

## *Turn It Around*

God's kindness is for repentance not enablement

Blueprint for Breakthrough Series – Part 4

Romans 2:1-11

March 28-29, 2026

### Introduction

- The Chain of Events – our beliefs determine our thoughts. Our thoughts determine our actions. Our actions determine our behaviors. And our behaviors determine our lifestyles. At some point along the way, in a sense, we become what we do. I'm always stunned at our ability to separate our actions from our identity. We will lie many times but not consider ourselves a liar. We will have sex with our boyfriend or girlfriend and not consider ourselves a fornicator. We will talk about others in a gossipy way but we don't think we are gossips. How do we believe those terms are defined?
  - Where's the line? – how many items do we have to steal to become a thief? How many drinks to be a drunk? I don't know but at some point what we do becomes in a sense what we are. Right?
  - It's self-deluding – it's self-deluding to think that everyone else who does the actions we do, becomes a type of person, but we don't.
- Sum total – the sum total of our lives will culminate by an examination of what we did with our resources. Apart from the grace and transformation of God, we end up as a result of our choices and decisions.
  - Which direction are we headed? – instead of waiting to find out what our lives result in, wouldn't it be wise to set our intentions and trajectories right now in the right direction? Wouldn't it make the most sense to set our compass on the true north of Jesus Christ and in the end trust Him to make up the rest to get us where we need to be? Wouldn't it make the most sense to continue to work on ourselves day by day, choosing obedience and little by little shape our habit patterns to be in alignment with our great God?
    - Is it possible to intentionally grow spiritually? Yes, it is.

### Our DECISIONS determine our DIRECTION

- Last Week – A list of 21 sins to demonstrate that when we are apart from God and doing our own thing, we spiral into chaos and wickedness. It was a stunning list to grab everyone and demonstrate that although Paul initially was highlighting a few examples (Rom 1:24-27 – unchecked sexual activity – as in types of homosexual behavior), it was really just an opening to talk about how ALL of mankind has been corrupted by selfishness.
- This Week – Paul continues on the, 'don't look at them...look at yourself', vibe. He wants to highlight, especially to his fellow Jews who saw all of those sins as being examples of the barbaric nature of Gentiles (non-Jews), that sin is sin and it doesn't matter whether you think that you have a 'get out of jail free card' through being a Jew or not (chosen people), God is going to condemn and judge sin in His wrath.

## Lesson

- Sorting Judgment
  - Paul warns against self-delusion of judging others
    - *Romans 2:1-3 - "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. <sup>2</sup> We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. <sup>3</sup> 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?"*
    - Therefore<sup>1</sup> – This is directly tied to the prior passage of the 21 sin examples of what it looks like when mankind is lost in selfishness and acts like they are gods. Everyone was included somewhere on the list. Therefore, they have no right to talk about 'others' who are sinners. It simply means, **WE are a mess.**
    - you have no excuse, O man, - **No excuse means ACCOUNTABILITY.** It suggests that there were **some who** were thinking that they didn't have to be accountable for their actions and they could **look at everyone else as if they were the bad guys.**
    - Who's getting in trouble here? – The phrase, 'O man' isn't very clear. On one hand it's easy to say everybody because everyone judges other people. However, the mostly reliable NICNT Commentary says that this section seems to be focused on the **Jews who were judging the 'Gentile sinners.'** That viewpoint is highlighting that the Jews thought they could get away with stuff because of their privileged status as 'children of God' when in fact Paul cites that is not so. Sin is sin and if a Jew or Gentile is doing it, it's still sin and God will deal with it. Do I agree with this perspective? It makes sense, and the passage

---

<sup>1</sup> The "therefore" that connects the opening of Rom. 2 with Rom. 1 creates a problem for our conclusion that 1:18–32 is directed mainly against Gentiles and 2:1–16 mainly against Jews. For if Paul has shifted targets in this manner, we would expect the transition to be made with something like "in the same manner also." But how can the sin and guilt of Gentiles establish the conclusion ("therefore") that Jews who judge them are also "without excuse"? Several scholars seize on this problem as another reason for thinking that 1:18–32 must depict humanity generally; for if all people have been condemned there, the sin of those from among them who judge can follow as a logical conclusion. But Paul's assertion that those who judge others do "the very same things" shows that he is distinguishing between those he described at the end of chap. 1 and those he now condemns. Others, then, argue that the word Paul uses at the beginning of this chapter has no inferential force here, or that it states the conclusion of an argument that follows in vv. 1b–2, or even that v. 1 should be removed from the text as a later gloss. But none of these suggestions can muster convincing lexical or textual support. There is more to be said for the possibility that the word connects 2:1ff. with 1:32. But the change of subject between 1:32 and 2:1 renders this connection logically questionable. The best solution is to understand the "therefore" to relate, not to the description of (mainly) Gentile sin in 1:21–32, but to the announcement of God's wrath and the reality of the knowledge of God in 1:18–19. For 1:18–19, which functions as a kind of heading for all of 1:18–3:20, includes reference to all humanity. On this reading, Paul would be saying in 2:1 that because God's wrath is revealed against all people, and because all people have been given knowledge of God, therefore even the person who judges is "without excuse" before God. Although it might be objected that connecting 2:1 with 1:18–19 skips over too much intervening material, it can be said in response that 1:18–19 establishes what is Paul's main point in 1:18–32, so that the "therefore" in 2:1 resumes the main sequence of Paul's argument. Paul's accusation that the person who judges another is "without excuse" gives further support for this conclusion. In 1:20, Paul directed this accusation against those who spurned the knowledge of God available in nature. Paul now brings the same accusation against those who reveal by their act of judging that they also have access to the knowledge of God. The person whom Paul so accuses, addressed with the second person singular in diatribe style, is "O person, each one of you who is judging."<sup>16</sup> Paul invites anyone who might judge another to include himself or herself in the scope of his accusation. But he particularly wants Jews to realize that they cannot be excused from this category. It is anyone—including the Jew—who "condemns" another that is "without excuse." Douglas Moo, NICNT Commentary

directly talks about the Jews first and then the Gentiles (marking out the two groups). I also agree that there are odd things about this passage (including the one before) that seem to highlight non-believers vs. believers, but maybe I'm making too much of it. More specifically I struggle with the 'conditions' of salvation in verses 6-11 in light of Paul's other grace passages. But I'll deal with that further down below.

- every one of you who judges – for our study of this passage we will acknowledge that 'you who judges' may be **contextually more specific to the Jews, but we are going to focus on the broader context of 'all humanity' falling into this category.** It's halfway between context and application. We are just going to let the hit fall on all of us since we are human and we all judge other people.
  - [Matt 7:1-2 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."](#)
  - What does it mean to judge someone? – The way that the bible talks about judging (verb) seems to stem from an almost legal language. **A judge (noun) is someone who renders a final verdict. They assess all the information and make a final determination.** And I think that is where the danger lies: **FINAL.** When the judge gives a final ruling it's done and **becomes facts that people live by.** It means we've **closed the book** on the matter/person and we are **no longer looking at evidence.** In my opinion, from my examination of Scripture, the problem is when we play God and make a final determination about the sum total of another human being. We judge them by saying, **they ARE this or that.** It's not leaving any room for us to be wrong. It's not leaving any room for God's movement in their lives. It's not recognizing the dynamics of a human being. It's painting them with permanent paint. That is why it's one thing to judge an action, behavior, decision, etc. and quite another to judge a human being (see below).<sup>2</sup>
  - Judging what? – The way that the New Testament talks about judging and the rules around it are tricky. **On one hand we are told not to judge people but on the other hand we are told to examine and judge the fruit of their lives to make determinations** (1 Jn 4:1). We are told that there are tests we can do to find out 'if they were ever one of us or not' (Lk 6:43-45; 1 Jn 2:19; 4:1-6).
  - What improper judging does - There is a difference between figuring out if something is right or wrong and in **how it makes us think about**

---

<sup>2</sup> There is a difference in judging actions/behaviors and judging people. It is only responsible to see the works that someone is doing and determine if they are healthy or not. It's entirely okay to look at someone's behavior and conclude whether or not that is sinful behavior, Paul does it all the time. But it's quite another thing to judge a person. We should certainly have some judgment on situations (Lk 12:57; Jn 7:24; 1 Cor 2:15).

people and how we treat them afterward. When we judge people inappropriately we then act as if it is true. It may be, it may not be. But we change our hearts toward them. But what if God has a different opinion and our perspective has altered our love for that person? The danger is **separation** between people. The danger is less love and compassion and care for one another. The danger is acting as if we are better than they are by our determination.

- Sidenote: Judging is evidence of 'knowing God' – why would we make a moral judgment on other people if we didn't think there was some cosmic moral code? A universal accident doesn't lend to morality decisions, so it must be right and wrong based on what 'those that know' would say. It can't simply be 'what's best for our tribe' because in this case it's about saying something is morally wrong and judging them for it in the eyes of God. So, in a sense the general revelation of God has so informed human beings that they have created or absorbed God's attitude about behaviors being right or wrong. It means that they know enough about God to be shaped by His thinking. This is additional evidence that mankind knows enough to be held accountable to know God for salvation.
- **Judging Who? – do we have different rules about judging non-believers as believers? Yes, there seems to be. See 1 Cor 5:9-13 when Paul tells the church leadership to hold Christians accountable for their behavior and not associate with them.** He specifically says that there is a completely different scope of accountability between non-believers (who's biggest problem is they are still in their sin and under wrath), and believers (who have experienced God's grace and love and will be held to a higher standard). So, how are we to handle what seems to be a contradiction? Are we judging people or not? Regardless if they are Christians, how do we make sense of Paul telling us not to judge and then telling us to judge them as a, 'idolater, reviler, drunkard, swindler, etc.' I think the difference lies both in **WHO is doing the judging: It's not regular believers but leadership of the local church** (who have a responsibility to protect the flock). **Additionally, I think it's about ACCOUNTABILITY of actions and behaviors not in total judgment of a person.** The New Testament is clear about accountability for actions and doesn't seem to have any problem with that. But **how do you deal with someone's actions without judging them as people? I think the answer lies in how the person/people are viewed.** If the greater perspective is that the person is viewed as precious to God and either in rebellion or under captivity of Satan's blinding and temptation, the choices they are making are not okay. **Therefore, any decision needs to be made to curb the behavior, purify that identity, bring accountability for selfishness, but with the END RESULT of restoration in mind.** The point is to get them back to what they were saved to be as opposed to labeling them as yucky or damaged and throwing them out in the trash. Because not everyone can be trained in the nuances of that and instructed in how to keep the big picture in mind, **Paul doesn't tend to**

encourage regular believers to be moral-police on one another. Let the leadership, who are trained, held accountable by God, to do it, IF it needs to be done. The leadership should know that it's not ultimate judgment that they are providing on the person but simply a determination of where that person is at the moment and whether or not they are endangering the flock (especially in the case of 1 Cor 5:9-13; which follows 1 Cor 5:1-2).

- 1 Co 5:9–13 - *"I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—<sup>10</sup> not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. <sup>11</sup> But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. <sup>12</sup> For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? <sup>13</sup> God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."*
- 1 Co 5:1–2 - *"It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. <sup>2</sup> And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you."*
- 2 Th 3:6 - *"Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us."*
- Ro 14:1–12 - *"As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. <sup>2</sup> One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. <sup>3</sup> Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. <sup>4</sup> Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. <sup>5</sup> One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. <sup>6</sup> The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. <sup>7</sup> For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. <sup>8</sup> For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. <sup>9</sup> For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. <sup>10</sup> Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; <sup>11</sup> for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." <sup>12</sup> So then each of us will give an account of himself to God."*
- 1 Co 4:3–5 - *"But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. <sup>4</sup> For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. <sup>5</sup> Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God."*
- Lev 19:15 *"Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly."*
- Lk 6:37 *"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."*

- Ro 14:4 *"Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand."*
- Ro 14:10-13 *"You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: 'As surely as I live, says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.' So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way."*
- 1 Cor 6:1-5 *"If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church. I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers?"*
- Col 2:16 *"Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day."*
- James 4:11-12 *"Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judge it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you – who are you to judge your neighbor?"*
- 1 Cor 11:31-32 *"But if we judge ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world."*
- Jn 7:24 *"Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment (on who Jesus is)."*
- Rom 12:3 *"For by the grace given to me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you."*
- 1 Cor 7:25 *"Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy."*
- For in passing judgment<sup>3</sup> on another you condemn<sup>4</sup> yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things<sup>5</sup> – The very strange thing about judging other people as sinners and violators of God is that we are ignorantly commenting on ourselves and our behavior. We want to be talking about THEM, but really we are just talking about behaviors of human beings, and inadvertently we are talking about how guilty WE ARE as well. The very similar types of actions we are condemning in people

<sup>3</sup> Passes judgment = Krino – "to divide, separate, make a distinction, come to a decision." (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>4</sup> Condemn = Katakrino – "from kata, against, and krino to judge. To pronounce sentence against, condemn, adjudge to punishment." (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>5</sup> "In the second part of the verse, Paul tells why one who judges is without excuse before God: in the very act<sup>19</sup> of judging another, a person is "condemning" himself because he does the same things as the other. It is not clear what Paul means in accusing the judgmental person of doing "the very same things" as "the other." If "the other" is to be identified with the Gentile of 1:21–32, as seems clear, how can it be said that highly moral people like the Jews are doing "the very same things"? Barrett suggests that this takes place in the act of judging itself, for to judge another is to seize God's prerogative and thus to be guilty of idolatry (cf. 1:23, 25). But this interpretation does not adequately explain the plural "these things." Minear suggests that failing to glorify and thank God and making a false claim to wisdom, which he views as the key sins in 1:18–32, are intended by Paul. Another possibility is that Paul thinks in terms of sins "according to their essential moral categories," perhaps in dependence on Jesus' manner of interpreting the commandments (Matt. 5:21–48). In this sense, the Jews' reverence for their traditions is not essentially different from the idolatry of the Gentiles, nor is the lust in the hearts of Jews any less culpable than the perverse sexual practices of the Gentiles. There is some truth to this observation; but the similarity of "you are doing the very same things" and "those who are doing these things" in 1:32 suggests that we should look to 1:29–31 rather than to 1:20–28 for the sins Paul has in mind here in 2:1. Many of these sins—for example, pride, arrogance, gossiping, maligning others, and lack of affection—are as prevalent in the Jewish as in the Gentile world. In fact, Paul will accuse the Jews of some of these same sins in vv. 17–24." NICNT

around us are the types of things we are doing. They may not be the same but they are anti-God and therefore in the same classification. To make matters worse they are simultaneously going on. We are currently in sinful patterns and choices WHILE we are condemning others for similar things. The embarrassing irony is thick.

- *Matt 7:3-5 - "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eyes and pay not attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.*
- **Degree vs. Quality** – the difference in sins between people tends to be one of degree, never quality. We love to order sins in terms of more or less serious and that only works in terms of collateral damage. But, sin means violating God, that's the main problem before we ever talk about the ramifications of the sin on this planet. Therefore **rebellion is rebellion. Sin is sin, in this sense.** The difference between me and Stalin, or me and Hitler, or me and the BTK killer is not one of kind, but one of degree. They acted out their selfishness, evil, hatred in physical action to an extreme degree, but I bleed out my selfishness in damaging ways too. We are all sinners doing sinful things, living as unlike Jesus, acting on evil, but the difference is the extent of the impact of our sin on other people. Stealing a pencil from your company inadvertently is not the same as genocide on a human level, but both are called selfish. Both are filed under the file: Anti-God-like.
  - *"The moral law, as a greater teacher of mine once put it, is like a sheet of glass. If it is broken, it is broken."* NT Wright, *Romans for Everyone*
- **Sorting types of Judges** – there are a few different common types of judges on this planet that we fit into:
  1. **Ignorant** – we honestly don't realize that we are just as sinful as others and we see them as different because we don't know any better. We have not been instructed and had our eye-lights turned on.
  2. **Inconsistent** – we judge other people and then fall into the same pattern of sinning that they do. We may do different types of sins but sin is sin. We are inconsistent because we think there are different levels of sins and we are giving ourselves grace where we are bringing judgment on them.
  3. **Hypocritical** – any time hypocrisy should be used as a label is if there was knowing deceit. In other words, you know you are doing the same thing and you are judging other people while it's in your life and you know that. Hypocrisy is a theater term and it means to wear a mask to deceive and manipulate. If someone is ignorant or

simply inconsistent in their lives, it doesn't mean they are trying to deceive people.

- We know<sup>6</sup> that the judgment<sup>7</sup> of God<sup>8</sup> – we know, who knows? Jews? Christians? Both? I think the context is Jews who have grown up studying the law and having at least a modicum of respect for God (at least enough to judge other people morally), but it applies to Christians as well (whether Jewish or Gentile) as we have had the revelation of God in our lives and know Him as the great judge.
- rightly<sup>9</sup> falls<sup>10</sup> on those who practice<sup>11</sup> such things. – The reason that God's judgment on man is just is that **He is the only infinite, omniscient being that knows all the facts and has the clear head to make that determination. Man is does not have that vantage point.**
- 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?<sup>12</sup> – This is Paul being kind of snarky, saying, 'oh, do you really think that you aren't a part of this?' But there is something deeper and that is that some of his audience did see that they had sin in their lives but they simply thought that they wouldn't be held accountable for it. We'll talk a lot about that in the next section, but the Jews absolutely felt this way. They had a very 'us vs. Gentiles' perspective. They saw the Gentiles as subpar, wicked, super-sinners, and saw themselves as spoiled children of God with a secured status.
  - So how do we handle judgment properly? – we've talked a significant amount of all the ways we view judging, but at the end of the day we

---

<sup>6</sup> "Know translates oida, which carries the idea of awareness of that which is commonly known and obvious." (MacArthur)

<sup>7</sup> Judgment = Krima "the suffix ma indicates the result of krino, to judge. A solemn judgment, judicial trial or judicial sentence" (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>8</sup> God = Theos – "God. Originally used by the heathen and adopted in the NT as the name of the true God." (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

"Having accused the self-righteous person of doing the same things as the "wicked" Gentiles, Paul now affirms as a general principle the fact and fairness of God's judgment of such practices: "Now<sup>24</sup> we know that the judgment of God upon those who do such things is according to truth." In claiming that God's judgment is "according to truth," Paul is affirming that God's judgment against sin is fully in accord with the facts, that it is just.<sup>26</sup> This tenet was one on which both Paul and his dialogue partner could agree, it being a standard Jewish teaching. Where the disagreement between Paul and the Jew comes is in Paul's application of the principle to the Jews on the same basis as to the Gentiles. In other words, the Jews would want to include as part of the "truth" on the basis of which God judges the special relationship that they enjoy with God. Paul does not deny this relationship (cf. 3:1–8), but claims that it does not shield the Jews from the consequences of their sins (cf. the generally parallel vv. 6, 11, 13, and 16)." NICNT

<sup>9</sup> Rightly = Aletheia – "Truth, as the unveiled reality lying at the basis of and agreeing with an appearance; the manifested, the veritable essence of matter. The reality pertaining to an appearance. Denotes the reality clearly lying before our eyes as opposed to a mere appearance, without reality." (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>10</sup> Falls = Kata – "The primary meaning of down, i.e., down from, down upon, down in. Generally used of motion or direction." (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>11</sup> Practice = Prasso "to make, perform in general; do good; but more commonly, do evil. Whenever the words prasso and poieo assume an ethical tinge, the inclination makes itself felt to use poieo in a good sense and prasso in an evil sense." (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>12</sup> "The sense of the verse shows that Paul is questioning this person's belief that he or she will be able to escape this judgment of God. Such a question is legitimately put to the Gentile moralist or philosopher who thinks he or she can please God by his or her good life, but it is particularly the Jew who would be likely to make such an assumption. This is just the attitude revealed in the intertestamental Jewish writing The Psalms of Solomon, where the author asserts that "those who do lawlessness will not escape the judgment of the Lord" (15:8) but then goes on to exempt the "righteous" from that same judgment. What Paul is calling into question is precisely whether anyone can claim that exemption, at least as traditionally defined in terms of the Mosaic covenant." NICNT

want to be more aligned with God on how we handle judgment matters on earth, right? So, how do we do this rightly?

1. We determine matters and facts
2. We analyze people's behaviors but leave room for self-error and their correction
3. We remain humble knowing we have our own stuff
4. We let God be the final call

- It's Dangerous to Assume

- Paul warns against the self-delusion of abused grace

- Romans 2:4-5 – *“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?”* <sup>5</sup> *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.”*

- Or do you presume<sup>13</sup> on the riches of his kindness<sup>14</sup> – this is a very Jewish concept (although today Christians tend to do it as well). The Jews were consistently talking about how their **status as Children of God is a ‘get out of jail free’ card**. They knew the Law was important but they felt their status gave them an escape. It was a ‘presumption’ that Paul was correcting here. People that know God relatively well know how He has described Himself over the years (example: Exodus 34:6-7) especially to people like Moses. They know that He describes Himself as loving, kind, forgiving, and patient. They were taking advantage of that. **Today, we as Christians, do the same thing**. We know that 1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter, applies to God as well. We know that He is infinitely kind. We know that His love is extraordinary. We know that His grace can be taken advantage of. And in that room **we have chosen to take advantage of His goodness**.

- Ex 34:6-7 – *“The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and*

---

<sup>13</sup> “Paul wants to show the person who thinks she can sin and yet avoid judgment that she is, in fact, “showing contempt for” God’s mercy... As we have noted, several of the words Paul uses in v. 4a are found in OT and Jewish descriptions of God’s goodness and mercy toward Israel. But the text that stands out as particularly significant, in the light of parallels between Wis. 11–15 and 1:18–32, is Wis. 15:1–2. After a long exposé of Gentile idolatry and sin (chaps. 11–14), the author says in these verses: “But thou, our God, art kind and true, patient,<sup>40</sup> and ruling all things in mercy. For even if we sin we are thine, knowing thy power.” That Paul has this text in mind is probable; but even if he does not, it is the attitude expressed in the passage, and by no means confined to Wisdom of Solomon, that Paul rebukes in these verses. Certainly the OT encourages God’s people to regard God as merciful and forgiving (e.g., Ps. 145). But the assumption of God’s special favor toward his people had already in the OT period become a source of false security for those within Israel who were not living faithfully within the covenant, as the preaching of the prophets abundantly indicates. The literature of intertestamental Judaism, while consistently stressing the need for Jews to repent of sin, also tended to highlight Israel’s favored position to the extent that its security in God’s judgment was virtually unassailable. It is this assumption that Paul, in agreement with the prophets, calls into question. As the passage unfolds, however, we will find Paul going beyond the prophets in asserting that Jews are no better off than Gentiles in the judgment. This is a radical departure from all Jewish tradition and implies not only a critique of the prevailing understanding of God’s covenant with Israel but also that a new era in salvation history had dawned.” NICNT

<sup>14</sup> Kindness = Chrestotes – “Benignity, kindness. Goodness, kindness, gentleness. It is the grace which pervades the whole nature, mellowing all which would have been harsh and austere.” (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

“Three terms, all dependent on “riches,” describe this mercy of God. “Goodness” is attributed to God by Paul in Rom. 11:11a and c (where its opposite is “severity”) and in Eph. 2:7; Tit. 3:4. It is used several times in the LXX of the Psalms to designate God’s goodness toward his people.” NICNT

*faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty,...*"

- and forbearance<sup>15</sup> and<sup>16</sup> patience,<sup>17</sup> - God is RICHLY longsuffering and RICHLY patient. It's so extreme (the length of time that He has put up with nonsense and evil from human beings) that it almost gives the impression that He doesn't care about our sin that much, but nothing can be further from the truth. It's that His love for us exceeds His easy and justifiable justice on us.
  - "God is kind...in the sense of genuinely caring and understanding, and trying to find the best way forward for every single human being...God is patient. Again and again he gives people the chance to get it together, to turn to him in repentance and trust, and to find their lives coming back into shape. But what if it doesn't have that effect?" NT Wright, Romans for Everyone.
- not knowing<sup>18</sup> that God's kindness<sup>19</sup> is meant to lead<sup>20</sup> you to repentance<sup>21</sup>?<sup>22</sup> – We don't get it that God's slowness in our judgment and punishment is not because He doesn't see or doesn't care. God's reaction is due to His love and waiting for our repentance as He continuously woos us. God has many ways of dealing with man and fear is one tactic, but love is another. Either way He is capable and knows what He's doing. It is the love that holds it back (wrath). God wants us to turn from our sin on our own accord, not by Him pushing us. He wants us to love Him in response to His love.
- But because of your hard<sup>23</sup> and impenitent<sup>24</sup> heart<sup>25</sup> – This means, 'because you are so stubborn and resistant to REPENTANCE... Stubbornness is refusing to change. Resistant to repentance means unwillingness to change our mind about a situation that would result in a change of behavior and choices.

---

<sup>15</sup> Forbearance = Anochē – "forbearance, from anechomai to bear with, suffer, from ana, up a, and echo, to hold, bear. Indulgence, temporary longsuffering. The temporary character of God's attitude toward sin." (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>16</sup> "'Forbearance' and 'patience'<sup>37</sup> denote the expression of God's goodness in his patient withholding of the judgment that is rightfully due the sinner." NICNT

<sup>17</sup> Patience = Makrothumia – "forbearance, longsuffering. The person who has power to avenge himself, yet refrains from the exercise of this power. Derived from makros, long and thumos, passion. A long-holding of the mind before it gives room to action or passion, it is patience in respect to persons while endurance, is patience toward things or circumstances." It is associated with mercy and is used of God with the word tolerance." (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>18</sup> Not realizing = Agnoeo – "from the neg. a and noeo, not to recognize, not to know, to be unacquainted with." (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>19</sup> Kindness = Chrestos – "from chraomai, to furnish what is needed. Useful, profitable, good; good, kind, obliging, gracious." (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>20</sup> Leads = Ago – "to lead, to lead along, to bring, carry, remove." (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>21</sup> Repentance = Metanoia – "A change of mind, repentance. To change ones mind from evil to good or from worse to better." (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>22</sup> "The participial clause in the last part of the verse—"being ignorant that the goodness of God is leading you to repentance"—shows that God's purpose in his kindness is not to excuse sin but to stimulate repentance. This notion, too, has parallels in Jewish teaching (cf. Wis. 11:23), and Paul criticizes his rhetorical partner for willfully ignoring this truth. Repentance plays a surprisingly small part in Paul's teaching, considering its importance in contemporary Judaism. Probably this is because the coming of Christ had revealed to Paul that acceptance with God requires a stronger action than the word "repentance" often connoted at the time." NICNT

<sup>23</sup> Stubbornness = sklerotes – "from skeros, dry, hard. Hardness, obstinacy, stubbornness." (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>24</sup> Unrepentant = Ametanoetos – "from the priv. A and metanoeo, to repent or change one's mind. Unrepenting, impenitent." (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>25</sup> Heart = Kardia – "heart. The Scriptures attributed to the heart thoughts, reasonings, understanding, will, judgment, designs, affections, love, hatred, fear, joy, sorrow and anger since these things can actually affect a man's physical heart. Therefore, the heart is used for the mind in general." (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

- you are storing up<sup>26</sup> wrath<sup>27</sup> for yourself – Because of the stubborn and hard-heartedness, **the wrath of God is building against you**. All the reasons and heat of rebellion and wickedness is stacking. The Bible talks about how God has **proverbial bowls** in heaven that are filling up and when they reach the brim they begin to spill and are poured out.
- on the day<sup>28</sup> of wrath when God's righteous judgment<sup>29</sup> will be revealed – We have seen so much of the consistent grace side of God that **we forget his judgment side that is equally who He is**. His day of judgment on mankind will happen. God will be RIGHT in everything He does and everything He thinks and everything He says.
  - *“Those who persist in wickedness, despite having every chance to turn back, are positively asking for it. There is no alternative.”* NT Wright, Romans for Everyone
  - **The Great Judgment**<sup>30</sup> – It seems to be highlighting the eventual final and great judgment on mankind that happens at the end of all things. Jesus talked about it, Paul educated on it, John saw it. It's the time when Jesus sits on His rightful throne as King of Creation and ultimate Judge and will call things as they are. Mankind will be sifted on those who get to be with Him forever and those who don't. How will they be separated out? That's the next passage.
    - Rev 20:11-15 *“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead are judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the*

<sup>26</sup> “God’s patience with sin must not be taken as a sign that he is weak or that he will withhold his judgment forever. In this verse, Paul warns his complacent addressee that a time of judgment is indeed coming, and that instead of mercy, it is wrath that the person who presumes on God’s kindness is accumulating in advance of that judgment. It serves, then, as a solemn confirmation of the answer implied by the rhetorical question in v. 3. Such a person will certainly not “escape the judgment of God.” Specifically, Paul claims that “because of your hard<sup>45</sup> and unrepentant heart you are storing up for yourself wrath.” The metaphorical application of “store up” was well established.<sup>47</sup> But since what is “stored up” is almost always something good, the verb possesses an ironical flavor here: the recalcitrant sinner is storing up for himself not blessing or life but wrath.”NICNT

<sup>27</sup> Wrath = Orge – “wrath, anger as a state of mind.” (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>28</sup> “When will this situation become evident? Noting that Paul speaks in this context (1:18) of a present infliction of the wrath of God, some commentators think that the last phrase in the verse, “on the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God,” modifies “storing up.” In this case, Paul would be qualifying the current period of salvation history as the “day of wrath.” But “day of wrath” is quasi-technical biblical language for the time of final judgment.<sup>51</sup> This strongly suggests that Paul is looking here at the climactic outpouring of wrath at the end of history; and the Jew who refuses to repent is even now accumulating the wrath that on that day will be revealed. Also to be revealed on that day, claims Paul, is “the righteous judgment of God.”<sup>53</sup> This word also continues a central theme of this section of Romans: the reality of God’s judgment and the fact that this judgment will be absolutely just (cf. v. 2). Paul thus calls into question the Jewish tendency to confine God’s “righteous judgment” to Gentile sinners.”NICNT

<sup>29</sup> Righteous judgment = Kikaiokrisia – “from dikaios, just, and krisis, judgment. A judgment which renders justice, which produces right. Righteous judgment.” (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>30</sup> “Scripture speaks of a judgment of Christians. Christ at his coming will judge his people (Mt 25:14-30, 31-46; Lk 19:12-28; 1 Cor 3:12-15; 2 Cor 5:10; 1 Pet 1:17; Rev 20:12f). Christians will be judged by their Lord in respect of their stewardship of the talents, gifts, opportunities and responsibilities granted to them during the course of their lives. The divine judgment of the people of God will be a fatherly judgment. This father judgment will be exercised by Christ at his coming. (Regarding human judgment) Here as elsewhere man is called upon to imitate God. Just as God is a righteous judge, so men are called upon to judge righteously (Lk 12:57; Jn 7:24) in the constant recognition that ultimately the judgment is God’s (Dt 1:17). The Christian is expected to show discrimination and judgment in moral matters and the ability to do so is a sign of true maturity (Lk 12:57; Jn 7:24; Rom 15:14; 1 Cor 2:15; 6:1-6; 10:15; 2 Cor 13:5; Phil 1:9f; Col 1:9; 1 Jn 4:1) Christians, according to 1 Cor 6:2f will be called upon to exercise judgment with respect to the world, and angels in particular.” (New Bible Dictionary, Third Edition: Marshall, Millard, Packer & Wiseman.)

*second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."*

- Sheep and Goats
  - The sifting and sorting of mankind in judgment
    - *Romans 2:6-11 – "He will render to each one according to his works: <sup>7</sup> to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; <sup>8</sup> but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. <sup>9</sup> There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, <sup>10</sup> but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. <sup>11</sup> For God shows no partiality."*
    - He will render to each one according to his works<sup>31</sup> - **At first look** this flies in the face of everything we have been indoctrinated to believe by the Protestant Reformation which is founded on the **'saved by grace through faith alone.'** What do you mean God is going to determine our eternal destiny by whether we do more good than bad? Isn't that the way of most of the other world religions? Isn't Christianity different due to the grace aspect? Didn't Paul, the same author as here, write clearly later in this SAME BOOK, "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace." (Rom 11:6)? Yes, and **that's why we need to read the whole context** (usually the whole passage, or the whole book, or the whole New Testament) so that we get a full understanding and not just tunnel vision on a particular verse. So, we know that the bigger picture is that it is faith and grace that saves us not works, so what is Paul saying here? If you look forward at verse 11, it says, 'FOR, God shows no partiality' which seems to be highlighting that Paul is talking about Jews vs. Greeks in this passage. Does that give us a hint as to what he's getting at? Maybe. Maybe it's a passage about how Jews view it versus how Gentiles view it. But at the end of the day we are still left with **two options: 1.) Paul is setting up the need for God's grace to save us** because no one can do good enough – thus this passage is part of explaining why we are all doomed and need Jesus; **2.) Paul is roundabout explaining that just as before Christ God saved people through their faith demonstrated in their behavior.** A prime example, that Paul uses, is Abraham. Abraham believed God (faith work) and it was credited to him as righteousness (good work). It was Abraham's behavior that demonstrated he had a heart for God. The problem with all of that line of thinking is that we learn from Paul that no one is going to do right, no one is going to do righteousness. We learn that 'while we were yet

---

<sup>31</sup> Deeds = Ergon – "work, performance, the result or object of employment, making or working. Denotes any matter or thing, any object which one may have to do or attain; the general object or result of doing and working, an object or result whose attainment or realization is not accomplished by a single act but by accumulated labor and continued work; labor enjoined by and done for Christ bas the spreading of his gospel and the furthering of his church; moral conduct." (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

sinners, Christ died for the ungodly.’ (Rom 5:6). In other words, no one is going to do good consistently to achieve what this passage is talking about. So, in my opinion **we are left with only one option: since Paul is talking primarily to Jews about the Jewish perspective, he is arguing from what they already know and walking them into a situation where they are finding themselves as condemned as Gentiles (that they judge).** I can’t find another way to read this.

- A proper perspective on righteous works – Although I have stated my understanding of this context, there is a way that we need to view works because it comes up a lot. Jesus, in Matt 16:27 says that he will return and, ‘pay each person according to what he has done.’ He later talks about, in John 5, that, ‘those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.’ In **Matthew 25 Jesus talks about the final judgment** (starting in v. 31ff). He talks about the **separating of the sheep from the goats**. The division is done based on, feeding, giving water, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, visiting those in prison. And of course those who did not do those things were cast away. **So, we do need to deal with this concept. How does it reconcile with Grace by Faith Alone? I think James tries to sort it out in his book, 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter.** He explains that **there is only one kind of real faith, faith that transforms and affects. A claim to faith, belief that God exists, isn’t enough. A proper saving faith is more like ‘trust’ and it’s highly relational. The Bible teaches that when we are connected to God we will NATURALLY produce spiritual fruit.** If a branch is connected to the right good vine, it produces fruit (grapes). The production is happening far back in the root system and vine system. By the time it gets to the branch it’s really just a conduit to express or manifest the fruit that comes through it. In other words, **if we are really connected to Jesus Christ we WILL produce good works. There’s no other way around it. If we aren’t producing good works, then it’s evidence that there is no connection at all. So, in that sense we can look at the fruit as evidence of connection to the root.**
  - James 2:14-20, 26 *“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless...As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.”*
  - Jer 17:10 *“I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.”*
  - Matt 16:27 *“for the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.”*

- John 5:26-29 *"For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out – those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me."*
- 1 Cor 3:11-15 *"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each mans work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames."*
- 2 Cor 5:10 *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."*
- Matt 7:16 *"By their fruit you will recognize them."*
- Eph 2:8-10 *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of god – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*
- A deeper level of works (Christ's commands) – But there is even a deeper level of works that we need to explore. Over and over Jesus said, if you are mine you will obey my commandments (John 14). He suggests that if you don't obey His commandments, which are technically 'works' you are not His. So, what are His commandments? Thankfully John (Jesus' closest disciple) lays them out clearly (1 Jn 3:19-24). **There are two commands that Jesus laid out clearly for His followers to adhere to: 1.) believe in the name of Jesus Christ; 2.) love one another, just as he has loved us.** Those are the commandments of Christ. **Those are the WORKS required: belief and love.** If those are not in us we are not saved. They are the essence of what it means to have God within us. **It's the natural fruit, the necessary fruit. So, in a sense we will be judged by our works, these works.**
  - 1 Jn 3:19–24 – *"By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him;<sup>20</sup> for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.<sup>21</sup> Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;<sup>22</sup> and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.<sup>23</sup> And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.<sup>24</sup> Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us."*
  - Jn 13:34–35 – *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."<sup>35</sup> By this*

*all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

- Jn 15:10–17 – *"If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. <sup>12</sup> "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup> No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. <sup>17</sup> These things I command you, so that you will love one another." (cf. 1 Jn 2:7ff)*
- Mt 22:34–40 – *"But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. <sup>35</sup> And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. <sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup> And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*
- Mk 12:28–34 – *"And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>30</sup> And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' <sup>31</sup> The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." <sup>32</sup> And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. <sup>33</sup> And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." <sup>34</sup> And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions."*
- Mt 28:18–20 – *"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*
- to those – We are continuing with the context that Paul is specifically addressing Jews here which means that he is talking to **Jews from a historic Old Testament law perspective** about how people rise to glory. **The mandate was clear: Do the righteous works of the law and you will be saved.**

- Again, who is this talking about?<sup>32</sup> - Who is going to seemingly get

---

<sup>32</sup> “We now must ask who it is that Paul has in mind in vv. 7 and 10, where he promises salvation to those who engage in persistent “doing good.” The question is an important one because these promises would seem at first sight to conflict with Paul’s insistence elsewhere that “no one will be justified by works of the law” (cf. 3:20). Answers to this question can be divided into three categories, according to the identification of those who are doing good.

- (1) Quite popular in the patristic period was the identification of these people with faithful Jews and “moral” Gentiles before the coming of Christ.
- (2) The majority of commentators have argued that Paul refers to any non-Christian. But within this interpretation, five approaches, differing in vital respects, are to be distinguished.
  - (a) Some think that Paul sets out as a possibility the salvation of some people through their works apart from faith in Christ and that this principle stands in irreconcilable tension with his teaching of justification by faith alone.
  - (b) Others argue, similarly, that God rewards with eternal life those who respond obediently to “the light they have received” and that as long as the works are regarded as produced with the aid of God’s grace no contradiction with Paul’s teaching elsewhere is created.
  - (c) Another variation holds that those who earnestly seek eternal peace are granted the faith that brings justification and that this faith—the missing “middle term” in Paul’s argument—is what brings eternal life.
  - (d) A few have viewed the principle as purely hypothetical, a statement of the way things would be if Christ had not come and the law could be fulfilled.
  - (e) Finally, others argue that the promise of eternal life for those who do good is fully valid, but that the power of sin prevents anyone from doing that good to the degree necessary to merit salvation. Verses 7 and 10 set out the condition, apart from Christ, for salvation; Paul’s subsequent argument shows that no one is able to fulfill those conditions.
- (3) Growing in popularity is the view that Paul is thinking in these verses specifically of Christians. They, and only they, are those who, through union with Christ, are able to produce works acceptable to God in the judgment.

We think that the choice lies between the last two of these alternatives. That Paul is considering only people before the coming of Christ (view 1) or that he considers them completely apart from the coming of Christ (view 2d) is unlikely because the revelation of God’s wrath of which Paul is speaking is addressed clearly to Jews and Greeks in Paul’s own day. Furthermore, the principle that all people, even Christians, will, in some sense, be judged by works is clearly taught in the NT and cannot be dismissed as a “pre-Christian” viewpoint. To adopt a view that creates a contradiction in Paul’s teaching (view 2a) is a last resort and one that is unnecessary in the present instance. If they are to harmonize Paul, those who claim that Paul teaches a salvation based on obedience to the light each person has received (view 2b) must argue that Paul does not exclude all works from having the power to justify, but only “works of the law,” understood in some sort of restricted sense (cf. 3:20, 28), and that Paul does not regard everyone who has not been justified by faith as condemned. But these positions cannot be maintained. Paul’s denial that “works of the law” can justify is meant to exclude all “works,” anything that a person does, as a basis for salvation (see our comments on 3:20). And the verdicts of 3:19 (“the whole world is held accountable to God”) and 3:23 (“all have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory”), in relationship to 3:21–22, 24–26, show that only by receiving God’s righteousness through faith can a person be saved. The suggestion that we should supply justifying faith as the middle term in the promise of vv. 7 and 10 (view 2c) overcomes this objection but implies more than the context allows. It suggests a relationship between human effort and God’s grace that is at least questionably Pauline (cf. 4:1–8; 9:10–13). Whether we regard these verses as describing Christians (view 3), or view them as setting forth the unrealizable condition for salvation apart from Christ (view 2e), consistency in Paul’s teaching is maintained. For Paul teaches, in agreement with the OT and Judaism, that judgment will be based on works, for Christians as well as for non-Christians (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10 and the Excursus: The Law, Justification, and Judgment in Paul). Moreover, he upholds faithful obedience to God, or the law as a theoretical means of attaining justification (cf. 2:13; 7:10). But the context strongly suggests that Paul is not directly describing Christians in vv. 7 and 10. Paul’s purpose in 2:6–11 is to establish the principle that God will judge every person on the same basis—by works, not by religious heritage or national identity. Paul’s focus is on the standard of judgment. It is a continual seeking after eternal rewards, accompanied by a persistent doing of what is good, that is the condition for a positive verdict at the judgment. Paul never denies the validity of this principle, but he goes on to show that no one meets the conditions necessary for this principle to become a reality. This is the conclusion to which Paul is driving throughout this part of Romans (cf. 3:9, 19–20). It is true, of course, that a person in Christ does meet these conditions as the fruit of faith comes to expression in his life; and, while the principle in its context has the function of condemning all apart from Christ, Paul will show subsequently in Romans that it is, in fact, Christians who fulfill these conditions. This may be right, but there is reason to be hesitant; the works of the Christian that are valid in the judgment are the “fruit” of union with Christ and manifestations of God’s grace. But the stress in v. 6 on man’s works as the criterion in the determination of a person’s salvation or condemnation makes it difficult to fit grace into the situation at all (see the final paragraph in this section). We think, therefore, that vv. 7 and 10 set forth what is called in traditional theological (especially Lutheran) language “the law.” Paul sets forth the biblical conditions for attaining eternal life apart from Christ. Understood this way, Paul is not speaking hypothetically. But once his doctrine of universal human powerlessness under sin has been developed (cf. 3:9 especially), it becomes clear that the promise can, in fact, never become operative because the condition for its fulfillment—consistent, earnest seeking after good—can never be realized. This paragraph raises the question about the relationship between justification and judgment—an intricate theological topic. On the one hand, it is vital that the finality and determinacy of justification not be mitigated and that salvation, from first to last, be ascribed to God’s grace.<sup>33</sup> Paul believed that justification, in this life, was perfectly sufficient for deliverance from wrath at the judgment (cf. 5:9–10; 8:28–39). On the other hand, we cannot ignore the serious warnings addressed to Christians about the importance that their works will have at the final judgment (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10–14; 2 Cor. 5:10; Jas. 2:14–26; cf. Matt. 12:37; 25:31–46). Some seek to reconcile these by attributing different purposes to the initial “judgment” of justification and the final judgment, others by attributing the two strands of teaching to different audiences or different purposes,<sup>35</sup> but none of these is completely convincing. Without becoming involved in the intricacies of theological nuance (and they are important here), we would follow those who maintain that the justification by faith granted the believer in this life is the sufficient cause of those works that God takes into account at the

saved through their good works? It seems to be carrying, based on verse 17, the idea of talking to Jews about their process before God. We know that Paul is rocketing toward his famous chapter 3 statement that, “none is righteous, no not one...” Perhaps this is another way of explaining how the Jews thought things went BEFORE understanding Jesus. Paul may be laying out the impossibility of mankind doing enough good (standard = perfection) to get to heaven. It all seems rather messy and unclear, unfortunately.

- who by patience in well-doing<sup>33</sup> – **the Old Testament law was not based on just one good day of doing good stuff.** It was on a consistent basis of adhering to the mandates laid out both in the 10 commandments as well as the rest of it fleshed out in the Mosaic Law found in Exodus-Deuteronomy. It was **a lifestyle of righteousness.** We know now that it was all a test of faith (the sacrificial system) and a way for people to reveal their hearts, faith, and connection to God and God dealt with them accordingly (how people got saved before the cross). But the law was clear that it was a long-term patient lifestyle of goodness and righteousness.
- seek<sup>34</sup> – The NICNT Commentary provides an alternative translation that I favor but they say doesn’t fit as well. It’s would be, “for those seeking eternal life [He/God will render] glory, honor, and immortality [to them].” It makes more sense in the overall big picture, but the grammar doesn’t seem to support it as well. Regardless, I think the concept is so similar it almost doesn’t matter. If someone is seeking from God: glory, honor, and immortality, then they are seeking eternal life and God grants that to them. I guess I’m old-school and struggle to think of mankind seeking glory and honor, as a good thing (although it’s technically correct – seeking our glorified bodies, the honor of being named a good servant, etc.).
- for glory – glory is what makes you look good. It means that in a God sense it’s what makes Him magnificent and draws people to worship Him. When we talk about people it is more of a moon reference, reflecting the Sun/Son. We shine in our glorified bodies because of who He is and what He has done. He makes us shine.
  - Col 3:4 *“When Christ who is your life, appears, then you will also appear with him in glory.”*

---

time of the judgment. The initial declaration of the believer’s acquittal before the bar of heaven at the time of one’s justification is infallibly confirmed by the judgment according to works at the last assize.” NICNT

<sup>33</sup> Doing = Ergon – “work, performance, the result or object of employment, making or working. Denotes any matter or thing, any object which one may have to do or attain; the general object or result of doing and working, an object or result whose attainment or realization is not accomplished by a single act but by accumulated labor and continued work; labor enjoined by and done for Christ bas the spreading of his gospel and the furthering of his church; moral conduct.” (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>34</sup> “An alternate translation of the verse would run, “to those who are seeking eternal life, [he will render] glory, honor, and immortality.” On this reading, δόξαν και τιμην και ἀφθαρσίαν are objects of the understood verb ἀποδώσει, while ζῶην αἰώνιον is the object of ζητοῦσιν (see Zahn). In favor of this rendering is the fact that “glory and honor” describe what God gives to those who do good in the parallel v. 10. But the syntax, with δόξαν και τιμην και ἀφθαρσίαν enclosed by the article τοῖς and the participle ζητοῦσιν, strongly favors the reading that we adopt above (which is reflected also in the major English translations).” NICNT

- and honor – the same is true of glory as it is of honor. We gain honor as humans when we do the things of God in obedience. We earn a reward from God of ‘well done, my good and faithful servant’.
  - Matt 25:21 *“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’”*
- and immortality, - This is the longevity of eternal life, as opposed to the quality of eternal life. Immortal means never dying. When we pursue a relationship with God we are ultimately seeking eternal existence with Him.
- he will give eternal<sup>35</sup> life<sup>36</sup> - in both quality and quantity. Eternal life begins with connection to God not just at death.
- but for those who are self-seeking<sup>37</sup> – **in contrast to those who are seeking God, there will be those who are seeking self. Instead of God being at the center of their universe, they are.** Instead of Christ on the throne of their lives, they sit there themselves. At the end of the day all sin is selfishness. All rebellion is pride. All those who go to hell (lake of fire) are those who trust only in themselves to save and reject Christ’s salvation.
- and do not obey<sup>38</sup> the truth,<sup>39</sup> but obey unrighteousness,<sup>40</sup> - those selfish ones have a lifestyle contrary to the righteous. They pursue things other than the truth. They align with evil and wickedness.
- there will be wrath<sup>41</sup> and fury<sup>42</sup> – And for those anti-God, there is a wrath coming upon them. **The wrath and fury is directed at the sin within them but they have embraced their sin and made it their identity and a part of them so they are swept up in the fury and wrath.** Jesus addressed the focus of this life in Matt 16. He explained that the only way we become truly human and live forever is when we hand ourselves over to Him and live for Him. Then we will find what is right and who is Good.

---

<sup>35</sup> Eternal = Alonios – “eternal, belonging to the aion, to time in its duration, constant, abiding, eternal. When referring to eternal life, the life which is God’s and hence not affected by the limitations of time.” (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>36</sup> Life = Zoe – “life, referring to the principle of life in the spirit and soul. Distinguished from bios, physical life. Zoe is the nobler word, expressing all of the highest and best which Christ is and which He gives to the saints. The highest blessedness of the creature.” (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>37</sup> “Paul describes these latter people from the standpoint of their basic motivating principle—selfishness—and from the standpoint of their allegiance: they give themselves in obedience to unrighteousness rather than to the truth. Paul here describes opposite sides of the same coin. These people are refusing to subject themselves to the truth as God has revealed it and prefer rather to give themselves over to “unrighteousness” (cf. 1:18).” NICNT

<sup>38</sup> Do not obey = Apeitheo – from the neg. a, without, and peitho, to persuade. Not to believe, to disbelieve implying disobedience; to disobey as through unbelief.” (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

Obey = Peitho – “to entice or persuade. NT meanings; to be persuaded, trust, to depend upon, trust in, have confidence in.” Aletheia – “Truth, as the unveiled reality lying at the basis of and agreeing with an appearance; the manifested, the veritable essence of matter. The reality pertaining to an appearance. Denotes the reality clearly lying before our eyes as opposed to a mere appearance, without reality.” (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>39</sup> Truth = Aletheia – “Truth, as the unveiled reality lying at the basis of and agreeing with an appearance; the manifested, the veritable essence of matter. The reality pertaining to an appearance. Denotes the reality clearly lying before our eyes as opposed to a mere appearance, without reality.” (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>40</sup> Unrighteousness = Adikia – “From a, neg., dike, justice. What is not conformable with justice, what ought not to be, that which is wrong.” (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>41</sup> Wrath = Orge – “wrath, anger as a state of mind.” (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>42</sup> Indignation = Thumos – “anger, wrath, from thuo, to move impetuously, a violent motion, or passion of the mind. Thumos is more temporary and more passionate than orge.” (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

- Mt 16:25–26 – *“For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. <sup>26</sup> For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?”*
- There will be tribulation<sup>43</sup> and distress<sup>44</sup> – For those who don’t live according to God, those who don’t align with Him, those who live selfishly and cast Him away, there is going to be trouble and pain. It’s not just in the life to come but in this life as well.
- for every human being who does evil<sup>45</sup> - This is a humanity thing. Our groups and our tribes like to assume that we are different from the others, but that is not so. Humans are humans. Every human being who does evil will have to answer for it. That’s why we need Jesus.
- the Jew first and also the Greek<sup>46</sup> - **It doesn’t matter what your genetics are, you are accountable for your sin.** Paul is specifically addressing the Jews in this because the Jews held that belief that their status as Chosen People gave them an excuse and an out from accountability for their sin. They would talk all day about Gentiles receiving judgment for their sin but would neglect to talk about theirs. Paul isn’t having it.
- but glory<sup>47</sup> and honor and peace<sup>48</sup> for everyone who does good<sup>49</sup> - But for those who seek God there is glory, honor and peace. There’s a settledness in their spirits because the main things are the main things. The core is right, the root is right. That allows blessings to flow.
- the Jew first and also the Greek. – And again, Paul explains that since God called the Jewish people to be His primary point-people (creating them through Abraham), they get the first front row benefit. They always saw that as only for blessing (which Paul calls out here), but they didn’t realize it’s always for accountability, discipline, and wrath as well.

---

<sup>43</sup> Trouble = thlipsis – “from thlibo, which in turn is derived from thlao, to break. Thlibo means to crush, press, compress, squeeze. Thlipsis symbolically means grievous affliction or distress. Pressure or a burden upon the spirit.” (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>44</sup> Distress = Stenochoria – “form the verb stenochoreo, to straighten or press together in a narrow place. Derives from stenos, narrow, and choreo, to be or fit in a space. A narrow place. Symbolically, great distress, straightness. Pressed from the side.” (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>45</sup> Evil = Kakos – “evil, wicked, from the verb chazo or chazomai, to give back, recede, retire, retreat in battle. One that is evil in himself and as such puts others in trouble. From this is derived kakia, wickedness, iniquity, evil, affliction.” (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>46</sup> “Paul apparently wants to emphasize again the utter impartiality of God’s judgment. And, once again, this point is directed particularly to the Jew, as the last phrase of the verse—“for the Jew first and then for the Greek”—indicates. In an ironic twist, Paul uses the same phrase that maintained the priority of the Jew as the recipient of the good news of salvation (1:16) to assert the same priority in judgment. As the word of the promise has gone “first” to the Jew, so does punishment for failure to respond to that word go “first” to the Jew. In contrast to the Jews’ tendency to regard their election as a guarantee that they would be “first” in salvation and “last” in judgment, Paul insists that their priority be applied equally to both.” NICNT

<sup>47</sup> Glory = Doxa – “Glory. The meanings of this word divides themselves conformably with the use of the verb dokeo, to think, recognize for what a person or thing is. Reputation, glory. Basically, in the Bible, refers to the recognition belonging to a person, honor, renown. God’s image and character.” (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>48</sup> Peace = eirene – peace, rest. Denoting the absence or end of strife. Denotes a state of untroubled, undisturbed, well-being.” (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

<sup>49</sup> Good = Hagiotēs – “holiness. Like all deriv. Of hagios, holy, the word is unknown in classical Greek. It speaks of the essence of the character of God.” (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

Does good = Agathos – “good and benevolent, profitable, useful. Benefiting others.” (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

- For God shows no partiality<sup>50</sup> - Funny how he mentions no favoritism after showing a priority list. However, I believe his point is that everyone is going to get their due in time.

### Conclusion

- Breakthrough – I think some of us are stuck in our lives because we continue to blame others for everything. I don't think that we take responsibility or accountability for our lives. We have a million reasons why things aren't right. We quickly judge others and how they have affected us but we haven't judged ourselves properly. Some of us will get unstuck if we start to look inside first. Not with condemnation but with conviction and there's a key difference. Too often we assume that our shame means that we've taken accountability but it doesn't. It only means we've sunk in shame and avoided dealing with it.
  - Traction to turn it around – We are given this lifetime to turn things around and turn them toward God. Each day we are given on this planet is another day to align with the Lord. It's another day to walk out of our sinful bondage and into His freedom and joy.
  - We are not victims – we have a chance to become what God designed us to be IN THIS LIFE. We do not have to wait until heaven to begin living our eternal life. It started when we got saved. Let's go!

---

<sup>50</sup> Partiality = Prosopolepsia –“respect of persons, partiality.” (Lexical Aids to the New Testament: NASB Key Study Bible)

The word prosōpolēmpsia describes making unfair distinctions between people and treating some better than others. God does not show partiality (see Deut 10:17; Acts 10:34–35); He judges both Jews and Gentiles on the same basis—according to works (see note on Rom 2:6). Paul is attempting to convince some Jews that God will not overlook their sinful activity just because of their ethnicity.