

Romans

- I. Paul's foundational information for understanding the rest of Romans
 - A. Today, we will look at Romans 2:5-13, but before considering what God is telling us in those verses, I want to remind you that in Romans 1:18-3:20, Paul is laying the foundation for properly understanding what he says in the rest of Romans, and especially in chapters 4-11.
 - B. Last Sunday we looked at Romans 2:1-4, where Paul makes these three essential points:
 - 1. Based on the truths conveyed in chapter 1, we have no excuse for wrong doing. And we prove we know right from wrong when we judge and condemn others for doing what they know is wrong.
 - 2. It is foolish to claim privileged status as a reason for God to be immensely merciful and gracious with us while being harsh on unbelievers when it comes to the willful practice of sin. As we will see today, God is an impartial judge.
 - 3. And finally, we have not escaped God's judgment on our unrepented practice of sin just because He does not execute His justice quickly, but rather continues to treat us with kindness, tolerance, and patience. The day of judgment is coming, and as Paul makes clear here in Romans 2, the One who will judge us is as impartial in His judgment of unrepentant sinners as He is in His justification of sinners who repent and pursue a godly life.
 - C. Prayer
- II. The impartial judgment and justification of God
 - A. Romans 2:5-6 . . . But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, [6] who will render to each person according to his deeds:
 - 1. The first point Paul makes in verse 5 is that stubborn resistance to God's rule and an unwillingness to change one's ways leads to only one outcome – God's wrath. Though this truth has already been stated several times (Rom 1:18, 32, 2:1-3), it is probable Paul makes it again to make certain we understand that God's justice impartially brings condemnation on everyone who deserve condemnation – just as God's justice impartially justifies those whom God deems worthy to receive His unmerited, and therefore gracious gift of eternal salvation.

2. In verse 6, Paul shows that God judges us according to our deeds.
 - a. The first thing to notice here is that the word “deeds” is in the plural form. Why? Because it takes more than one deed or one day to reveal what is in our heart, how we think, and what habits, routines, and patterns of behavior we willfully and consistently follow. In other words, and this is a generalization because there are exceptions, it is the accumulation of deeds repeated over days, months, or even years that reveals the truth about us.
 - b. The second thing I want to point out is that our deeds are the most accurate representation of what we believe, how we think, who we love, what we long for, and what we choose when we feel free to choose whatever we want. Therefore, our deeds form the most dependable basis for the impartial justice of God.
 - c. The third truth to see in this verse is that whether we are unbelievers or living by faith, self-ruled and lawless or submissive to the rule of God and seeking to be holy in all our behavior, we will face the final judgment of God – and that final judgment is part of what determines our eternal destiny. It is for this reason that the scriptures, and Christians down through the ages, speak of having a fear of God, and living a life that is worthy, worthy of our calling (Eph 4:1; 2 Thess 1:11), and worthy of the gospel (Phil 1:27), and worthy of the Lord (Col 1:10), and worthy of God (1 Thess 2:12), and worthy of the kingdom of God (2 Thess 1:5; Lk 20:35).
 - d. Finally, what Paul is saying here about God’s judgment is not unique to him, for it is found in other places in scripture. For example:
 - (1) Jeremiah 17:10 . . . I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds. (Ezek 18; 33:1-20)
 - (2) Matthew 16:27 . . . For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds.
 - (3) 2 Corinthians 5:10 . . . For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.
 - (4) Revelation 22:12 . . . Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.

- B. Romans 2:7-8 . . . To those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; [8] but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.
1. Paul points to only two possible outcomes when being judged by God in the final judgment – eternal life or God’s wrath and indignation, which results in eternal damnation.
 2. Paul says that God will give eternal life to those who by perseverance (*patient persistence, enduring to the end*) in doing good (*good works*) seek (*to pursue something you want*) for glory and honor and immortality.
 3. Now I realize that this statement makes no reference to justification by faith, faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, saving grace, or imputed righteousness. So where is Paul going with this statement about eternal life?
 4. As I have said before, in Romans 1:18-3:20, Paul is laying the foundation for what he is going to say about justification by faith in chapters 3-5 and what he says about the Christian life in chapters 6-11. Therefore, here in Romans 2, the foundation Paul is laying is not an explanation of how God justifies sinners or how He gives sinners the gift of eternal life, but rather who God justifies and to whom God gives the gift of eternal life.
 - a. In starting out talking about the who of justification and eternal salvation rather than the how, Paul is establishing the fact that God is using the same standard in the NT as He used in the OT for determining who He justifies, and to whom He credits righteousness, and to whom He gives the gift of eternal life.
 - b. This is important because a single standard for both OT and NT believers removes any thought that the added NT requirement of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, along with the NT teachings about God’s grace and imputed righteousness, in any way lowers God’s standard for justification and eternal life.
 - c. Paul further affirms God’s single standard in both the OT and NT when he uses Abraham as his example to NT believers of someone whose life of faith resulted in being justified and credited with righteousness (Romans 3).
 5. And this brings us to the question: Who does God justify? To whom does He give the gift of eternal life? If we confine our search for an answer to Romans (*not recommended*), we discover that the answer to these questions is those who persevere in doing good in order to

receive glory, honor, and immortality (Rom 2:7). It is those who are the doers of the Law (Rom 2:13), and those who show the work of the Law written in their hearts (Rom 2:15). As Paul says in Romans 9:27, it is not all the Jews, but the remnant, or as we might say today, it is not all who claim to be Christian, but those who actually are. It is those who have faith in Jesus (Rom 3:26) and are righteous in the sight of God because they are living by faith (Rom 1:17). These are those who rise to the standard or fulfill the condition of those who God justifies and those to whom He gives the gift of eternal life.

6. Following Paul's words about those to whom God gives eternal life, he says that God will give wrath (*extreme anger*) and indignation (*outrage mingled with disgust*) to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey (*do not serve, submit to*) the truth, but obey (*serve, submit to*) unrighteousness.
 - a. There are two points I want to make about this statement.
 - b. First, in spite of our free will and ability to choose, in reality, we are free to choose between only two masters. Therefore, we are either slaves of sin or slaves of righteousness. We either serve the world, our flesh, and the devil, or we serve God.
 - (1) Paul brings this truth into clearer focus in chapter 6 when he says such things as:
 - (2) Romans 6:6-7 . . . knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; [7] for he who has died is freed from sin.
 - (3) Romans 6:16-18 . . . Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey (*in other words, we are not slaves of the one we claim to serve, but the one we actually obey*), either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.
 - (4) Romans 6:22 . . . But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God (*God's standard*), you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.
 - c. Second, the wages of sin is death. In other words, eternal damnation is earned by sinning and continuing to live a sinful life. However, in contrast to sin earning eternal death, righteous-

ness does not and cannot earn eternal life. And yet, according to Romans 2 and other portions of the OT and NT, an honest pursuit of righteousness is God's condition or standard for those whom He justifies and to whom He graciously gives eternal life. So, how is it that unrighteousness earns death, yet righteousness cannot earn life?

(1) To see how sin earns death, we must start with the fact that the penalty for sin is death, add to that the fact that we have already sinned sufficiently to owe the debt of death, and add to that the fact that this is a debt we have the ability to pay – by dying. Hence, sin earns death.

(2) However, gaining eternal life is different, because no amount of righteousness can earn us eternal life. And there are two reasons for this. First, because the only acceptable payment for sin is death. And second, because we already owe our life for sins committed in the past – regardless of how righteous we live in the future. In other words, we have nothing but our life with which to pay our sin debt. Therefore, the eternal life you receive from God upon repenting and believing in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, is totally and without exception, a graciously given free gift.

7. The point here, and this is an important point to understanding what Paul goes on to say in the rest of Romans – the point here is that even though eternal life can only be given and received as a free gift, its freeness neither removes nor lowers God's universal and eternal standard or condition upon which He bases who He justifies, to whom He credits righteousness, and to whom He gives eternal life.

C. In the next 21 verses (9-29), Paul restates in several different ways the truth he has just stated. Which for me raises the question: "Why does he feel the need to repeat himself?" It is my opinion that Paul repeats himself in order to drive this truth home, and in driving it home, do what he can to make sure we keep it in mind when reading and pondering the rest of Romans. With this in mind, let us begin with verses 9-11.

D. Romans 2:9-11 . . . There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, [10] but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. [11] For there is no partiality with God.

1. In other words, when you stand before God in the final judgment, it will not matter if you are part of the group who has been taught about God and His ways, or if you are among those whose only knowledge of God comes from the innate knowledge He puts within us all, and the knowledge of God we learn from nature.
 2. What will matter is how you lived your life. If you persisted in doing evil, you will suffer the consequences of doing evil (*tribulation and distress*). If you repented of you evil and turned to travel down the path of doing good, you will receive the rewards of doing good (*honor and peace*).
 3. And the reason it doesn't matter which group you are in is because God impartially judges each of us on our deeds, not our affiliations.
- E. Romans 2:12-13 . . . 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; [13] for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.
1. Like the Jews before us, we Christians are adept at separating the world into two groups – those who have eternal life and those who don't. And like the Jews before us, some of us base our decisions as to who is in which group on such things as religious affiliation, specially selected scriptures, and a theology that invites practicing sinners to feel eternally secure in God's saving grace.
 2. To counter such unbiblical thinking, Paul makes it clear that those who live a sinful life without having any access to the Bible or without being taught what the Bible says, will be judged according to the knowledge they have. And those who live a sinful life even though they have read and studied the entire scriptures or have been taught the essential truths of the Bible, will be judged by the knowledge they have. In either case, the outcome for practicing sinners is the same – God's wrath and condemnation.
 3. Why? Because it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

III. Conclusion

- A. We will stop here for today, but Paul has not ended his effort to show us the truth about who is justified, to whom God credits righteousness, and to whom God gives the gift of eternal life.
- B. And he is not going to these great lengths to convince us that God's wrath is real or that those who may never hear about God and His word might

possibly be saved. Paul's extended effort here in Romans 2, is intended to convince those of us who feel so secure in our salvation that we neglect to put away known sin and replace it with righteousness. And what is he trying to convince us of? That we ought never feel smug in our assumed security, for God's judgment of unrepentant sinners is according to their deeds, according to the knowledge they have, and according to how they judge others.

- C. And we know God's judgment is impartial, for as Peter said, "It is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17).