obey the truth unless you belong to the Lord.

So if you are saved, verse seven describes you. But if you are not, verses eight and nine describe you.

You see, there is a place of judgment for both the believer and unbeliever.

The believer is judged at the Bema Seat of Christ. And he or she is judged for their faithfulness (obedience) with what God has given them.

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The unbeliever is judged at the Great White Throne. And one question will be asked there, I believe. God is going to ask them about His Son and what they did with their knowledge of Him. Because they rejected His Son, they will be eternally separated from God. And it seems as if there will be levels of punishment depending on how much wrath has been stored up. And notice this, because it is important.

It doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile (Greek). You cannot gain salvation because of your race or nationality.

You can't get there by your works.

It doesn't matter if you were baptized as a child or attended church faithfully.

It is not about what you do.

It is all about what He has done. It is all about Jesus.

Look at verse 11:

For there is no partiality with God.

God has only one plan of salvation for man.

He made us all the same — in His image.

So He treats us all the same.

He didn't mess up the world with sin. We did.

His plan was perfect. Ours is not.

But we can expect that He will be completely and totally fair with all of us. And that is what the rest of our study is about. Look at verse 12:

**For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law,
and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law**

What Paul is saying here is that God also judges based on opportunity, on the light you have been given. Those who have the Bible will be judged by the Bible. In other words, if you are in a society that has the Word of God and you reject it, your fate is sealed. And if you try to keep the law to earn your salvation, you have to keep it perfectly. One slip and you are done for.

But those without the Word of God will not be held responsible for what they don't have. Abraham didn't have the Bible. Neither did any of his sons. Enoch didn't have the Bible, and he was *raptured* into heaven.

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As we talked about in an earlier study, men will be judged on the revelation they have been given. If creation and conscience is your only revelation, you can respond favorably. And if you do, God will see to it that you receive further revelation. If you reject what God has revealed to you, you will perish, even though you don't have the Bible.

Does that make sense?

If not, maybe what Paul says next will shed a little more light on this. Look at verses 13-14:

¹³(for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; ¹⁴for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves,

This so reminds me of what James wrote in his epistle (chapter 2). We are called to be doers of the Word and not just hearers only. The Word of God can and should change us.

But is it possible to keep God's law?

No.

That is why Paul wrote this to the Galatians (2:16):

knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

Even if you could keep the law from a point in time moving forward, you still cannot be justified.

Why?

Because God requires that which is in the past to be perfect as well. And, unfortunately, our past is linked to Adam and the fall.

So what is Paul trying to say here?

Remember, he is building a case against men who think they are okay with God outside of His plan for salvation. They would say that it is not fair for God to hold them accountable for being sinners if they didn't have the law. But the truth is, all men have an innate understanding of right and wrong. Even those who only have the witness of creation and conscience. In fact, other than the Sabbath commandment, which requires

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revelation, it can be argued that all men have an understanding of the other nine commandments. That is what Paul is going to argue next (verse 15):

who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*)

Paul is telling us that God has revealed Himself in two ways: *divine law (the Bible) and natural law*. In verse 15 he lists three components to natural law:

First is an innate sense of right and wrong. He writes, “**the law written in their hearts.**”

Second, their “conscience” also bears witness. People who have never heard God’s Word directly still have a moral compass they are accountable to.

And third, all societies develop a moral consensus “**between themselves.**” It is an agreed-upon morality that is formed through logic and reason. All societies have laws, and they are basically consistent with God’s laws until man perverts them.

The bottom line is this:

There is a law within every human. And tragically, all men have broken that law.

Do you know anyone who has done the right thing in every situation?

I don’t either.

So your conscience either “**accuses you**” of unrighteousness and leads you to repentance. Or it “**excuses you**” for your unrighteousness as you harden your heart against God’s conviction. Either way, your conscience condemns you as unrighteous before a holy God.

That is why every man needs the Gospel. No one can stand on his or her own. We all need a Savior. Look at verse 16:

in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

So here is the bottom-line argument Paul is making:

There will come a day when God is going to judge “**the secrets of men.**” And the way He is going to do this is through His Son Jesus Christ, according to Paul’s gospel.

You cannot be good enough or moral enough for God to save you.

You cannot plead ignorance.

You cannot coattail on someone else, as we will learn next week.

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It is all about you and your relationship with Jesus Christ.

How do you want God to judge you?

Do you want to rely on what you have done or on what He has done?

That is where this whole argument rests. You can either stack up all the good works you have done or rely on the blood of Jesus Christ.

Next time Paul is going to begin teaching us about the law.

If it cannot bring salvation, then what is it good for?

Read ahead and see what the Lord shows you.

Let's pray.

REVELATION SONG: HE IS COMING BACK AGAIN!

He is coming back again
He's coming back again
My Jesus He's coming back again

May be morning night or noon
I hope it's very soon
My heart tells me He's coming back again

He is coming back again
He's coming back again
My Jesus He's coming back again

May be morning night or noon
I hope it's very soon
God's Word tells me He's coming back again

MY JESUS, HE'S COMING BACK AGAIN!!!