

26. The Book of Romans—2:11-13

(8/16/23)

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.

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

We’ve already looked at the first 3 principles of God’s coming judgment—which brought us to number *4*—which we are currently looking at.

4. Deeds—v.6-10

Romans 2:5–6 (NKJV)

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 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.

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

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)

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). (Titus 1:16)

As we said last time—if going to church, being baptized, or even being a deacon isn't the deeds that God is looking at to determine whether a person is a true believer in Jesus Christ—what is?

Well, in verses 7-10 Paul examines the deeds that distinguish a true believer in Jesus from those who are phony, false believers in Christ.

A. Marks of a true believer—v.7

Romans 2:7(NKJV)

⁷ eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality;

1. Patient continuance in doing good—v.7

2. Seek for glory—v.7

3. Seek for honor—v.7

4. Seek for immortality—v.7

B. Marks of a false believer—v.8-9

Romans 2:8–9 (NKJV)

⁷ eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; ⁸ but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, ⁹ tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;

1. Self-seeking—v.8

The first mark of a phony or counterfeit Christian is that he is not seeking the honor, the glory, and the will of God on a daily basis but is seeking after his own glory, honor, will, desires, and pleasures.

In essence, what characterizes their lives is self-love—the very thing Paul warned would characterize many churchgoers in the last days—

2 Timothy 3:1–2 (NLT)

¹ You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. ² For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred...

And again, this (self-seeking) could represent the qualities of a carnal Christian—but don't assume they are because you might be fooling yourself into thinking you're a true Christian (just a 'little carnal') when in fact your lifestyle is revealing what's really going on in your heart (no saving faith).

This of course leads to the second mark of a false believer—

2. They do not obey the truth—v.8

John 14:6 (NKJV)

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. [also John 10:27]

John 17:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

Romans 1:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

2 Thessalonians 2:9–12 (NKJV)

⁹ The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹ And for this reason God will send

them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, ¹² that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

3. They obey unrighteousness—v.8

You see there is no middle ground—as Jesus said, “*You are either for Me or against Me.*”

As Joshua challenged Israel in Joshua 24:15—“*Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*”

Paul is telling us that these are the qualities, the characteristics of unredeemed men and women (which would include of course phony, counterfeit Christians)—self-seeking (self-love, and self-worship)—disobedience to the truth of God as revealed in His Word—open flaunting of sin.

The marks of unbelievers are exactly opposite those of a Spirit-filled believer in Christ.

And when talking about the phony, counterfeit ‘Christian’ church goes as compared with a true believer in Christ—it’s the difference between the broad-way and the narrow-way. (Explain)

And so, that brings us to the fifth principle of coming judgment that Paul gives in the first 16 verses of Romans 2—

5. Impartiality—v.11

Romans 2:6, 11 (NKJV)

⁶ who “*will render to each one according to his deeds*”... ¹¹ **For there is no partiality with God.**

When God judges, He doesn’t look at the person—He judges on the basis of their deeds (whether they obeyed Him or not).

The issue is not whether a person is rich or poor, whether they are Jew or Gentile, whether they are religious or non-religious, man or woman, educated or uneducated, famous or unknown—God will judge them with total impartiality on the basis of whether they lived their life in obedience to His Word or not—indicating that did or did not have saving faith in their hearts.

God called His earthly judges ‘*elohim*’ (gods) and demanded the same impartiality from them when they judged—

Leviticus 19:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ ‘You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.

Deuteronomy 16:19–20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. ²⁰ You shall follow what is altogether just, that you may live and inherit the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

Proverbs 17:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, Both of them alike *are* an abomination to the Lord.

John 12:48 (NKJV)

⁴⁸ 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.

When a nation is starting to decline, one of the things that breaks down is its judicial system—justice is corrupted and as a result society breaks down and crumbles. ([America](#)—Comment)

The phrase “**no partiality**” or as the KJV translates it—“**no respect of persons**” is one word in the Greek and is a combination of the word “*face*” and the word “*to receive*.”

So, the phrase “**no partiality**” literally means that with God—He doesn’t ‘*receive your face*’—or in other words, He doesn’t judge by appearance, He looks deeper.

It’s as God said to Samuel in 1Sam. 16:7—“*...For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.*”

In other words, God doesn't judge *superficially* and with *partiality*—He always judges fairly and righteously!

We get a glimpse of the final judgment of all unbelievers in Revelation 20 called the Great White Throne Judgment:

Revelation 20:12 (NKJV)

¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

The ‘**small and great**’ doesn't refer to their physical *stature* (i.e., ‘*the short and the tall*’)—but to their supposed importance upon the earth in life.

So here we see a picture of Judgment Day where the “**small**” (the slave, the poor, the insignificant and the unimportant) standing next to the “**great**” (the kings and presidents; senators and CEO's; the rich and the famous).

This group will include the atheists and so-called “*intellectuals*” (college professors) who mocked the existence of God—the late-night comedians—those who were too *cool* for God and made fun out of those who were “*stupid*” enough to believe in Him.

This group will consist of all the rebels who ever lived on the earth, who refused to bow the knee to Jesus as their King.

The ‘Henley’s’ who shook their fist in the face of a holy God and cried out, “*It matters not how straight the gate nor how charged with punishments the scroll—I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul*”—and everyone whose “life song” was “*I did it my way!*” in defiance of God!

And so, on Judgment Day, there will be assembled before Jesus’ Great White Throne—all the so-called *somebodies* and all the lowly *nobodies*—the irreligious and the very religious all standing before the Judge of all creation, all standing on equal ground, and all bound together by their common, willful unbelief and rebellion.

These are those who rejected the love of the truth (the gospel), which would have saved them from this terrifying Day.

And now they stand before the One who loved them and gave Himself for them—Whom they rejected as their loving Savior on earth—and now they stand before Him and He becomes their Righteous Judge!

And remember that God is no respecter of persons—He isn't 'impressed' by fame and wealth, by positions of power as with kings and presidents—all will be judged fairly, impartially and righteously!

Hebrews 4:13 (NKJV)

¹³ 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.

Acts 10:34 (NKJV)

³⁴ Then Peter opened *his* mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.

Galatians 2:6 (NKJV)

⁶ But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man...

Ephesians 6:9 (NKJV)

⁹ And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

Colossians 3:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

1 Peter 1:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here* in fear;

All these verses say the exact same thing as Romans 2:11.

Now, some may be prone to think that this means that God is going to judge everyone the same—but actually, what it says is that God will be absolutely fair not that everyone will receive the same rewards or the same punishments.

The Bible teaches that there are different degrees of reward in heaven (1Cor. 3:12-15); and it teaches there will be various degrees of punishment in hell (Luke 12:47-48).

And so, the idea behind the statement that “**there is no partiality with God**” is the fact that—

1. *He doesn't favor certain people over others.*
2. *He deals fairly with all people according to the 'light' (knowledge) each of them had.*

You see, Paul anticipated the question “*Are you saying then, that God judges everyone the same?*”

And his answer is ‘No’ by what he goes on to say starting in verse 12:

Romans 2:12 (NKJV)

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

In other words, there is no partiality with God and He is absolutely fair when He judges.

If a person had the law of God (His written law given to Israel thru Moses) they will be judged by God’s written law—and if they didn’t have the written law of God—they will be judged without the law.

And of course, by saying this Paul is making a distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles—the Jews having the written law of God and the Gentiles who did not.

It’s important that we understand that the basic idea of the verse is that—in the final eternal judgment of God—He will show equity and impartiality by dealing with people according to the light they possessed.

Those who had the Bible (special revelation) will be judged by it and those who didn’t have the Bible will be judged without it.

“Yes, but how can God judge the Gentiles when He didn’t give them His divine laws (His Word) as He did the Jewish people?”

Paul is going to deal with that in a minute—but first understand that the Jews saw themselves as special to God because they were the ones He gave His law to.

They *guarded* it, they *copied* it—and they *preserved* it down through the centuries for their future generations of descendants to read and obey.

And because of this, here’s the way the Jews felt because God had entrusted them with His truth—*“Certainly, we should have the higher honor, not the greater condemnation.”*

But here’s the problem—a problem that Paul put his finger on in verse 13:

Romans 2:13 (NKJV)

¹³ (for not the hearers of the law *are* just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified;

The word for “**hearers**” is not the usual Greek word (‘akouo’) for hearing something—it’s the word ‘*akroates*’—a word that was used of pupils who *constantly* hear something taught.

And that is exactly what the Jews did in the synagogues every week—and what so many church goers do in churches each week—they hear the Word of God over and over and over again but they don’t obey it!

James 1:21–25 (NLT)

²¹ So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls. ²² But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. ²³ For if you listen to the word and don’t obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. ²⁴ You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. ²⁵ But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don’t forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

If a person comes to church every week to hear the Word of God being taught—it will only bless their life as long as they obey what it says (especially the gospel).

However, if they only hear it but don't really intend to obey it—it will lead to greater chastening on earth if they're saved and greater condemnation in hell if they're not. (Comment)

And again, some would say at this point—*“If a person didn't have the law of God—how can God possibly condemn them for not obeying it?”*

Paul anticipates that question—*“What about that pagan who never heard the gospel, who never read the Scriptures—how can God hold them responsible for not doing it?”*

Paul tells us that God will not judge anyone for what they didn't know—only for what they did know.

In other words, unbelievers will only be judged based on whatever 'light' (truth) they had.

We'll see that next time!