

24. The Book of Romans—2:6

(8/2/23)

This evening we find ourselves in the first main section of the Book of Romans.

This first section falls under the heading of “**Condemnation**” because in it Paul wants to prove that the whole human race, apart from Christ, is condemned by God—which means at one point He will judge the world—

Psalms 9:7 (NKJV)

⁷ But the Lord ...has prepared His throne for judgment.

Psalms 96:13 (NKJV)

¹³ 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.

2 Timothy 4:1 (NKJV)

¹ I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

Now, these are just a few of the hundreds of verses we could look at throughout the Bible that tell us that God is going to someday judge the world—however, not everyone believes this:

2 Peter 3:1–7 (NKJV)

¹ Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in *both of* which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), ² that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, ³ knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, ⁴ and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation.” ⁵ For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, ⁶ by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. ⁷ But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

This judgment day is given many different titles in Scripture:

- In Jeremiah 30:7 it is spoken of as: *“The time of Jacob’s trouble.”*
- In Romans 2:5 it’s referred to as: *“The revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”*
- In 2 Peter 3:7 it’s called: *“The day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.”*
- In Jude verse 6 it’s called: *“The judgment of the great day.”*
- Revelation 6:17 puts it this way: *“For the great day of His wrath has come and who is able to stand?”*

Listen, this judgment is called by many names—but whatever you want to call it one thing is clear—there is a ‘day’ of judgment coming (not 24-hour day but a period of time the Bible calls the Tribulation Period) when God will judge the world.

“O but isn’t God a God of love? I can’t believe that a God of love would judge the world.”

First of all, let me say that God is a God of love—but His love won’t save you—in fact His love has never saved anyone—all His love can do is provide you a way by which you might be saved—and that of course is by believing in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Refuse Him (the only One who can save you from the wrath to come)—and you will die in your sins and reap eternal judgment.

But as for God judging the world someday—the world is under the control of Satan (the ‘god of this world’) and most of the people in it are following in the devil’s footsteps by living in rebellion against God.

If they don’t repent and receive Jesus as their Savior, they will be subjected to a world-wide judgment at one point—a judgment designed to purge the world of the ‘earth-dwellers’ in preparation for Jesus coming back and establishing His Kingdom.

2 Thessalonians 1:7–10 (NKJV)

⁷ [Jesus Christ is coming someday] ...with His mighty angels, ⁸ in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord...¹⁰ when He comes, in that Day [the day of His wrath/judgment]...

This judgment is described in Revelation 19:11-21 (this speaks of their ‘first death’—i.e., ‘physical death’) and then a thousand years later in Revelation 20:11-15 speaks of their ‘second death’—i.e., ‘spiritual/eternal death’).

The Bible is absolutely clear that someday God will judge every person that has ever lived on the face of the earth—the just and the unjust.

The just shall inherit the Kingdom of God—and the unjust will be cast into the lake of fire (hell) for all eternity.

If judgment is inevitable then it’s vitally important that we all understand what is necessary to escape the judgment of the *unrighteous*.

And so, that leads to a very important question—if all people will someday face the judgment of God—what will be the criteria by which God will judge?

Or in other words, on what basis will people be condemned and sent to hell forever—and on what basis will people be allowed to enter heaven forever?

I believe that the basis for divine judgment is given by Paul in the first 16 verses of Romans 2.

In the first 16 verses, Paul gives 6 principles that become the basis on which God will judge all people: *1. Knowledge; 2. Truth; 3. Guilt; 4. Deeds; 5. Impartiality; 6. Motives*

Now remember that this is just one small section of a much larger section we’ve subtitled “**Condemnation**” which covers from 1:18 thru 3:20.

The theme of the entire epistle is: “*The Gospel of Jesus Christ.*” (1:16)

As we have said numerous times during the course of this study—the word *gospel* means ‘*good news*’—and yet before a person can receive God’s good news, they first have to understand and accept the ‘*bad news*’.

And so, beginning with chapter 1:18 and going through chapter 3:20—Paul gives his readers the bad news—and none of it is pretty!

Here Paul is acting like a prosecuting attorney who starts by proving that the pagan is condemned (guilty) before holy God (the most obvious group of condemned individuals).

He then moves to the moralist to show that those who think they’re right with God because they live ‘moral’ lives are hypocrites and guilty.

And finally, he turns his focus on the religionist (in this case those who embrace Judaism) to show that keeping the Law of God (religion) will not save either.

The verdict—all apart from Christ are guilty and condemned!

And why is it so important that Paul begins the main body of this epistle by proving the whole world apart from Jesus is condemned—it’s important because he knows that before a person will see their need for a Savior, they must first be made to see themselves as sinners.

His point is to prove that fallen man (no matter how hard he or she tries to be righteous) is helpless to change their eternal destiny (in hell) through their own raw determination, human effort and good works.

As the saying goes, ‘*man has fallen and can’t get up*’—in other words, human beings can’t change their condition before the holy and righteous God of the universe—they are fallen condemned sinners!

But then starting in chapter 3:21—Paul begins to share with lost sinners the good news—that there is hope in Jesus Christ!

That He is the solution (the only solution) to fallen man’s predicament.

And that even though fallen human beings can’t be righteous in themselves—the righteousness of Christ can be imputed to their account by faith thus making them worthy of eternal life in God’s Kingdom!

We’ve already looked at the first 3 principles of God’s coming judgment: *1. Knowledge; 2. Truth; and 3. Guilt*—which now brings us to number 4:

4. Deeds—v.6-10

Romans 2:1–6 (NKJV)

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. ² But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. 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? ⁴ Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? 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, ⁶ **who “will render to each one according to his deeds”...**

In Revelation 20:11-15 where the Great White Throne Judgment is taking place—*twice* it says that God is going to judge men and women according to their works.

And Paul in Romans 2 is saying the same thing.

Some would say in light of this—“*Yes, the wicked will be judged by their works because they have rejected Jesus—but not the righteous! We’re saved by grace—our works have nothing to do with our salvation!*”

Okay, let’s explore that idea for a minute:

Matthew 16:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

John 5:28-29 (NKJV)

²⁸ Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice ²⁹ and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

In both the Old and the New Testaments, we are told that God will judge people on the basis of their deeds (their works)—both good and bad:

2 Corinthians 5:9–10 (NKJV)

⁹ Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

The Greek word translated ‘judgment seat’ in v.10 is the word ‘bema’.

This word was used of the judgment seat at an athletic event like the Olympics where athletes would appear before the judge who was seated on an elevated platform to receive their prize or award for winning an event.

Paul no doubt had this in mind when he said in 1Cor.9:24—

1 Corinthians 9:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain *it*.

And of course, the context is that Paul is admonishing all believers to go all out in their ‘race’ for Christ so that someday they may receive a great reward.

However, the word ‘bema’ was more commonly used in the N.T. to describe a *judicial* judgment seat.

It was used of the judgment seats of Pilate (Matt. 27:19; John 19:13), Herod (Acts 12:21), and Festus (Acts 25:6, 10, 17).

There was also a *bēma* at Corinth, where unbelieving Jews unsuccessfully accused Paul before the Roman proconsul Gallio (Acts 18:12, 16, 17).

One author points out—

“A person was brought before a bēma to have his or her deeds examined, in a judicial sense for indictment or exoneration”.

Now I bring this all out because I believe that Paul has more in mind when he said in v.10—

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

I believe when he said, “*we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*” he has in mind all humanity not just all believers in Christ.

I believe that because he says people are going to have to answer for the things they have done while on the earth whether “good or bad”.

Those who will be judged for the good I believe is a reference to Christians for which the Judgment Seat of Christ will only be for the handing out of rewards.

There will be no punitive action taken against us there since all of our sins were paid for by the blood of Christ—so it's all good, although probably not without some tears over wasted opportunities or lost rewards due to wrong motives.

However, the word 'bad' is the Greek word 'kakos'

In the NT kakos is translated, "evil or wicked" and refers to one who is "*evil in himself and, as such, leads others into evil*".

In a moral sense the word means, "*wicked, vicious—bad in heart, conduct, and character.*"

This absolutely cannot be referring to saved person with the Holy Spirit living inside them who has made them a new creation in Christ!

I believe that this judgment seat of Christ (where the bad are being judged) is the judgment of unbelievers called the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev.20:11-15).

That judgment of course *will be* punitive and all who appear before it will be sent to hell a.k.a. the Lake of Fire.

Now listen—the whole point of this is to drive home to your understanding that God doesn't judge us on the basis of our *profession* of faith (what we *say* we believe)—He judges us on the basis of the *performance* of our faith (how we *live* what we say we believe).

Furthermore, He doesn't judge us on the basis of our religious affiliation (Roman Catholic, Baptist, Presbyterian etc.)—He judges us on the basis of the *product* of our life (what is being produced in our lives).

The issue is not what a person claims to believe—and it's not a matter of what church they belong to or how often they attend.

It's not a matter of how pious they seem (like the Jews back then and others today)—or if they were circumcised, baptized or subjected to any other outward ceremony or ritual in whatever group or denomination they belong to.

The real issue is—have they received Jesus as their Savior and does their life attest to that by them living in obedience to God?

You see, that is the '*litmus test*' when it comes to true saving faith—as Jesus pointed out, "*You will know the true from the false by the fruit produced in their lives.*" (Matthew 12:33-37)

1 John 2:3–7 (NKJV)

³ Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. ⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. ⁷ Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning.

And as Paul said in Titus 1:16 concerning many churchgoers—"*They profess to know God (to be Christians), but in works (by their deeds) they deny Him.*"

Luke 6:46 (NKJV)

⁴⁶ "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?

Matthew 7:15–27 (NKJV)

¹⁵ "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Therefore by their fruits you will know them. ²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice

lawlessness!’²⁴ “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.²⁶ “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:²⁷ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.” (Comment)

Please don’t misunderstand what I’m saying—the works aren’t a condition for *attaining* salvation—they are the evidence of a person *having* salvation.

Again, Jesus said that we would know if a person was a Christian by the fruits produced from their life.

→ Use the illustration of trees in the winter and how I couldn’t tell you an oak tree from an apple tree—that is until summer. Eventually, the apple tree will bring forth fruit whereas the oak tree will not...the fruit doesn’t make it an apple tree—it just bears witness that it is one...

And so, Paul in Romans 2:6 is saying that God will judge us, not on the basis of what we say (profess), but on the basis of how we live (what is produced from our lives).

And again, I’m not saying that we get into heaven on the basis of our deeds—the Bible is very clear about that:

Ephesians 2:8–9 (NKJV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God,
⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

But then Paul went on to say—

Ephesians 2:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Titus 2:13–14 (NKJV)

¹³ looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,
¹⁴ who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.

Don't get me wrong—I'm not saying that the wicked are sent to hell on the basis of their evil deeds.

"It sounds like you're contradicting yourself?"

John 3:16, 36 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life...³⁶ He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

The Bible is very clear that a person gets to heaven or goes to hell on the basis of whether or not they believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior—PERIOD!

But the works they do (how they live from day to day) indicates whether or not they truly do believe (have genuine saving faith in their heart)!

Matthew 3:8 (NKJV)

⁸ Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,

John 8:31 (NKJV)

³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed ['truly'].

Now, once a person is saved by faith—the good deeds they do in Jesus' name will determine the degree of their rewards in heaven.

And likewise, if a person rejects Jesus Christ as their Savior—the bad deeds they did on the earth during their lifetime will determine the degree (severity) of their punishment in hell.

But good works don't get a person into heaven and bad works don't send them to hell—it's a matter of whether you believe in Jesus Christ for salvation or don't believe in Jesus Christ for salvation.

But again, how do we know if a person really believes in Jesus or not—by the deeds of their life.

Of course, God knows their heart (Heb.4:13) and knows whether or not they truly believe or whether their so-called faith is nothing more than a façade—

“The firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, ‘The Lord knows those who are His.’”
(2Tim. 2:19)

But He tells us that obedience to His word is the only outward way to see true faith in the heart (mention 2 pots of dirt and only one containing a seed—which one is it?)—it isn’t for His benefit but for ours (*“Examine yourself to make sure you’re in the faith”*—Explain)

And that’s why the Bible says that God judges on the basis of works or *deeds*—because they are the truest test of what a person believes (not what they claim to believe, but what they actually believe).

Now, in verses 7-10, Paul examines those deeds and distinguishes between the deeds of true believers in Christ and those of false believers who think they’re ‘in Christ’—which we’ll look at next week.

→ Mention how John Bunyan, in *Pilgrims Progress*, made the observation that there is an entrance to hell even from the gates of heaven. (Explain)