

## 23. The Book of Romans—2:2-5

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(7/26/23)

This evening we find ourselves in the first main section of the Book of Romans (1:18-3:20).

This first section falls under the heading of “**Condemnation**” (judgment) because in it Paul wants to prove that the whole human race, apart from Christ, is condemned by God.

After looking at verses 18-32 of chapter 1, the question that Paul anticipates his readers will be asking themselves is—“*What about the good people? The moral people? The people who aren’t murderers, fornicators, adulterers and homosexuals—you know, the people who are basically good, decent people? Certainly they won’t be judged by God?*”

Well, Paul anticipates this thinking and so he moves from the *unrighteous heathen* in chapter 1—to the *self-righteous hypocrite* in chapter 2 to prove that the ethical, moral person (primarily the Jew but also Gentiles) is going to find themselves in the same hell as the Gentile pagan idolator if they don’t see themselves as sinners and turn their life over to Jesus as their Savior.

Actually, Paul lays out 6 principles of judgment in the first 16 verses of Romans chapter 2:

1. *Knowledge.*

2. *Truth.*

3. *Guilt.*

4. *Deeds.*

5. *Impartiality.*

6. *Motives.*

Paul builds his case against the moralist and religionist (often the same person) that they are also guilty before God around these 6 indictments.

## 1. Knowledge—v.1

### **Romans 2:1 (NKJV)**

**<sup>1</sup> Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself...**

The verse begins with the word ‘**Therefore**’—which ties this section back to what preceded it in chapter 1.

Paul is saying that what is true of those spoken of in 1:18-32 is also true of you—you the so-called ‘good’ person, the moral person!

You are also without excuse—Why? Because you know the truth.

And how do unbelievers prove they know the truth—they prove it by judging others!

In other words, if a person didn’t know right from wrong—they couldn’t judge anyone for doing what is wrong!

The very fact that they judge others for breaking God’s standards proves they *know* God’s standards and therefore they also are without excuse.

## 2. Truth—v.2-3

### **Romans 2:2–3 (NKJV)**

**<sup>2</sup> But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. <sup>3</sup> 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?**

**John 17:17 (NKJV)**

<sup>17</sup> [Father] Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

**John 12:48 (NKJV)**

<sup>48</sup> He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. [Rev. 20:12]

The same truth that sanctifies the believer will be used to judge and condemn the unbeliever someday—

**Psalms 96:13 (NKJV)**

<sup>13</sup> For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with His truth.

God's truth (His Word) will judge unbelievers based on the facts of their lives—which He knows perfectly:

**Hebrews 4:13 (NKJV)**

<sup>13</sup> 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.

There are many people who are such 'con-artists' that they think when they stand before God on the Day of Judgment, they're going to be able to '*fudge the facts*' and fast talk their way into heaven—they better think again!

Some people are so good at fooling others about themselves they think they can fool God—but in reality, they're only fooling themselves—

**Galatians 6:7–8 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. <sup>8</sup> For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption... (*on Judgment Day—check out Revelation 20:11-15*)

For some reason people don't seem to believe that God says what He means and means what He says! And on the Day of Judgment I can imagine Him saying to them—"*What part of thou shalt not didn't you understand?!*"

### 3. Guilt—v.4-5

#### Romans 2:4–5 (NKJV)

**<sup>4</sup> Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? <sup>5</sup> 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 [that man is guilty of violating God's holy laws]...**

Let me start out by saying there are 2 kinds of guilt—*good* guilt and *bad* guilt; *legitimate* guilt and *illegitimate* guilt—depending on the circumstance. (Define legitimate and illegitimate guilt)

Today guilt has been defined by secular professionals and Christian psychologists alike as a toxic emotion that will produce neuroses and if allowed to continue will eventually produce physical harm like strokes and heart attacks—and even lead to suicide.

One well known pastor had this to say on the subject—

*“Recently I listened to a talk show on a local religious radio station. This daily program features a man who bills himself as a Christian psychologist. On the day I listened he was talking about the importance of overcoming our sense of guilt. Self-blame, he told his audience, is usually irrational and therefore potentially very harmful. He gave a long lecture about the importance of forgiving oneself. The whole discourse was an echo of the world's wisdom—Guilt is a virtual mental defect—don't let it ruin your self-image, and so on. He never mentioned repentance or restitution as prerequisites for self-forgiveness, and he never cited a single passage of Scripture.*

*That kind of counsel is as deadly as it is unbiblical. Guilt feelings may not always be rational, but they are nearly always a reliable signal that something is wrong somewhere, and we had better come to grips with whatever it is and make it right. Guilt functions in the spiritual realm like pain in the physical realm. Pain tells us there is a physical problem that must be dealt with or the body will suffer harm. Guilt is a spiritual pain in the soul that tells us something is evil and needs to be confronted and cleansed.”*

The only way *legitimate* guilt can be effectively dealt with and removed is through *repentance*.

But before repentance can happen there first has to be the *acknowledgment* of sin and the guilt that goes with it—the guilt of violating God's holy law, His righteous standard—the guilt of sin!

In Romans 2:4-5 Paul is saying that God's mercy and forbearance are giving people time to repent and get their lives right with Him—if they repent, He will forgive them, but if they don't repent, He will have no choice but to judge them.

But Paul is warning people not to abuse the longsuffering of God—because every day that God withholds His judgment from their life by giving them time to repent—is another day that judgment is being accumulated for the sins they commit—

**Romans 2:4–5 (NLT)**

**<sup>4</sup> Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin? <sup>5</sup> 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.**

One author commenting on this said—

*“Paul is saying that God has been good to man all across the world, and His goodness, forbearance and longsuffering had as its goal to lead them to repentance and salvation. But when it didn't lead them to repentance because of their hard and impenitent heart the converse is resulting instead—they are storing up wrath in the day of God's judgment.”*

The same fire that can *warm* you if used properly can *destroy* you if used improperly—or to put it another way, the same Person who can save you is the same Person who can judge you.

As someone has said, *“Jesus will be one of two things to every man and woman that has ever lived—either loving Savior or righteous Judge! And what He becomes to you then (the day of judgment) will be determined by what you do with Him now!”*

The word translated ‘**despise**’ in verse 4 means, *“To grossly underestimate the value of something, a failure to recognize true worth.”*

In essence, it means to take something that is *priceless* and to discard it, to throw it away as though it was *worthless*.

“**Goodness**” means God's kindness to us in regard to our past sin. He has been good to us because He has not judged us yet though we deserve it.

**“Forbearance”** means God’s kindness to us in regard to our present sin. This very day—indeed, this very hour—we have fallen short of His glory, yet He holds back His judgment against us.

**“Longsuffering”** means God’s kindness to us in regard to our future sin. He knows that we will sin tomorrow and the next day, yet He holds back His judgment against us—Why?—

**2 Peter 3:9 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> 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.

The bottom line is that God is good, and He expresses His goodness in blessings upon all mankind—what the theologians call ‘common grace.’

**Matthew 5:43–45 (NKJV)**

<sup>43</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘*You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.*’” <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

**Psalms 145:9 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> The Lord *is good to all*, And His tender mercies *are over all His works*.

**Psalms 33:5 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> ...The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

The sad appalling thing about this is that—many if not most people really don’t see God as being good—in fact, most people wonder at how God can be so ‘*evil*’ as to allow bad things to happen to good people (wars, famines, disease, injustice etc.)?

What most people don’t realize is that—there are no good people for bad things to happen To—as Jesus said, “*No one is good but...God.*” (*Matt. 19:17*); and Paul echoed, “*There is none who does good, no, not one.*” (*Rom. 3:12*)

What most people fail to understand or refuse to acknowledge is that God shows His goodness and mercy to fallen sinners every day in that every time they sin against Him, He doesn’t strike them dead on the spot (“*the souls that sins shall surely die*”)—and it’s only His goodness, forbearance and patience that lets them take another breath!

You see, people are so used to God's goodness, mercy, and patience—that they take them for granted or worse—they think they deserve them!

So that when God does finally judge sin—people see Him as harsh, unjust, and unloving—when the Bible clearly teaches that the wrath of God (His holy judgment poured out on sin) abides on all who have not received Jesus as their Savior.

But the goodness and longsuffering of God holds it back giving them time to repent.

As one author put it—

*“Most people don't believe that God will judge them—they don't believe that for a minute! And every day they load up on God's goodness, blessings, and provisions. They take in all the pleasure and joys of life—the love of a spouse, children, family, and friends. They enjoy the beauty of the creation, the good times in life, they enjoy these things every day and never give a thought that it all comes from the hand of a gracious, loving God who is trying to use His goodness in their lives to bring them to Him.”*

And yet, most people today don't see themselves as guilty sinners deserving of God's judgment and the only reason He hasn't judged them is because He is a kind and merciful God who's giving them time to repent and get their lives right with Him.

No, but rather they see themselves as good people who deserve to be blessed, so that when adversity comes their way, they rail at God by saying things like—*“I'm a good person, so why is God being so hard on me? This isn't fair! I deserve that He blesses me! He's a cruel, unjust God!”*

These people are so self-focused and convinced of their own moral superiority and goodness that—they don't thank God each day for His blessings in their lives because they believe they have those things coming to them—that it's their right to be happy and blessed!

And so, when things don't go the way they feel they deserve—they become angry with God because He has *cheated* them out of what belongs to them!

One of the biggest problems facing the modern Christian church is this very thing—the mentality that God owes us something, that His blessings are our right!

One pastor put it well—

*“There is a sick cult that has arisen in contemporary evangelical Christianity, that is built around self. People talk about self-image, self-esteem, self-worth, and self-value—but it is nothing more than humanistic worldliness. You have no worth or value as a self, as a corrupt sinner. And the whole idea of that concept has taken evangelicalism and twisted it from a God-centered perspective to a man-centered perspective. And salvation and Christianity is all seen from the viewpoint of ‘what it can do for me?’ and sin is always seen as to how it affects man and not how it affects God. We are ‘selfists’ indulging ourselves in God’s mercies—this is a horrifying error!!”*

I’d like to spend the rest of our time tonight addressing this issue because it opens up one of the greatest fundamental truths in the Bible—and we need to understand it.

People see God as unjust if some tragedy comes into their life (a loved one dies, they get cancer or some other adversity comes their way) and they say to God—*“That’s not fair God! How can You do this to me?”*

And right away they see themselves as innocent victims and God as the evil bad guy doing them wrong by stealing their blessings from them like some kind of common thief!

And so, they begin to question God’s love and His goodness in light of what they believe are the actions of a cruel and unjust God.

Here’s the problem—they have taken His goodness and blessings so for granted that they actually see them as their due, their right—that God owes them these things.

Why? Because they are good people!

When, the real question we should all be asking ourselves isn’t, *“Why do bad things happen to good people?”* (since there aren’t any) but—*“Why do so many good things happen to us seeing as we’re all so bad—fallen sinners who violate God’s laws every day?”*



Instead of acting like we're being mistreated by God when something bad comes into our lives (we're living in a fallen world we've brought upon ourselves where evil is the norm)—we ought to be thanking Him for showering us, who are so undeserving, with so many good and blessed things every day!

But as long as people have a man-centered theology that exalts themselves as good and deserving people instead of seeing themselves as unworthy sinners—they will always have a low and defective view of God. → (The woman of Luke 7:36-50)

If people would just understand when they shake their fist at God and say, *“If You were really a good God You would not have allowed this painful thing happen to me”*—that God is saying back to them, *“You don't understand there are no good people but I do a lot of good things for all people even though they sin every day and violate My commandments, because I am a good and loving God.”*

The problem is that people are too blinded by pride and self-righteousness to see themselves honestly and rightly before God.

Everyone thinks they're basically a good person (Proverbs 20:6) and therefore they feel that they deserve to be happy and blessed so much so that—when something bad does come along they quickly point a finger at God and accuse Him of mistreating them.

But instead of asking why do bad things happen to us *sometimes*—we should be asking why don't they happen to us more than they do?!

A good example is the story of Annanias and Saphira.

They were guilty of bringing the first sin into the church.

What was it—they lied about giving something to God—

**Acts 5:1–11 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. <sup>2</sup> And he kept back *part* of the proceeds, his wife also being aware *of it*, and brought a certain part and laid *it* at the apostles' feet. <sup>3</sup> But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself? <sup>4</sup> While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." <sup>5</sup> Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. <sup>6</sup> And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried *him* out, and buried *him*. <sup>7</sup> Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. <sup>8</sup> And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much." <sup>9</sup> Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband *are* at the door, and they will carry you out." <sup>10</sup> Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying *her* out, buried *her* by her husband. <sup>11</sup> So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

Now, people read that story and say, "*That wasn't so bad, who hasn't lied? Why did God have to kill them for that? He wasn't being right! It was cruel and unjust what He did to them...!*"

The problem is—we have gotten so used to sin that we no longer understand that all sin is punishable by death ("The soul that sins shall surely die") and the fact that God hasn't wiped us all out is a testimony to His mercy and grace!

But people read that and say, "*Why did God have to do that to them? How could a loving God...*"

Listen, the real issue isn't—"Why does God judge some for their sins and take their lives?" The real issue is—"Why doesn't God judge all of us when we sin? Why does He let the rest of us live?!"

**Lamentations 3:22 (NKJV)**

*The unfailing love of the LORD never ends! By his mercies we have been kept from complete destruction.*

People are not seeing things properly—and therefore they're prone to say, "*I'm good, but God is bad.*"

→ Talk about 9/11—America’s national tragedy.

How many people came out and said, “*How could a good God have allowed this to happen to us? What kind of a God is He?*”

I see it the other way around. I think it was a testimony to God’s mercy that our enemies were only able to kill 2500 of our people—they originally wanted to use ten planes and hit ten targets.

Given the filth and corruption of this nation it’s a wonder God doesn’t wipe us all out.

God has promised to protect and bless any nation that honors and obeys Him.

If God’s hand of protection is being removed from America—it isn’t an indictment against His goodness—it’s an indictment against our wickedness!.

We need to understand that—along the highway of human history God has placed warning signs of danger ahead—the danger of coming judgment.

These warning signs consist of tragedies that He allows to wake us up and get our attention when we as a people are no longer listening when He speaks from the pages of His Word.

I believe that 9/11 was one of those warning signs and wake-up calls—and I shudder to think what the next one will be like if we don’t repent as a nation and get right immediately.

Israel didn’t listen to Jesus when He warned them about coming judgment (Matt. 23:37-39; Luke 19:41-44)—and it finally came 38 years later. (Explain)

And these words of Jesus ring just as true today as when He spoke them back then—

**Luke 13:5 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> I tell you...unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”

Getting your life right with God right now is the most important thing you can ever do.

I don't know if there's any hope for our nation—I pray there is.

The farther we move away from God—the more we move out from under the umbrella of His protection.

The only hope for America is that we as a people repent—

**2 Chronicles 7:14 (NKJV)**

<sup>14</sup> if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

In Romans 2:4-5 Paul is saying that God's mercy and forbearance are giving people time to repent and get their lives right with Him.

If they repent, He will forgive them, but if they don't repent, He will have no choice but to judge them.

But as for the teaching that says, “*Good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people.*” (Book of Job)

I have seen too many wicked people prosperous and healthy—and too many wonderful godly people sick and poor to ever let me believe in a theology like that!

**Ecclesiastes 8:12 (NIV)**

<sup>12</sup> Although a wicked person who commits a hundred crimes may live a long time, I know that it will go better with those who fear God, who are reverent before him.

And if you're sitting there fuming at what I've been saying, let me say to you as kindly but as firmly as I know how.

It's because you've allowed the devil to brainwash you into thinking you're a good person who deserves to be happy and have God's blessings in your life.

Instead of seeing yourself as God sees you—a sinner who needs forgiveness and salvation.

And as Jesus promised unless you repent you *will* perish.

**Romans 3:23**

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

**Romans 6:23**

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.