

No Partiality
Romans 2:1-16

Acts 10:24-43

2 Timothy 2

Responsive: Psalm 57

Turn to Romans chapter 2 this morning where we will be looking at the first 16 verses. We have here another one of those cases where the chapter divisions don't exactly line up with a new idea or thought, but rather has been put smack dab in the middle of a point that Paul was making, Starting off with the word Therefore, connecting all that came before with what he is about to say. So we must remember the context in which he is writing this connecting point. He had just finished writing about the sinfulness and rebellion of mankind, bearing the sin in their fleshly deeds have brought upon themselves the punishment and wrath of God, in abject rebellion against God having suppressed the knowledge of God in unrighteousness, have twisted and perverted the very nature created by God to their own selfish lusts and desires. The root of sin is rebellion, and it is the natural state of mankind, to seek the elevation of self over God, in complete arrogance believe that truth is determined by our own thoughts and reasoning. Even the very nature of the creation portrays God's sovereign power and design and mankind using everything given to them by God, seeks to disprove the very one who created it.

And while there is an ultimate judgment and punishment awaiting all those who's life is marked by such rebellion, in a way there is also a punishment given within this life as well. There is an element of suffering in this life as well, for God has design this world to react in cause and effects. The sinful nature within our own hearts and minds will likewise cause a penalty of that error. Paul goes on to list in the last verses of chapter 1 these descriptors and sinful rebellion against God, Sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, being full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, being whisperer's backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, creators of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving unmerciful. and in each one of these, I am sure we could come up of a list of the outcomes of such behavior that has within in it, an element of judgment and punishment. And really what Paul is describing here is nothing more than the nature of man without God. We can find ourselves within this list as well, before the gift of the new birth in Jesus Christ we were prisoners to the very same rebellion, rejecting God, profession ourselves to be wise, suppressing the truth of God, lost in our own blindness and foolishness. Which brings us to the Therefore in chapter 2, So let us go ahead and read our passage this morning, starting in verse 1 and reading to verse 16 in chapter 2. (Read Chapter 2:1-16)

It is helpful in understanding this passage to know that Paul is focusing on the Jewish community, as he speaks of law and judgment that they too are guilty of the same as listed before. There was an arrogance in the Jewish nation that having the law of God given to Moses, and the promises of being God's people there was an idea that they were better than the gentiles and those around them, but Paul in his argument here is pointing out that they themselves are guilty of the same. In their arrogance and pride they too have rejected God by the denial of the messiah that was sent to bring salvation and reconciliation. Having perverted the very nature of the law using it as their form of righteousness and likewise a tool of judgment against the gentiles when they themselves are guilty of the same. Which is what Paul means here in verse one when he writes, "Therefore you are inexcusable O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you practice the same things." This is not Paul warning people not to judge, but rather be careful for the very judgment you judge others will be the measure by which you are judged.

Paul has already drawn a vivid picture of the depravity and rebellion of mankind, and the very nature attributed to the pagans and the gentiles also live within the Jews, for no man of himself can escape the wrath of God poured out against the sinful rebellion of mankind, but we are all shackled and held captive by our own fleshly desires and arrogance driven to sinful rebellion by our very own fallen nature. And no law, or ritual can change this reality, for even those things given by God, but the sinful nature of man have been perverted to be what they were not intended, and have taken the very things that were given to teach and to show Christ, as the things which give righteousness, and in doing so have rejected the righteousness of God given by his Son. Paul himself is an example of this, He was one of the respected in Israel, a man of power and authority believing himself righteous and holy because of his zealousness toward the law, but God had revealed to him that this love that he thought he had for God was not pure, but instead was driven by pride, arrogance and ambition.

This revelation of the motives within his heart, perverting his understanding and reverence before God is what revealed to him the darkness and hopelessness of the human condition. For it was not only the Gentiles who lived in opposition to God, but the Jews as well. He came to understand the painful truth of scripture that all people live in active rebellion against the one who made them, therefore there is no place for a self righteous judgment of others when they fail, because all are guilty of the same. In his writing here Paul is not arguing that we should not judge, in deed exercising discernment is required, and is an element of judging, what he is dealing with here is those who by the use of God's law judge cruelly other peoples lives when they themselves are guilty of sinful rebellion against God as well.

God's judgment is based upon truth, for unlike humans he shows no partiality, and is not a respecter of persons, there is no favoritism within his judgments, while we may tend to be lenient, or more cruel based on our own personal bias's God is just and holy and judges righteously. God can not be bribed, nor ever influenced by the status of the one whom he judges. We humans pass judgment on people continually, at best our judgment is flawed, at worse it is malicious. For we can only judge relying upon the testimony of others and our own experiences, but this is not so with God, for his is all knowing and all seeing and does not rely on the testimony of others for he sees all that they do, and not only that, he knows the very thoughts and desires that are in their hearts and minds. So Paul warns, So when you a mere man passes judgment yet are guilty of the same things do you think that you will escape the judgment of God? He is warning against self-righteousness, The Jews were not exempt from God's judgment, or punishment for sin and rebellion, the old testament shows us this, and likewise the new testament warns that all who are outside of Christ, will likewise face the wrath of God for their sins. There is none exempt from this reality, there is none who are righteous of themselves.

The Old Covenant did not excuse Israel, nor did it offer a way of salvation from sinfulness, but rather was a reminder of their failure and their need for a messiah. If anything the Old Covenant increased Israel's responsibility to live a life worthy of the God who rescued them from slavery, and showed that it was not possible for mankind to do so. In the following few verses, Paul is warning this very thing that in believing oneself to be righteous before God by our own merit, is indeed no righteousness at all but rather, in verse 5. "in accordance with your hardness and impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds." The Jews of Jeremiah's day argued that they were being punished for the sins of their fathers, and that God was unjust in doing so, but Jeremiah's message to them, was not that they were being punished for their fathers sins, but for their own. In the same way Paul is warning those in Rome that they can not escape the wrath of God being poured out upon the sinful by mere heritage, or circumstance, but rather an individual and personal relationship must be made with the Messiah who has come to take away our unrighteousness and impute his own.

And to those to whom Christ's righteousness has been imputed are those who Paul speaks of in verse 7, "Eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for the glory, honor and immortality." He is not arguing here that there is a righteousness of men outside of Christ, he is not arguing that one may seek to do good to gain favor of God, but rather all those who are of Christ will be faithful, and will continue in doing good for the glory and honor of Christ. This is in a stark comparison to those who are self righteous.

He just warned that those who are self righteous are in danger of the wrath of God, but those who are in Christ are those who will patiently continue in the works of God. Verse 8, Those who are self seeking and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish on every soul of man who does evil of the Jew first and also the Greek, for there is no partiality with God. Just as in salvation were the calling of God to repent and believe has been given to all of mankind, the Jews, the Greeks, the rich, the poor, and there is no favoritism, likewise it is the same with the judgment. The wrath of God is visited upon the individual who in their unrighteousness has rejected the salvific work of Christ, regardless of nationality, or social status. No one escapes the punishment of sinful rebellion against God, except those who have been rescued in the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. And even then, it was not an escape without punishment, for instead of the wrath being poured out upon you for your sins, Christ has taken that punishment upon himself in your stead, sin must be punished or God is not righteous and holy, and that punishment was either paid on the cross, or will be paid in judgment and eternal damnation.

In the last few verses that we are looking at today, Paul continues on to show that there is no partiality with God, that all of man has fallen short of the glory of God, and without God's provision in the sending of his Son all would perish under the weight of sin. There is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile, the only form of righteousness brought about by the law was a self righteousness which Paul had already condemned, being no righteousness at all, but rather pride and arrogance. The law awakens the sinful nature within man, showing our need for a savior. Verse 12. "For as many who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and as many as have sinned in the law, will be judged by the law. For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified....Paul here must be talking about something a little different, for he had just been arguing that the law brings self righteousness, and self righteousness brings condemnation yet here he says the doers of the law will be justified. The key to understanding this is in the next verse, verse 14, "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, BY NATURE, do the things of the law, these although not having the law are a law unto themselves.

The reality of being in Christ is a change of nature, from a nature of sinfulness seeking self righteousness, to a nature seeking after God. A gentile in Christ, is more of a law keeper who will stand righteous before God because of Christ than the Jew who seeks righteousness through the law. For as verse 15 says, "for they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or excusing them, in the day that God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to the gospel.

Paul is speaking of more here than the mosaic law, he is speaking of the nature of Christ himself, Christ is the law to all who believe, and his very nature and spirit has been given to all who believe, so that the work of Christ through the conscience of the believer by the holy spirit may be found righteous and just before God. There is therefore no need for an external law such as the mosaic law for those who are justified through Christ, for Christ is now indwelling and has been written upon the hearts of all those who believe, working in them to will and to do that which is pleasing to God. The Mosaic law was a guardian, or a fence put up around Israel, giving restraint and limits. Paul himself understood this very well being a pharisee himself knowing that the law mindset would have restricted many from the sins they would have otherwise committed, but having rejected some is not enough. The law did not change the heart of mankind, but rather set forth a system of controlling the sinful nature. The Jews considered themselves justified by the law and the sacrifices. The sacrifices took care of sinful rebellion against the law, yet even they were not truly what was needed but only a messenger of the true sacrifice needed for atonement.

Therefore it put Israel in a critically dangerous situation, relying upon the law and the sacrifices for their righteousness before God. But Paul is attempting to show, that even the gentiles without the law, are justified through Christ who is the end of the law and the prophets, who is the substance and fulfillment for all those who believe upon him. This is what Paul means when he says, that the Gentiles are a law unto themselves, it isn't as though they are without a law, yet they do not have the mosaic law, so it is something else, those who act according to the will of God are operating within the law of Christ which is written upon the heart of each and everyone who believe. Which created this interesting dichotomy where there were gentiles with a higher standard of morality and whose lives reflected the holiness of God more than the Jews. But even then such morality is just the outward flowing of a new and changed heart, not an action worthy of justification on its own. For Paul explains in verse 16 the scary reality, "in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to the gospel."

God does not judge nor look upon the outward man, his ability to appear righteous and holy, but he looks upon the secret thoughts, and intentions of mankind. With that standard, even the most pious law-keeper would fail, for such outward piety would create inward pride and arrogance, which God despises. We even see this line of reasoning in the world today, it is Satan's great deception. It shows itself by the phrase, "well I am a good person, I haven't killed anyone." Or "at least I am not as bad as that guy." But the reality is, you are, and you have for as Christ said on the sermon on the mount, you have heard it said you should not murder, but I say unto you if you are angry at your brother without a cause you have already committed murder.

It is not the act, it is the intent, before the act is the thought and desire, the act can be controlled, but the desire and thought sometimes just pops up in your head condemning you. But, that is the good news of the gospel, Christ died to cover those thoughts, God will judge mankind by the secret things, but Christ has died to pay the penalty of them so that we may stand before God justified and holy. Not because we have kept some moral law, but because Christ has imputed his righteousness to us. It is Christ who is our hope, and it is only through him that we have access to God, and are to be found holy and blameless. So if you are hearing this message today, and you are relying upon your own goodness, and morality, listen to what is being said here, goodness and morality is not enough to please God for the condemning sin of mankind is deeper than mere actions, it is the heart that must change and that only through the gospel and belief upon Jesus Christ. And it is the holy spirit that bears witness of this change, for those who are Christ's operate on a different level, for they are not seeking justification for themselves through morality and actions, but rather live as those who are seeking to please God.

Do not rely upon your own ability, your own morality, and perceived goodness, for like Israel and the law, it is not enough. The only answer is Christ, go to him, repent and believe clinging to him for your salvation.