



SCRIPTURE STUDIES: ROMANS 2:6-16

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Romans 2:6-16 (ESV) -- He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality. For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

Review

- Paul's calling to Gospel ministry
- How the Gospel drives Paul's love for the church
- Setting the stage for the necessity of the Gospel
 - Man knows, rejects and is given over
- God's righteous judgment
- Today - the vindication of God's righteous judgment

Paul was focused on the scope of God's justice. Now he will turn to a defense of God's justice. How can a good God punish all these people? He's going to answer that here. You might summarize today's passage like this:

God's wrath towards all – both Jew and Gentile – is justified. He does not punish unfairly and He does not punish undeservingly.

Living Waters evangelism example. (Are you a good person?)

- Ligonier poll 2020 "Everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature."
 - 46% of evangelicals said yes.

Point #1-You will be judged by works. Your or Christ's. Paul lays out the first to establish the need for the second.

Romans 2:6-8 (ESV) -- He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

- Step outside of the Gospel for a second. We read this and we think, "what a minute, I thought we were saved apart from works?" You are. And last week Brandon told you to read the Bible through the lens of the Gospel. Both of those are right. However, remember what Paul is doing. He is playing the prosecuting attorney here, indicting all men. He hasn't gotten to the Gospel yet.
- Covenant of Works: The Westminster Confession of Faith describes this covenant as one "wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience" (VII.2)
 - Covenant of Works characterized by "do this and live." Covenant of Grace, in contrast, characterized by "I have done this that you may live."
 - Republicized at Sinai and never fulfilled until Christ.
 - He was not just earning your righteousness. He was fulfilling that covenant to usher in a New Covenant. Those united to Him are seen as covenant keepers in this new covenant. Those not united to Him are still united to Adam. (See Rom. 5-6, Matt. 3:15, Gen. 2:17, Galatians 3:10-14)
 - "The original covenant between God and humankind was a covenant of works. In this covenant, God required perfect and total obedience to His rule. He promised eternal life as the blessing of obedience, but threatened mankind with death for disobeying God's law. All human beings from Adam to the present are inescapably members of this covenant. People may refuse to obey or even acknowledge the existence of such a covenant, but they

can never escape it. All human beings are in a covenant relationship to God, either as covenant breakers or covenant keepers. The covenant of works is the basis of our need of redemption (because we have violated it) and our hope of redemption (because Christ has fulfilled its terms for us)." – RC Sproul

- **3 uses of the Law**

- **Mirror:** "Its first function is to be a mirror reflecting to us both the perfect righteousness of God and our own sinfulness and shortcomings. As Augustine wrote, "the law bids us, as we try to fulfill its requirements, and become wearied in our weakness under it, to know how to ask the help of grace." The law is meant to give knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20; 4:15; 5:13; 7:7-11), and by showing us our need of pardon and our danger of damnation to lead us in repentance and faith to Christ (Gal. 3:19-24)."
- **Mitigate:** "A second function, the "civil use," is to restrain evil. Though the law cannot change the heart, it can to some extent inhibit lawlessness by its threats of judgment, especially when backed by a civil code that administers punishment for proven offenses (Deut. 13:6-11; 19:16-21; Rom. 13:3, 4). Thus it secures civil order, and serves to protect the righteous from the unjust."
- **Mold:** "Its third function is to guide the regenerate into the good works that God has planned for them (Eph. 2:10). The law tells God's children what will please their heavenly Father. It could be called their family code. Christ was speaking of this third use of the law when He said that those who become His disciples must be taught to do all that He had commanded (Matt. 28:20), and that obedience to His commands will prove the reality of one's love for Him (John 14:15). The Christian is free from the law as a system of salvation (Rom. 6:14; 7:4, 6; 1 Cor. 9:20; Gal. 2:15-19, 3:25), but is "under the law of Christ" as a rule of life (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2)." – **Taken from the Reformation Study Bible**
- Paul is focused on the first use here.
 - Matt. 5:48
 - Ps. 24:4, clean hands and a pure heart
- So what Paul is saying here is absolutely true. He is setting us up for failure though. If you, by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, God will give you eternal life. You know that you can't do that. But Paul hasn't gotten there yet.
- And for those of us that do not do that i.e. all of us (which is his point), we can expect wrath and fury.

- Why? Because God is just. Do you see how Paul is vindicating God's justice here? He's not going to leave room for anyone to say, "well I'm a pretty good person."

Point #2-All will be judged fairly with respect to the light that they have. This is not an advantage to the unrepentant religious person. It is a disadvantage.

Romans 2:9-11 (ESV) -- There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, The Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality.

- The key to this portion is the last sentence. And, as you've seen, this is a key to the whole argument Paul has made thus far: there is no partiality.
- You've heard the saying that justice is blind right?
 - "Justice is justly represented as blind because she sees no difference in the parties concerned. She has but one scale of weight for rich and poor, great and small." – William Penn
 - "A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is His delight." Pro. 11:1 and more
- And why the Jew first? Because he has more light.
 - "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" Amos 3:2
 - "Then He [Jesus] began to upbraid the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. Matt. 11:20-22
 - We are held accountable to the light that we're given. However, that is never good news because Chapter 1 showed us that we're all given enough light to be without excuse. Paul will go there again.

Romans 2:12-13 (ESV) -- For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it

is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.

- The Gentile, who doesn't not have God's special revelation will be judged by the Natural Revelation given to him.
 - What does this tell us about man? That in our apologetic encounters we need to remember that he is not neutral. Neutrality is a myth. There are no poor lost sinners out there just hoping that God will come and save them. There are only 3 categories of people in this regard.
 1. People who have the light of the truth and are suppressing it in unrighteousness. Even if they are doing so in some degree of ignorance.
 2. People whose eyes have been opened to their suppression of that truth through the Gospel.
 3. People who are in the process of being drawn by the Holy Spirit from #1 to #2.
- There is no neutrality.
- To perish without the Law simply means that they won't be judged by the Law but by the knowledge they have.
 - Rejecting Christ is not what sends people to hell. People are judged for their sins. That is exactly what Paul is saying here. That phrase assumes a bad starting point. It assumes that people are basically good. We just need to get them over this hump. Paul says no, they're dead in their trespasses and sins. They are default darkness.
 - You want to know how to answer the question of "how is it fair for God to save some and not others?" It's fair because He doesn't have to save any.
- Identifying with criminals not the judge
 - 5 miles over
 - Imagine a judge who has seen countless children killed by drivers going 5 over and who has never sped a day in his life. He is going to have a very different view of that crime than you are. If you are a person who speeds. And, you do not know that these awful things are happening as a result of driving 5 miles over. And then if one of your friends were sent to prison for life for driving 5 over, you would not rejoice in the justice of that would you? No, because you drive 5 miles over and have not considered the consequences. You don't like this form of justice because you identify with the other lawbreaker. We are all criminals in God's sight and no criminal likes justice.

- His love necessitates His wrath towards sin. The issue is that we don't see how destructive sin really is.
 - His love for His creation in view of the destructive power of sin - He hates sin with a holy fury.
- Those who have the Law will be judged by the Law. This is the same principle here. They're judged by the light they have.
 - Brandon has made a correlation between the nominal church and the Jews being referred to in Romans several times. This is another appropriate place for that. Every time you sit under the preaching of the Gospel and refuse to submit to it, you harden your heart a little more.
- The doers of the Law will be justified – look at Romans 3:20 "For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin."
 - Just to make this abundantly clear, this is where Paul is going. Our verse in Chapter 2 has been abused by any number of heretical religions, calling themselves Christian, promoting works based righteousness.
 - So what is Paul saying? He is saying the same thing he said in v.7. Only the ones who live completely righteous and holy lives will be justified. Only, he's not telling you this so you'll try and do that. He's telling you this to show you that you've already failed to do that. Again, remember he is validating God's just judgment in pouring out His wrath on all men

Point #3-No one will stand in that judgement because all have light. God's condemnation of man is justified because man's very way of living shows that he knows what he ought to do.

Romans 2:14-16 (ESV) -- For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

- I'm sure most, if not all of you already know this, but it may be worth pointing out that when the Bible talks about Gentiles, it's talking about you. These aren't some specific group. This is everyone outside of the Jewish community.
- What Paul is showing us is something that I found very interesting as a new believer. He's saying that every time the atheist, the agnostic, the Muslim, etc. does something good...every time they act selflessly or show love they are not

only proving the existence of God but they are proving that His judgement of them is just. That's what he means by a law to themselves.

- They show that the moral law of God has been implanted in them. Not by culture or upbringing but by the Imago Dei.
- He goes further and reminds us of the mechanism that God has given us to appraise ourselves – conscience.
 - The word conscience, ironically enough, means “with knowledge.” In other words, it's an internal mechanism that says “you know better.” Which is precisely what Paul has been saying since the beginning of this letter.
- The last thing to note here is that Paul says that all of this, including Christ judging the secrets of men, is “according to his Gospel.”
 - We often don't think of the Gospel as very gloom and doom. In fact, it's common to hear the two pitted against one another. “Don't preach all that judgment and condemnation. Jesus wants us to preach the Gospel.”
 - Yet Paul says that judgment and condemnation is part of his Gospel. This goes back to what I said last time I taught. We need the bad news first or the good news won't be good. It'll just be news.

Conclusion

I began tonight with this summary and I'd like to reiterate it now that we've walked through the passage.

God's wrath towards all – both Jew and Gentile – is justified. He does not punish unfairly and He does not punish undeservingly.

Paul in this passage is concerned with vindicating God's verdict. Look at Paul as the prosecution, God as the judge and mankind – Jew and Gentile as the defendants. Paul is pronouncing the Judge's just verdict on the defendants and lest anyone disagree with the verdict, Paul is shutting their mouths.

Sample Themes for Questions:

1. What is Paul's indictment on mankind in this passage? (v.12)

2. What standard will people be judged by? (the light that they have)
3. Will anyone be able to say, "but I didn't know?" (no, vv.14-16)
4. What does Paul say we must do in order to be counted as righteous by our own merits? (Follow the Law vv. 7, 13)
5. Can we do that? (no, which is the point that Paul is making)
6. What does Paul say that we justly deserve? (God's wrath, vv.6, 9)