

Romans 2 - "How to Think About God's Judgment"

Review: Romans 1 – God's good news is about salvation from sin - received by faith and obedience; and about righteousness – “putting things to right” with God and the world. Though people are blinded to the truth and glory of God by their sins, they are without excuse because the created world shows them who God is.

► *Romans 2:1* “You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.”

- This is a corporate indictment. Not every person does every sin, but as a whole they're guilty. They all have a part to play in their judgment.

Reasons why God's judgment of sin is right and fair

1. God's justice is true. ► *Romans 2:2* “Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth.”

- His judgment isn't impulsive and pure emotion. There is eternal truth that forms the foundation of this judgment - truth centered in the very character of God. He doesn't make up rules, they flow from who he is.

2. God's justice is kind. ► *Romans 2:4* “Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?”

- God doesn't forgive so that we can feel good about sinning more, God forgives that we might be moved by his love and sin less.
- His delay of judgment is a sign of God's kindness and patience.

3. God's justice is according to our deeds. ► *Romans 2:5-8* “But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God “will repay everyone according to what they have done.” To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.” Also ► *Ephesians 2:8-9* “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

- We are saved by faith, by trust, by a heart relationship with Jesus. But true faith will *always* involve works. Always. ► *Matthew 7:21* “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven.” ► *Matthew 16:27* “...he will reward everyone according to what they have done.” ► *John 5:29* “those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.” ► *James 2:17* “faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”
- It's not *just* about works - it's about works with a particular heart foundation. Those who will receive eternal life are those who “seek glory, honor and immortality”, and those who will experience God's wrath and anger are those who “are self-seeking”.

► *Romans 2:13* “For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous”. And *1:17* - by “faith” we are made righteous.

4. God's justice is according to the moral light we all have, so that we are without excuse. ► *Romans 2:12, 15* “All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. . . [The Gentiles] show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.”

- The core of God's law is written on our hearts. Our consciences will tell us what is right. Yes, some sins may not be so clear because of the sin-drenched culture people live in, but the fact remains, people still know they shouldn't steal, lie, “cheat on your spouse”, etc. God wrote them into the human heart – so we are accountable on the day of judgment.

5. God's judgment will be given out by Jesus. ► *Romans 2:16* “This will take place on the day when God judges everyone's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.” ► *John 5:22* “The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son.”

- So every deed done in secret, every word spoken when no one was around, every desire that no one ever knew about except you – all will be laid bare at the final judgment.
- Jesus, the one full of compassion and mercy and forgiveness and love, will make a determination based on our faith and deeds. He's not looking for perfection, but he will judge.

• What will the Judgment look like? There are differing biblical understandings about God's judgment, but 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 is a good summary. The bottom line is that those who don't “*know God and obey the gospel*” will be “*shut out from his presence.*”

• Every person will get what they chose in this life. If they chose to be relationally connected to God, they will get him. If they not – they will not get him. And all this flows from his love - honoring the freedom of our choices.

• It's not about externals. ► *Romans 2:25* “Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised.” *Rom. 2:28-29* “A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God.”

• It's tempting to brag about our religious status (church, doctrines, “conservative”, serving, etc.). But our relationship with God is not about external, physical things – not even the “law”. It's about inward things: “the heart”, “the Spirit”, desiring “praise from God” (not people).

• We must be on guard against external things becoming more important than inward things – even external things that are good. Over time they can become routines and rituals and miss the point. And we must guard ourselves from judging people who don't do the same religious behaviors we do. God is all about the heart.

• The true Jew is one who is an inward Jew – whose faith and obedience are centered around God, not religious heritage.

➔ **Summary:** The judgment to come is not something to push us from God but towards him, in love. It all starts in our hearts. *What do we want?*