

Romans 2:1-16 - Part 1

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[0:00] I invite you to take your copy of God's Word and join me in Romans chapter 2.! That's why there are Port-A-Johns outside.

The worst case scenario is that it's backing up into the building, which has happened on some occasions, and most of you have not known about that. I'm pleased to tell you that that's not happening, but the system is starting to back up.

So, at my instruction, Atom Dome has shut off the water to the building, so no more can go down the drain. So, if you need to use the restroom from here on out, please use the Port-A-Johns outside.

And I anticipate that I'm going to keep my comments brief, and that you may exit quickly when we're all done together, and we completely understand that.

So, that said, our text for today is Romans chapter 2, verses 1 through 16. Last week, we considered the end of chapter 1, where Paul condemns those who have suppressed the truth, rejected God, and descended into moral insanity.

[1:34] In chapter 2, Paul turns his attention to those who are more upright, moral, and religious, at least in their own estimation. It would be easy, as some commentators do, to oversimplify this part of Paul's writing, to suggest that he is addressing just Gentiles at the end of chapter 1, and just Jews at the beginning of chapter 2.

And while this may be largely true of Paul's original audience, and some of his intent, this is an inspired text, and it has direct bearing on us today.

And so, we want to be careful, and we do well to not miss the value of this part of Romans for you and I, as we consider it in the coming weeks.

Romans chapter 2, verses 1 through 16. Before I read it, beloved, let me remind you that this is God's word to us, written for his glory and our good. And so, we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and to obey its commands.

Therefore, you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another, you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.

[2:56] We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man, you who judge those who practice such things, and yet do them yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?

Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

He will render to each one according to his works. To those who by patience and well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek. But glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.

For God shows no partiality. For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.

[4:16] For when Gentiles who do not have the law by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, where their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.

On that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. Now, we will not have time to consider the totality of this text today.

So, Lord willing, we will cover some of its content today and the rest next Lord's Day in the following outline. Number one, we'll see in the text the justice of God's judgment.

Number two, the basis of God's judgment. And number three, the impartiality of God's judgment.

Now, I think this morning we are only going to have time for the first of these three points, especially with the current water situation that's happening.

But let's look at it carefully together. First, the justice of God's judgment. And we'll see this in verses one through five. I want to particularly and firstly draw your attention to verse two.

[5:40] Paul here says we know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. What are the such things that Paul here is referring to?

To answer that, we must look up at the previous chapter. Chapter one, beginning in verse 24, we read, Therefore, God gave them up in the lust of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves.

Because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason, God gave them up to dishonorable passions.

For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature. And the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another. Men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice.

[6:51] They're full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them, but give approval to those who practice them. Paul's list here is not an exhaustive list, but it gives us examples of what he means.

Back in chapter 1 and verse 18, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

So the such things of verse 2 of chapter 2 is godlessness and unrighteousness of all kinds and the approval of godlessness and unrighteousness of all kinds.

This is big and broad and summary. Recall that the godlessness Paul refers to is an attitude toward God, a rejection of him as the good king.

[8:11] And the unrighteousness is the active expression of that attitude, right? Making ourselves king and ruler of our own lives.

And Paul says that we know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. The Greek verb here translated, we know, carries the idea of awareness of a fact that is commonly known.

He's saying it's obvious that this would be the case. To put this in a more modern vernacular, it's a duh. Maybe modern for me, perhaps.

I'm dating myself. He's saying that it's innately understood, right? Paul's contending that the wicked activity of man deserves judgment.

And we know this to be the case. We are wired at some level to want to see justice served.

[9:18] You can observe this playing out all around us in various ways. Now, sadly, much of the justice cried for is not true justice because it

is not biblical justice.

But the point that Paul is making stands, right? People want justice to be served. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.

And Paul begins that point a verse up in verse 1 of chapter 3 where he says, Therefore, you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges.

For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself. Because you, the judge, practice the very same things. He starts chapter 2 speaking to those who are self-righteous.

Those who are more upright, moral, and religious in their own estimation. You see, those who are of God and have his law and employ it in the judgment of other people are confirming the value of God's law.

[10:30] This is probably the place we find ourselves most tempted. Not all, but many of us having grown up in Christian homes and in the church.

They show that God's law is a true measure of righteousness. And as failures to keep that law, they show that they have not measured up.

None of us have. Regardless of our upbringing. Regardless of our own estimation of our goodness. Our goodness perhaps compared to the badness of others.

None of us have kept God's law. And by judging other people by it, we show that it's valuable to judge. And that we have failed.

Paul tells us that this leaves us without excuse. Now we've been reciting on the Lord's Day together. The Heidelberg Catechism.

[11:28] And last week, questions 4 and 5 teach us this. Question 4 says, what does God's law require of us? And the answer is, Christ teaches us this in a summary in Matthew chapter 22.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart. And with all your soul. And with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself.

All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments. We understand these to be summary commandments of the Ten Commandments. Which are summary commandments of all of the moral law of God.

And then question 5 says, can you keep all this perfectly? And the answer is, no. I am inclined by nature to hate God and my neighbor.

These questions and answers are derived from the scripture. And I want to show you just two places that this is the case. First in 1 John chapter 1 verse 8 and then verse 10.

[12:38] Where John writes, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. And then in verse 10.

If we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar and his word is not in us. Paul is driving a point that all of us need the saving work of Christ on our behalf.

This is why he's not ashamed of the gospel. It's the power of God for salvation. And as he presses on in the book of Romans to chapter 3 and verse 10.

He's going to cite the Old Testament. Two different psalms he cites here. And he says, this is verse 10 and following of Romans 3. None is righteous. No, not one.

No one understands. No one seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good. Not even one.

[13:40] This is inescapable. Just from a couple of verses. Paul is going to do us the kindness of showing it to us across some chapters. No mere human has ever kept God's law perfectly.

It has not happened in the history of the world. Perhaps we can behave at times. But apart from the regenerating work of Christ.

The judgment of God awaits us. It is sure. It will happen. Paul is suggesting that we all know this to be true.

Paul presses to this end with a rhetorical question in verse 3. Do you suppose, O man, you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?

We all hear the news of a murder. And we say, that's wrong. This is not good and it should not stand.

[14:47] And yet we have hatred in our heart. Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, if you hate somebody in your heart, it is as if you've committed murder against them.

Adultery comes after that. We ourselves are all guilty of the very things that we would condemn others for. So we ask this rhetorical question.

Do you think somehow you're going to wiggle around the judgment of God? You who are guilty of those very things that you would judge another for? This answer is, of course not.

Of course you won't because, verse 2, we know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Note carefully that we know it rightly falls on those who practice such things. Our God is a just God. It is one of his attributes. And praise be to him, he does and he will make all things right.

[15:57] He cannot set aside who he is at any time. This is known as the doctrine of the simplicity of God. And that is to say that he is always who he is at all times.

He's not complicated like we are, always changing, fickle in who we are. God is who he is at all times and forever.

And so God is just. And he will judge justly. Whether or not you cognitively recognize it, you want God's just judgment to exist.

We don't want God to judge us justly. We would love to escape it, although we won't. But we do want the world to be rightly judged.

You want justice to be served. I said to you back in chapter 1, it is proper that Kim Il-sung, Pol Pot, Saddam Hussein, Vladimir Lenin, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and Mao Zedong are punished for the heinous crimes that were carried out by their commands and at their hands.

[17:07] We want justice to be accomplished, and yet we want to escape that justice. It follows that it is proper that all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of man be justly judged.

Because it is all a heinous rejection of God as our good king. It all deserves punishment. Now, if we rightly recognize that God is a just judge and that his judgment rightly falls on us, we who have his word and know his commands, then this presents to us the greatest of problems.

We desire a just God. We know that his justice will, in fact, come. He will judge. And this creates for us a problem. And we find in our text two ways to respond to this impending judgment.

First, the way that we ought not respond. Presumption that leads to death. He says in verse 4 and 5, This presumption, or some translations will say thinking lightly of God's kindness.

God's kindness is a dangerous thing. God's kindness and forbearance and patience is expressed in his provision for you and in his withholding of his wrath for long periods of time.

[19:08] You have wickedly rejected God's grace. You have wickedly rejected God's good rule. And yet he makes the sun to shine on you and the rain to fall on you that you might be temporarily sustained in this life.

We all experience this, the provision of God. We're not immediately destroyed upon sinning against him. We experience joys. We have relationships.

There's a kindness granted to all of mankind that mankind does not deserve. He doesn't give you what you ultimately deserve now, but he is forbearing and he is patient.

That you would turn from your sin and turn to him. Do not presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience.

Because if you do, God's wrath awaits you. Verse 5 says, your unwillingness to turn from your sin, your impenitence, your hard-heartedness stores up God's wrath for you.

[20:24] And it's a wrath that's going to be revealed at judgment. Psalm 90, verse 7 and following says, for we are brought to an end by your anger, by your wrath, we are dismayed.

You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. For all our days pass away under your wrath. We bring our years to an end like a sigh.

Our sins, God knows all of them. And if we are not found in Christ, if we are not repentant, all of that is purchasing for us a wrath that's being stored up to be revealed.

Jesus says in John chapter 3 and verse 36, whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

And so you see this juxtaposition between the two, right? An eternal life or God's wrath. An eternal death. This presuming leads to death forever.

[21:40] In Revelation chapter 14, we can read of the one who will drink the wine of God's wrath. He will be tormented with fire and sulfur forever and ever and will have no rest day or night.

And this is the just penalty for those who have rejected God's good rule. It's right and it's proper. And we will not escape it.

Death forever awaits those who presume on the riches of God's kindness and forbearance and patience. And God's law teaches us that there is a standard to which we are to live up to and yet we can not.

This is the purpose of the law. That it would point us to our own weakness and we would look elsewhere for the strength. To be set free from the death penalty of sin.

So I have my copy of Pilgrim's Progress. I'm going to wear it out reading it to you on Saturday mornings. I think I've read this little bit to you before. So if you've heard it, forgive me.

[22:55] But maybe it will warm your heart once again. Christian in this allegory is going on a journey to the celestial city. And he meets a number of characters.

And one of his companions along the way is a man named Faithful. If you know the story, you love Faithful. He's a good companion to Christian. And he tells some of his journey along the way. Christian has shared his part of the journey. They're catching up on what went on. And Faithful says this. He recounts, When I came to the foot of the hill called Difficulty, I met a very old man who asked me my name and destination.

I told him that I was a pilgrim going to the celestial city. Then the old man said to me, You look like an honest fellow. Would you be willing to come and live with and work for me for the wages that I would be willing to give you?

Then I asked him his name and where he lived. He said his name was Adam I. And that he lived in the town of Deceit. I then asked him what sort of work he had for me to do and what were the wages he would pay.

[24:05] He told me that his work included many delights. And for wages, he would make me the heir to his estate. I further asked him what sort of house he lived in and what other servants he had.

So he told me that his house was maintained with all the dainties in the world and that his servants were all relatives of his. Then I asked him if he had any children. He said that he had but three daughters, lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

Then he told me that I could marry them all if I wished. Then I asked for how long a time he would have me live with him. And he told me that I would live with him as long as he lived.

What was the outcome of this discussion? Christian asked. Why, at first I found myself somewhat inclined to go with the man, for I thought this offer sounded very good, Faithful said.

But as I looked at his forehead and spoke with him, I saw written, Put off the old man with his deeds. And then what happened?

[25:07] Then it came rushing into my mind that despite his flattering words, he would sell me as a slave when we got to his home, Faithful said. So I asked him to stop talking, and I told him I would not come near the door to his house.

Then he cursed me and told me that he would send someone after me who would make my soul bitter. So I turned to go away from him, but just as I turned to go, I felt him take hold of my flesh and give me such a deadly pinch that I thought he had pulled a part of me off for himself.

This made me shriek, Oh, wretched man that I am. So I went on my way up the hill. Difficulty. So remember, he's sending somebody after him. Now when I climbed about halfway up, I looked behind and saw someone coming after me, swift as the wind.

Soon he overtook me just about the place where the arbor stands. That is the place, said Christian, where I sat down to rest, fell asleep and lost my scroll. Part of the story earlier.

Dear brother, hear me out, faithful urged. So as soon as the man overtook me, without saying a word, he struck me and knocked me down unconscious. When I came to, I asked him why he had done thus assaulted me.

[26:22] He said it was because of my secret inclination to follow Adam I. And with that, he struck me another deadly blow on the chest and beat me down backward, and I lay at his feet as if I were dead.

So when I came to, I cried to him for mercy. But he said, I do not know how to show mercy. And with that, he knocked me down again. He would have beaten me to death, except one came by and told him to stop.

Who was it that told him to stop? Faithful went on. I did not recognize him at first, but as he went by, I saw the wounds in his hands and in his side.

Then I concluded that he was our Lord. So I continued up the hill. Christian then explained, The man who overtook you was Moses.

He spares no one, and he does not know how to show mercy to anyone who transgresses his law. So God's law is meant to show us our weakness and our need of another righteousness.

[27:34] We know that God's justice rightly falls on sinners. And so our only hope is in the one who comes and bids Moses to stop the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so you see another way of responding in this text. We see this wrong way to respond, this presumption that leads to death. But you also see the response of repentance that leads to life. Notice the end of verse four, right? There is this kindness and forbearance and patience that Paul says is meant to lead you to repentance.

God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance, right? The mercy and grace that you experience this day, the fact that you are presently alive is meant to lead you to repentance. Forbearance and patience. You deserve wrath. You deserve wrath now. But God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance. Paul and I are pleading with you at the end of verse four.

[28:51] If you have not already, repent. Repentance, most simply understood, is the changing of one's mind.

We can see an example of this in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 and verse 9 where Paul writes, For they themselves report how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.

It's to recognize that you do, in fact, deserve God's wrath, that His good, right judgment over you would condemn you to death forever.

And it's turning away from that sin and that attitude toward Him and turning to Christ. Looking to Jesus' perfect life.

His righteousness that's granted to you by faith. It's looking to His sacrificial death. Him taking God's just punishment for your sin on the cross.

[29:55] God doesn't stop being just in the forgiveness of your sins. He punishes your sin in Jesus that it might be forgiven. Repentance and faith.

George Gifford, this is the quotation on your bulletin, once said, The lost continue in sin, deceiving themselves with vain hope of God's mercy in the end.

The saved cleanse themselves from all filthiness in the flesh and grow in all graces until they have yielded up themselves to have Christ reign in them.

So, if you don't find yourself in Christ this morning, God's just wrath rests on you. The plea to you this day is to repent and to believe.

Turn from your sin and throw yourself on the mercy of Christ. If you have repented and believed, if you find that you're in Christ this morning and I believe that this is true of most of the people in my hearing today, then we have such reason to rejoice in the God of our salvation.

[31:10] We ought never grow tired of hearing who we once were and what we did deserve and therefore, what we've been delivered from and who we've been delivered to.

And remember, all of this is following the very emphatic thing that Paul has said at the beginning, middle of Romans chapter 1, the beginning of verse 16, where he says, for I am not ashamed of the gospel.

He says, I am proud of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.
Let's pray together.
Thank you.