



Scotts Hill Baptist Church

ROMANS •

WHY WE NEED THE GOSPEL: BECAUSE OF GOD'S JUDGMENT ON THE MORALIST •

ROMANS 2:1-16 • 9/24/2023

MAIN POINT

Whether we consider ourselves religious and moral or not, we are all in desperate need of a Savior.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Think back to when you were a child. What's the best or most creative excuse you ever used with someone in authority to avoid taking responsibility for something you had done wrong?

Do you think we are still prone to use excuses today as adults? Why?

What does our propensity to make excuses for ourselves reveal about the way we truly see ourselves?

The news is bad. In Romans 1, Paul made the argument that there is enough apparent about God in nature to condemn. Even people who have never read the Bible or heard a sermon preached know enough to know that God is the Creator they have sinned against. But as he opened chapter 2, he turned his attention to any of the rest of us who might think we are exempt from God's judgment because of our religious activity or morality. But as with the rest of humanity, chapter 2 shows us that those who rely on their religious performance and works of morality are as lost as those who are self-admittedly far from God.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 2:1-16.

Think back to the time before you were a Christian. Were you more like those in chapter 1 who lived rebelliously or those in chapter 2 who were confident in their own righteousness?

Why are those who are trusting in their own morality and religious actions in such danger?

Why do you think we are so prone to judge others in their sin when we are trusting in our own righteousness?

What do we communicate about ourselves when we judge other people for their sins? What do we communicate about God?

The Bible gives an urgent tone concerning our need to accept the work of Christ. Does that contradict or complement God's kindness, restraint, and patience? Explain.

After giving a detailed description of human sinfulness (see 1:18-32), Paul was amazed that some people thought they were free to judge one another. The apostle likely had Jewish readers in mind in the passage, but no one is immune from the attitude described here. Paul's message was clear. We are not free to judge others for their sins, because we too are sinners—at times, committing the very sins we condemn or worse. Paul focused on the sin of self-righteousness that deceives us into thinking we have the moral standing to pronounce judgment on others.

Have you ever presumed on the riches of God's kindness and patience? What did that look like? What led you to change?

What are the standards by which God will judge people? How do you reconcile these verses with Romans 1:17—was Paul now saying we are saved by good works? How does this fit with the rest of Scripture?

Careful attention to its context shows this verse does not teach salvation by works. Paul was addressing Jewish readers who believed in a judgment based on works. Paul agreed that faith is not divorced from real life. It's made clear by how a person lives, by his or her

works. Anyone who clings to the notion of good works leading to salvation apart from faith is still lost. However, good works as a result of faith is the proof of real faith.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What is one thing other than Jesus you are tempted to put your trust in?

What is a healthy way you can remind yourself of your need for a Savior this week?

How are you going to practically fight the tendency to judge others?

How can we grow so that our lives reflect what we claim to believe?

PRAYER

Close in a time of prayer, acknowledging your need for a Savior. Ask for God's forgiveness if you have been trusting in your own righteousness instead of the sacrifice of Jesus. Ask the Lord to make your heart soft instead of judgmental toward other people.

COMMENTARY

| ROMANS 2:1-29

2:1. Some interpreters think Paul is speaking about Gentile moralists in verses 1-16, and then Jews beginning at verse 17. The majority of scholars, however, see the Jew as the subject throughout chapter 2. Judgment and condemnation follow sin as night follows day. Not all people commit the same sins, but all show by their judging and criticism that they do not live up to the moral law they know. No one is without excuse.

2:2-3. The coming judgment will be based on God's truth, which no amount of human opinion or protest can alter. There will be no escape from God's coming judgment. All humans will be raised to stand before God's judgment (see 14:10; Rev. 20:11-15). The wise course is to settle your case with God before the judgment (see Matt. 5:25-26).

2:4-5. Grace should lead people to repent of their sin (see 2 Pet. 3:7-13). Like water pooling up behind a dam, people accumulate a debt of wrath as they continue to reject God's

grace. One day the dam will break, and the flood of divine wrath will sweep up individuals and entire societies.

2:6-10. Many interpretations of this controversial text exist. The most likely one is that works are the outcome of a person's faith. Christians are declared righteous by faith. At the moment of that declaration, the person is joined to Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit, becoming a new creation (see 2 Cor. 5:17) created for good works (see Eph. 2:10). As Paul wrote, "What matters is faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6). Thus the person of faith who seeks glory, honor, and immortality and continues to do good demonstrates that he is truly regenerate and thus is assured of eternal life. To the person who obeys unrighteousness and disobeys truth, however, wrath is his destiny.

2:11-12. No one should think that God's judgment is tainted with favoritism. He is a just Judge of both Jews and Gentiles. This verse introduces the Mosaic law into the discussion of the coming judgment. The law will be considered throughout the remainder of Romans. The Jews saw the Mosaic law as key in the difference between Jews and Gentiles; Paul teaches that the law does not save a person but only reveals sin as people fall short of the law's requirements. Thus in the judgment, the possession of the law will be a basis of condemnation.

2:13. Deuteronomy 6:4 calls Israel to "listen" to the declaration of God's identity, but Deuteronomy 6:5 follows up by saying that merely listening is not enough. One must love God with the whole heart, which entails obedience. And yet no one will be declared righteous by obeying the law, for no one obeys the law perfectly (3:20,23; Gal. 2:16; Jas. 2:8-11). The only incorrupt doer of the law was Jesus, the righteous One.

2:14-16. The Gentiles do not have the Mosaic law as a moral guide, but they do have an inner law that informs their conscience. All humans have this instinctively as a component of their being created in God's image (see Gen. 1:26). This moral law will accuse or excuse daily moral choices, but ultimately demonstrates that all people fall short of God's holiness. God knows every secret, and Jesus will be the final judge (see John 5:22-30; Acts 17:31). The coming judgment will be: according to truth, proportional to the rejection of revelation received, according to deeds done, without partiality, and in response to the gospel.