

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study through the Epistle to the Romans – Part 6

I. Exposition of Chapter Two.

A. God's judgment upon the morally educated.

1. Verses 1-3 - An indictment of the Morally Good (Self-righteous).

- a. **Verse 1** - **"Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge..."** - In chapter 1, Paul pointed out the blatant and obvious sins of mankind, in general, and the fact that they are **"without excuse" (1:20)**. Now he begins by addressing those who are generally **"moral"** who may be congratulating themselves that they're not the people Paul described in chapter 1. (cf. **Luke 18:10-14**.) He makes it very clear that they too, are **"inexcusable" (Same Greek word as 1:20)**.
- b. The Jew of Paul's day typified the moralist; but his words in **verses 1-16** seem to have a wider application. In **verses 17-29**, he deals with the Jews more specifically. There are a lot of people who feel like they're morally good but we know that that is not what it takes to be right with God.
- c. **"...for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things."** The "moralist" is not condemned for judging others; but for being guilty of the same things that he judges others for. Even if he doesn't actually commit the exact actions of sin, the Bible makes it clear that if you break one commandment, you're guilty of breaking the whole law (**James 2:10**).
- d. **Verse 2** - **"...judgment of God is according to truth..."** - has the idea of **"according to the facts of the case."** God will judge (and condemn) the moralist on the basis of the facts.
- e. **Verse 3** - The point is made clear that neither the **"unrighteous"** nor the **"self-righteous"** will escape the judgment of God?

2. Verses 4-5 - God's judgment on the Self-Righteous.

- a. **Verse 4** - **"Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering..."** - The word **"despise"** means; **"to think a thing down,"** or, in everyday language, **"to look down one's nose at a thing."**¹
 - 1) Paul accuses them of presuming upon God's **"goodness"**. Goodness may be considered 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.
 - 2) Presuming upon God's **"forbearance."** Forbearance means; **"tolerate"** or, **"bear with"**, which may be considered God's kindness to us in regard to our **present** sin. This very day we have fallen short of His glory, yet He holds back His judgment against us.
 - 3) Presuming upon God's **"longsuffering."** Longsuffering means; **"patience", "perseverance"** and **"slowness in avenging wrongs."** It may be considered God's kindness to us in regard to our **future** sin.
- b. **"...not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance."** Many people misunderstand the goodness of God towards the wicked. They don't understand the entire reason for it is to lead them to repentance.
 - 1) The word **"repentance"** means; The Greek word (metanoia) originally meant; **"to have an afterthought"**, or **"to have a second thought that revealed the error of the first thought."** From the NT uses, it is clear that *metanoia* means however much more than merely a change of one's mind but also includes **a complete change of heart, attitude, interest, and direction.** *Metanoia* is a conversion in every sense of the word.
 - 2) The Bible makes it clear that God desires all people to repent - **Acts 17:30; II Peter 3:9.**
- c. **Verse 5** - **"But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart..."**
 - 1) The word **"hardness"** means **"to be obstinate"** and **"stubborn."** Paul is describing the hard hearts of the self-righteous. It involves a resistant or stubborn attitude with regard to any change in behavior. The Greek word is the word we get the word "sclerosis" from such as with arteriosclerosis or, hardening of the arteries. Someone said; **"Hardening of the arteries may take a man to the grace but Hardening of one's spiritual heart will take a man to hell!"**

¹Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), Ro 2:4.

2) There are warnings about Christians hardening their hearts as well – **I Timothy 4:1-2; Hebrews 3:7-13.**

3) The word “**impenitent**” simply means; “**unrepentant**”.

d. “**...you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.**”

1) “**...treasuring up...**” – means “**to lay up**” or “**store up.**” Many times the self-righteous think that God’s wrath will come upon the blatant sinner but here it states it is also for them. They are “**laying up**” “**...wrath in the day of wrath...**” – Dr. Robert Utley states:

“Wrath, like all human words to describe God, are only analogously (anthropomorphically) applied to deity! God is eternal, holy and Spirit. Humans are finite, sinful and corporeal. God is not emotionally angry, as in a rage. The Bible presents Him as loving sinners and wanting them to repent but also as having a settled opposition to human rebellion. God is personal; He takes sin personally and we are personally responsible for our sin.”²

3. Verses 6-16 – God’s judgment Explained.

a. **Verse 6** – “**...who will render to each one according to his deeds.**” - This is a quote from **Psalm 62:12 and Proverbs 24:12.** Every human being is responsible for their actions and will give an account to God (cf. **Job 34:11; Proverbs 24:12; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Jeremiah 17:10; 32:19; Matthew 16:27; 25:31–46; Romans 2:6; 14:12; I Corinthians 3:8; Galatians 6:7–10; II Timothy 4:14; I Peter 1:17; Revelation 2:23; 20:12; 22:12).** Even believers will give an account of their lives and service to Christ (cf. **II Corinthians 5:10**). Believers are not saved by works but are saved unto works (cf. **Ephesians 2:8–10**).

b. **Verses 7-10** - This passage may sound like works righteousness (obtaining righteousness through human effort), but that would go against the major theme of the book of Romans. **It’s important to point out that these verses are a continuation of the point made in verse 6 pertaining to rewards versus punishment.**

1) Dr. Thomas Constable suggests the following:

“Paul probably meant that if a person obeys God perfectly, he or she will receive eternal life. Those who do not obey God perfectly receive wrath. Later he would clarify that no one can obey God perfectly, so all are under His wrath (3:23-24).”³

2) Another possible and certainly Biblical view is:

a) “**Eternal Life**” is given to those who show saving faith, and this is evidenced through “**patient continuance in well doing...seeking for glory and honor and immortality.**” This is the honor and glory of a Christ-reflecting life, showing His power to deliver from the corruption of sin.

b) “**Wrath**” comes to those who show no saving faith, and this is evidenced by being “**self-seeking...not obeying the truth, and obeying unrighteousness...doing evil.**”

3) One thing is for certain, the Bible teaches us that how we live proves if we are saved or not. However, always remember that Salvation is a GIFT, but Rewards are EARNED! (cf. **James 2:14-17**).

²Robert James Utley, *The Gospel according to Paul: Romans*, vol. Volume 5, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 1998), Ro 2:5.

³Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Romans*, (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2013)