

Romans 2

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, February 4, 2018

Good morning, everyone. You can go ahead and turn your Bibles with me to the book of Romans, if you're not already there. As you're doing that this morning, we are continuing a series called "The Book of Romans in 3 Months" where we are looking at this book in a three-month or 12-week period of time. Someone asked me the other day when we first started, they said, "Can you get through the book of Romans in three months?" and I said, "I really hope so. Otherwise, we're going to have to call it "The Book of Romans in 4 Months or 5 Months." That was a really bad joke that nobody's laughing at. Okay. I'm getting used to that.

Also, I was also asked if we're going to still do expository preaching here, which is a great question - if we're still going to go verse by verse through the Bible. I'd actually like to spend a few moments maybe talking about that, kind of as a way to introduce our chapter for today. If we were to give it a simple definition, expository preaching is preaching that explains the Bible. In its simplest form, if you were to kind of break it down, expository preaching is preaching that explains or exposes the Bible. You can see the word "expose" in the word "exposit". The goal is to expose the meaning of the text to you, to lay it bare for you to see, so that what you read here is what you hear out loud in the sermon. That's the goal of expository preaching.

There are several ways to do this. If you take it at that definition, one is by verse-by-verse preaching, which is a wonderful way to do it. You can go through the Bible one verse at a time and if you remember we did that in our series on 1 Peter. We started in 1 Peter 1:1 and we didn't stop until we got to 1 Peter 5:14. We went all the way through. I think we took a break for Christmas and Easter, and maybe a guest preacher here and there, but that's one way to explain the Bible verse by verse. Start at the beginning and finish at the end. You can learn all kinds of wonderful stuff as you do that, and we're going to do that a lot here at Grace Fellowship Church. That's going to be the most common way you're going to hear preaching from the pulpit.

But another way to do it is with a theme. So another way to explain the Bible is with a topic or a theme that is in the Bible. Some people do this with a theme that is not in the Bible, and that's not what I'm talking about here. Here, we're talking about a theme in the Bible like the church. If you remember in the series we did on the church, we opened up to passages like Matthew 16, which says, "You are Peter and upon this rock, I will build my church." And we talked about what that means, if you remember that. Then we went to another passage, Ephesians 4, which says, "He gave some as apostle, some as prophets, pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints...to build up the body of Christ." And we talked about that, but we talked about a theme in the Bible. That's another way to explain it, by letting Scripture interpret Scripture.

And that leads to one more way to do this, and that's what we're doing here in the book of Romans, and that is with a survey. You can explain the Bible with a survey or an overview of books in the Bible. You can study several chapters at once to understand the flow of Scripture. As you know, the Bible is a big book. Amen? Does anybody say amen to that? If you've ever read it before, you'll know it takes a long time to get through it. I actually did a little math on this, and according to one estimate, the Bible has 1100 chapters in it, 31000 verses. And if you

study them one week at a time, it would take you 80 years to finish it. If we were to start right now and study seven verses a week for 80 years, we would get through it all from Genesis to Revelation.

Now let me ask you, how many of you have that much time? A few hands are being raised. There are not too many of us. So we have to sometimes move a little faster, which is what a survey does. I was talking with a man from our church the other day who said, "I love pastors who spend several years going through one book of the Bible, but quite frankly, I'm not going to live that long." So we got to speed up every once in a while, and we're doing that here in the book of Romans. We're just picking up the pace a little bit. We're going a little faster than maybe what we would normally do, just so you can see the overall picture of this book.

And last week, if you remember, we started off. We're going one chapter a week right now. And we started in chapter one, verse 18, if you just want to read that. Paul writes, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth and unrighteousness." In other words, you see the word "unrighteousness" there a couple of times - God is angry with unrighteous men. That's what that verse means. God is angry with those who suppress the truth and ignore it. They pretend like God doesn't exist. They hide their head under the covers and pretend like He's not out there watching them.

Today, to balance that chapter out, if you look in chapter two, verse three, now Paul writes this. He says, "But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the wrath of God?" In other words, God is angry with righteous men, too. He's angry with unrighteous men in Romans 1. He's angry with righteous men in chapter two, especially when they say we're so much better than those people in chapter one.

I've told you before that Romans is about the gospel. That's the theme of the book. It's the good news that Jesus Christ died for sinners. But the good news starts off with this: We're all under the wrath of God. Righteous and unrighteous alike, we're all going to be judged by Him, because you can't keep the law.

To show you this, last week if you remember, I broke the 10 Commandments. You guys remember that? It was the most wicked sermon you've ever heard, because I broke all 10 Commandments in front of you guys? (Boy, my jokes are falling flat today. Is it the weather? It is the cloudy weather, 'cause these are really funny). I wrote them down and everything, but I showed you've broken the commandments into a million pieces, right? You remember that? Last week, I tore them. And you guys came up to me, and you said, "Look, you didn't tear them enough. You just kind of ripped them a little." So I asked Jordan Henderson to do them and she did it with a passion. So this is a little more accurate I think to Scripture.

We've broken the commandments a million times, haven't we? Everybody say "amen" to that? We've lied, lusted, and stole. We've coveted, blasphemed, and dishonored our parents. So spiritually speaking, without God, we're lost. Without Christ, we're lost. Righteous or not, we're doomed. We don't stand a chance.

George Whitfield said, "You can sooner climb to the sun on a rope made of sand than you can be saved by works." You can't do it. It's just impossible. To deal with that, Christ came and died for our sins and gave us His righteousness so that His list looks like this (undamaged paper). You guys remember that? He has a perfect list. He kept all the commandments. You don't have to tear any of His list. He never lied, lusted, or stole. He never coveted, blasphemed, or any of that. His righteousness is perfect. It is untouched by the wrath of God. And in His mercy, Jesus takes all of this on Himself and gives you this perfect righteousness. That's the good news. That's what Christ has come to do on the cross.

In fact, if you remember in your Bible several times, it says, "This is my Son with whom I am well pleased." Do you understand that's what this means? God is pleased with his Son. When God looks at you and me without Christ, He's not pleased, right? There is sin there. There is wrath to be paid. But when he looks at Jesus, there is no sin. It's a pleasurable sight to Him.

Now as you think of all this mess on the floor and Christ's perfect record, some of you might look at this and think, "Wait a minute, Pastor Jeremy, it's not that simple. What about all those people who claim to be Christians but are not?" Anybody ever thought about that? Where do they fit into this spectrum? What about those who say they're saved, but they try to be righteous by their works? They think they're good enough. They don't think they're that bad. To answer that, I have another visual illustration for you.

There's a lot of people, a lot of professing Christians today who say, "Yes, I've broken the commandments, but it's not that bad. I can fix it on my own like this." They take the million pieces that are scattered on the floor and they try to hold them together with tape or with glue. They say, "I don't need God. I don't need Christ. I just need my works. Or maybe I need a little bit of God and a little bit of Christ, but I can do the rest myself. I can make it look like this." Does anybody know what I'm talking about?

They come to the first commandment, which says, "You shall have no other gods before me," and they say, "Yeah, I've broken that one, but God doesn't care because I've done this. See. I've fixed it with tape." Or they come to the second commandment, which says, "You shall not make for yourself an idol." (And I think we were generous with tearing and taping this, because if we were more realistic, it'd be torn all over the place). But they see this, and they say, "Yeah, I've broken that one too, but it's okay because I'm a good person. I'm trying hard and God will reward me for that." They come to the third commandment, which says, "You shall not misuse God's name," and they say, "Yeah, I've broken that one, but I'm doing better than those people over there," right? "Oh, yeah, I blasphemed once or twice, but I'm not as bad as those people in Romans 1," right?

Now let me ask you as you look at this, is this any better than that, the torn-up paper on the ground? It's not, is it? Can you honestly say that this is pleasing to God? They're both torn. They're both broken. In fact, if you were God, which one would make you angrier, the torn-up paper on the ground or the torn-up paper taped together? Which one would offend you more? Probably the taped paper, 'cause this is just a lie, right? What you need to do is this: You need to

tear both of them, 'cause they're both the same. You need to trust in Christ's righteousness instead. If you try to tape up the commandments, you're lost. If you try to get into heaven with your own good works, you're under the wrath of God, too.

Some of you have heard the nursery rhyme, which says, "Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. And all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty Dumpty back together again." If you were to think about all the sins you've committed, all the lies you've told, all the ways you've dishonored God, you could put your name in there. "Jeremy sat on the wall. Jeremy had a great fall. And all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Jeremy back together again?" We could all put our name in there, because we've all broken the law. In God's eyes, we've all had a great, great fall. Nothing, no amount of tape or glue or religion or works can put us back together again. Our lives are shattered.

In the early 1900s, a major London newspaper wrote an editorial asking the question what is wrong with this world. And one author answered in two words, he said, "I am." He said, "I am what is wrong with this world. Not them, but me. Not those evil people over there. Not the atheists and the agnostics. Not the alcoholics and the drug users. Not people from other religions. I am what is wrong with the world. The problem starts with me." That's what Paul is saying in Romans chapter one and two. The rest of the book (just to encourage you) is about the good news. The rest of the book is about what Christ has come to do to deal with this, but Paul starts off with this.

As you read Romans 1, you're blown away with how bad the world is, right? I don't know if you guys have ever done that. You start reading Romans 1 and boy, it's really gotten bad. It starts off with men suppressing the truth of God. It ends up with men suppressing themselves, suppressing their own sexuality. But as you read Romans 2, you realize the problem doesn't stop there. It goes deeper than that. The problem is in the church, too. The problem of sin is with religious people as well. It's not just with the godless. It's with the godly. It's not just with the unrighteous. It's with the righteous men, too.

To look at this another way, Romans 1 is written to people who would've heard about the wrath of God and laughed at it. They would've heard about the wrath of God and thought it was a joke. The people in Romans 2 wouldn't have laughed. They would've taken it seriously. They would've shuddered to think of the wrath of God. Paul says, "Without Christ, they are under it, too." And that's what we're going to talk about this morning.

Martin Luther, maybe to even put this in some more perspective, he called the people in Romans 2 Satan's martyrs. He called them Satan's martyrs because they went to church, and prayed, and fasted, and read their Bibles...without Christ, and then they went to hell. They did all the right things for the wrong reasons. They did all the good stuff serving the wrong master because they did it to save themselves, to tape up the commandments. And you don't want to do that this morning. You don't want to be Satan's martyr. You want to tear the tape off the commandments and grab hold of the righteousness of Christ.

Let's talk about that. Let me give you four reasons why God is angry with the righteous, or we might say the self-righteous. I think that's a little more accurate thing to say in Romans 2.

Romans 2 is about four reasons why God is angry with the self-righteous. These people aren't really righteous. If they were, they would be trusting in Christ, but they are self-righteous. They think they're good enough to get to heaven and they're frowning on people that are not as good as them. Here's some reasons why God is angry about that.

The first reason is this, because they're inconsistent. God is angry with the self-righteous, because they're inconsistent. They don't do what they say they do. They don't keep the law themselves, even though they judge others who break the law, too. If you look in chapter two verse one, it says, "Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that what you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things."

That word "judge" or "judgment" is mentioned three times in this verse and nine times in this chapter, because that's the theme of it. These people are judging others. In chapter one, they're sinning and denying the truth about God. In chapter two, they're judging people. That's the whole context of this chapter. They're looking at all those sins in Romans 1 and saying, "We don't do any of that." And Paul is saying, "Hold on a minute. Yes, you do." In fact, he says, "You have no excuse for saying that."

If you remember back in Romans 1:20, Paul says, that all men are without excuse because that which is known about God is evident within them because they know there's a God. And now Paul says, therefore, you have no excuse, everyone of you who pass judgment because you have too much evidence for that as well. Paul says you could look at your own life and you can realize you don't need to be judging anybody.

He says in chapter two, verse one, he says, "You practice such things," which means you do them over and over again. Just like a hockey player practices hockey, you practice breaking the law. Like I showed you last time, you may not commit adultery or indecent acts, like Romans 1:24 talks about. But if you look in Romans 1:28, he goes on and he says,

...God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;

If you read that list with a humble heart, you would have to admit all of us have done one of those things. You may not have worshiped idols, but I guarantee you, you have been unloving and unmerciful, right? You may not have committed indecent acts, but you have gossiped and slandered, and Paul says both of those are evil in the eyes of God. You could say it like this. You can be a completely evil person and be nothing but envious all your life. Does that make sense? You don't have to go kill somebody, you can just be envious. Or you could be a fully depraved person and be nothing but boastful all your life. That sin alone can drag you straight to hell. Any of these sins can and, therefore, Paul says you can't judge anybody. This is a humbling passage. This is kind of like reading the Sermon on the Mount. No one can read the Sermon on

the Mount without putting their hand on their mouth and saying, "God, have mercy on me." This is that kind of passage that we're all guilty of one of these sins.

I remember talking with a young man several years ago who was really upset because his wife had just cheated on him. He was really torn up about it, and rightly so. It was horrible. I met with him several times and let him vent and tell me how bad she was. But finally, after three or four times of meeting with him, I had to say, "Listen, you're not perfect either." I was very gentle about that. I wasn't trying to offend him, but said, "You haven't done everything God has told you to do." He said, "Yes, I have." He said, "I've done everything God has told me." "Really? You've done everything?" That's what Paul is talking about here. It takes a self-righteous person to think that way. It takes a proud and an evil heart.

Just to see how you're doing with this (I've been humbled all week by this so I feel the freedom now to maybe pass off some humble pie to you guys), I've been chewing on it all week so let me ask you just to see how you're processing this. Have you ever watched the news and said, "What's wrong with the world? Has everybody lost their mind?" Anybody ever said that? I think we all have, right? Do you know what you could be saying when you say that? Maybe not, but you know what you could be saying? You could be saying, "What's wrong with the world? There's nothing wrong with me," right? "What's wrong with those evil people out there? There's nothing wrong with the good sweet people in here." Have you ever driven by a mosque or a temple and said, "How could anybody be that stupid? How could anybody be that crazy to pray to Allah or to worship all those Hindu gods?" You know what you could be saying when you do that? You could be saying, "What's wrong with them? There's nothing wrong with us. What's wrong with the Muslims? There's nothing wrong with the Christians." Have you ever seen an older man with a tattoo or a younger man with an earring? Have you ever seen a co-worker drinking a beer or smoking a cigarette and said, "What a loser. He'll never amount to anything."

Do you know what you're saying when you think like that? You know what you're doing? You're judging people. You're doing the very thing Paul says not to do right here. You're saying God made two types of people, us and them, the haves and the have nots, and we're the haves. We're better than everyone else. Paul says, "You condemn yourselves when you do that. For you who judge," he says, "practice the same things."

You can imagine a former Pharisee, like Paul, writing this out. If anybody was self-righteous, Pharisees were like self-righteousness on steroids. This was the cream of the crop in their own minds. Paul says, "You who judge practice the same things, too." Later on in Romans 7, Paul will say, "I tried to keep the law. I tried to do everything it said. And I did fine, until the law said don't covet. And then I said I'm lost." When it comes to being saved by the law, we all fall short of the glory of God. We've all failed. Our lives are like shattered pieces on the floor and, therefore, we can't judge anybody. We can't be self-righteous. God is angry when we do that.

A young couple once moved into an older home that had a kitchen window overlooking the neighbor's back yard where the neighbor lady hung her laundry. And everyday the young wife would come downstairs and say to her husband, "What is she doing? How could she let her laundry get that dirty?" This went on for weeks. She would come down every morning and complain about the neighbor lady's dirty laundry over and over again. Until one morning, she

came down and was amazed at the change. The laundry was clean. There wasn't even a spot on. And so she said to her husband, she said, "Finally, that woman learned how to wash clothes." And the husband said, "No, she didn't. I just washed our kitchen window."

Friends, maybe some of you need to wash your kitchen window this morning. Amen? Maybe some of you need to take a long hard look at your life and clean it off and see things the way God does. Our lives are dirty, too. You're a sinner like everyone else and, therefore, you can't judge.

Warren Weirsbe said, "Let God be the judge. It is your job to be a witness. It is your job to tell people about Christ. It's your job to proclaim the truth and love. It's not your job to pronounce condemnation on people." R. Kent Hughes said, "A little taste of righteousness can easily be perverted into a sense of self-righteousness." We could say this morning the way out of that is to deal with your sins first. Jesus said, "Remove the log out of your eye before you remove the speck out of your brother's eye." It's kind of a funny picture, isn't it? You're trying to remove the speck out of your brother's eye, but while you're on your way there, your log keeps slamming them in the face. You can't even reach the speck, 'cause your log is hitting him.

This leads to another reason why God is angry with the self-righteous. First, because they're inconsistent. They judge others for not keeping the law when they themselves don't keep it. Second reason is this, because they're ungrateful. Self-righteous people ungrateful. They don't thank God for all He has done for them. They don't thank Him for his mercy, thank Him for His grace, thank Him for His kindness, 'cause they don't think they need it. If you can get into heaven with a little bit of tape, why do you need the grace of God?

If you read on in verses two through four, Paul says it like this. He says in verse two,

2 And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. 3 But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

That phrase "think lightly" is another way of saying "think little of". Some of your translations say "despise" or "presume". If you think you can go to heaven on your own, you despise the kindness of God, don't you? You presume upon it. You say, "Yeah, Jesus, You died on the cross, but that wasn't enough. I need to do more. Let me go grab my tape." You say, "Yes, You bore the wrath of God for my sins, but I need to do more than that. I'm going to do a bunch of works."

To show you the seriousness of this, Paul refers not only to His kindness in verse four, but he refers to the riches of His kindness. If you notice that phrase, "the abundance of His kindness" "the lavish nature of His kindness". In other words, God spared no expense with you. He's gone over the top for you. He's gone above and beyond. Even though God sees everything you do, every sin, every evil thought, He doesn't send you to hell right away. Even though He watches from heaven and He sees your thought life, He sees your actions, He sees all of this stuff in Romans 1, He doesn't deal with it right away, 'cause He's kind. He's giving you time to repent.

Paul says when you judge others, you despise all that. When you say you're better than them, you step on it and throw it back in His face.

When Andrew Carnegie died, the famous millionaire, he gave \$1 million to one of his descendants who went on to complain because he didn't give her more. She went on to bad mouth him and slander him in the press because he didn't give her \$100 million like he did his cousins. He didn't give her \$200 million like he did his son. But here's the thing, friends, he didn't have to give her anything, right? He didn't have to give her one red cent and, friends, God doesn't have to give you anything either. He doesn't have to be kind to you. He doesn't have to be patient or tolerant with you. He doesn't have to sit up in heaven and watch you sin and wait, but He does. It's the height of ingratitude to let God do that for you and look at other people and say, "God, why are You so kind to them?" Does that make sense? It's the height of ingratitude to say, "God, why are You forgiving them for all they've done?" Or "Why are You being patient with them for what they continue to do? Why are you being patient this much with them and you've been patient this much with me?"

Here's the problem with this. Here's why self-righteous people are so ungrateful. Paul goes on in verses five through six to say, it's because of a stubborn heart. In verse five he says, "But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God who will render to each person according to his deeds".

I can't get into everything in here for the sake of time or look at all these passages, other than to say this is why God is so angry with self-righteous people. It's because they're stubborn. That word stubborn is *sklērotes* in Greek, which sounds like your English word "skeleton". And the idea is that they have a heart like a skeleton. Some of your translations say "hard". They had a hard heart. They have no life in them. They see all the kindness of God, but they can't be kind themselves. They see all the mercies of God, but they can't be merciful themselves. They look at all these people in Romans 1. They say, "They're bad. They're bad. They're bad," without ever looking at themselves and saying "I'm bad, too." Because of this, Paul gives a frightening word in verse five, he says, "They're storing up wrath against themselves."

When I was a kid, every Christmas, my parents would make me take the Christmas decorations and store them up in the attic. I don't know if you guys ever had to do this. I'd be gone for university all year. I'd come back for two weeks at Christmas and at least part of that was spent climbing up and down the attic with the Christmas tree. My mom said I did it so I could have dinner so she would feed me. But the same idea is here, God is storing up wrath in the attic. He's recording every sin, every evil deed, every evil transaction. And if you don't trust in Christ and repent, one day he says, "He will pour it out on you on the day of wrath when His righteous judgment will be revealed."

Just to warn you, I don't think I have to tell you this, but church people can be pretty stubborn, right? I'm not looking at anybody when I say that. I can be stubborn, too. We can be pretty hard hearted at times like walking skeletons in the church. A deacon was once asked to step down from his position over some doctrinal differences he had with his church and although he had served there for more 30 years, the people changed their mind on some things, and they asked

him to leave. At the meeting where they were dismissing this man, the deacon turned to the person sitting next to him and he said, "This is so sad, because let me tell you who these people are that are dismissing me." He said, "That guy over there, I led to the Lord. And that one over there, I rescued from drunkenness. That woman, I reconciled with her husband, and that one over there I took in off the streets. and they don't remember." He said, "They've forgotten."

My friends can I ask you have you forgotten the mercies of God this morning? Do you remember how kind He has been toward you, how patient, how tolerant, how much sin He has washed in the blood of the Lamb? Or do you think you're somehow past that now? Do you think you're better now and you don't need that anymore?

To say this another way, it's been said that if you have a heart of stone, you crush everything around you. Are you crushing everything around you? Are you like a spiritual bulldozer in the church? Listen, you can't weep over sin if you're crushing everything. You can't weep over sin if you have a heart of stone. Paul is writing this in chapter two. He's writing this in chapter one to maybe give a wake-up call, but it looks like in Romans 2, he's writing this to break some hard hearts. Do you have a hard heart this morning?

DL Moody once preached at a prison and afterwards, he went to visit the inmates after he was preaching. And he went to the first cell and he saw the man was happy. He was doing fine, and so he said, "You know what, that's not the man for me." So he went on to the next cell. And he looked in the cell, and he saw that man was doing fine. He said, "That's not the guy for me." Then he went on to the next cell, and the next one, and the next one until he found a man on his knees crying out for mercy to God. And he said, "That's the man for me. He gets it." Did you get it this morning? Do you understand what God has done for you and the weight of it?

We just talked about Romans 1 last week and how evil those people are. But when's the last time you saw yourself in there. Or, when is the last time you read Romans 1 and wept? When's the last time you read anything in the Bible and wept? We like to complain and gripe and bellyache about the news when it should be making us cry, right? One author said, "The doctrine of sin is the easiest doctrine in the world to prove, because everywhere you look, there it is." What do you do when you see it? Do you smile and say, "God's going to get you, you evil sinner?" Or do you cry out for mercy for them?

Just a side note here by the way, it might help to mention, Paul says more about judgment in Romans 2 than he does in Romans 1, 'cause it looks like this is what makes God angrier. This bothers Him more. In Romans 1, he says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven," but he doesn't say anything else about wrath until he gets to Romans 2:5. And then he goes on for six verses to talk about God's anger. From verse five all the way down to verse 11, he says, God is storing up wrath and righteous judgment for those who don't repent and He'll render to each person according to their due. In verse eight, he says, "The Lord will pour out wrath and indignation."

That word "pouring" is like water coming out of a pitcher or a glass. It'll smother everything. In verse nine, he says, "It'll be tribulation and distress for every soul who does evil," and he says all of this in the context of a self-righteous heart. He says all of this in the context of those who look

down on everyone else and judge them. He hates it when people act that way. Listen, friends. Let's say it this way. There's only one Judge in the universe and He sits in heaven.

And that leads to another reason why God is angry with the self-righteous. (And we'll go through these next ones pretty quickly). They're inconsistent. They are ungrateful. Third, God is angry with the self-righteous because they're unaware, or we might say ignorant, of the nature of God. They're unaware of the nature of God. They don't really get it, as DL Moody says, because they're not broken over their sins.

Paul says this briefly in verse 11. If you read in verse 11, he says, "For there is no partiality with God." He talks about the Jew first and also to the Greek in verse ten. Then he says, "For there is no partiality with God," or in the King James version, "God is no respecter of persons." I kind of like that version because the idea is that God doesn't respect who we are or what we do. He's not impressed with it. It doesn't mean God doesn't care what we do. He cares very much what we do. But God doesn't look down from heaven and say, "Wow, look at how much they did for Me. Let's let them into heaven. Look at how many times they pray. Look at how many Bible verses they memorized. Look at how many times they went to church. Let's bring them into My presence." It doesn't work that way.

For you guys, did you guys get gold stars for having perfect attendance in Sunday school when you were a kid? I got those on a chart. Other kids got it on a chart. I never got one. My mom gave me one when I came home so I'd feel better about myself, but I never got a gold star. God doesn't give gold stars for perfect attendance, not when it comes to salvation. Here's why. Verse 12 says, "For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under law will be judged by the law." In other words, no matter who you are, you've broken the law. If you have the law or have the Bible, you've sinned under the law and will be judged by that. And if you don't have the law, you don't have the Bible, you sinned that way as well. You'll perish.

One author said it this way, he said, "Any man can be judged by his own conscience and he will be condemned. No man has ever lived up to the light that he has." You ask any man what his code of conduct is, and I guarantee it, he's broken it. Paul's point is a judgment is coming to everyone. Verse 13 says, "For it is not the hearers of the law who are just before God, but the doers of the law..." and we could add nobody does that. Nobody does the law. Nobody keeps it. As we've just seen, we're all broken and stand condemned in the presence of God.

In his commentary on Romans, Donald Grey Barnhouse has a rather lengthy quote on this, but I think it's a good one. And I want to read it to you in full because it's a perspective on this. But it says this,

The goddess of justice in the Greek system had a bandage over her eyes so that she could not see the person who came before her to be judged. And she carried a set of scales so that justice could be given with absolute balance and equity, and she carried a sword that had no scabbard which was swift to strike all who are guilty. Man, on the other hand cannot have an unqualified justice, because he never knows all the facts. The true motives which make up our behavior are for the most part hidden from us. So to compensate, man

has invented the idea of justice tempered with mercy. That idea is a purely human one. With God, there is no mixture. The divine justice was manifested in the Lord Jesus and without any mercy whatsoever, the wrath of God was poured out upon Him in full. Henceforth, mercy and justice are in two different categories and they can never be mixed. It is all mercy for the one who believes in Jesus...and it is all justice for the one who does not. That's why the whole Christian concept may be expressed in three phrases: I deserve hell. Jesus took my hell upon Himself and now there is nothing left for me, but heaven. There is no middle ground. God is not a respecter of persons.

See what he's saying. There's no middle ground with God. If you believe in Jesus this morning, you will experience nothing but mercy, nothing but grace, nothing but forgiveness and love when you die. But if you don't believe in Him, you will experience nothing but justice. Going back to that phrase, "The wrath of God is stored up," the idea is it's just waiting there for you. And when you die, it will be unleashed, because God is no respecter of persons. There's only one person He respects when it comes to salvation, that is the Lord Jesus Christ. If you're in Him, you will be saved. If you're not, you'll be lost.

And that leads to a final reason why God is angry with the self-righteous. And that is because, just to put it bluntly, they're hypocritical. That's what it all boils down to at the end of the day. It's kind of a scary term to use. It sounds a little insulting, and I don't mean it that way, but self-righteous people are inconsistent, ungrateful, and unaware because they're hypocritical. That word "hypocritical" means "to live under a mask". The idea is they're hiding. They're not living in reality. This is not reality, right? This is a delusion. It's not the real thing.

To show you this, Paul in a very humble way brings up the Jews, the most self-righteous people of all time, his people. They're the most religious. If you think of all the religions in the world, the longest lasting religions, Judaism may be it. It's been around for thousands of years. Thousands of years they've tried to keep the law, and they couldn't do it. Thousands of years they've tried to obey the commandments, and they failed. And now Paul, at the end of Romans 2, says if they couldn't do it, what chance do you think you have? If in the scope of 4 or 6000 more years they couldn't keep this, why do you think you can?

To show you this, Paul begins by saying, Judaism had its advantages, in verses 17 through 20 of chapter two. If you notice, he says, "They were instructed out of the law, so they knew the law. And through that, they became a guide to the blind, and a light to the darkness, and a corrector of the foolish, but unfortunately, he goes on to say, they couldn't keep the law either. I think it was Augustine who called the Jews blind men carrying lanterns. They had light and they couldn't see it. Some of them could, but most of them couldn't.

He says in verses 21 through 23, again, this is Paul talking about his own people, talking from a humble heart, in verse 21 he says,

21 you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal? 22 You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?

In other words, Gentiles, non-Jews look at you and they look at your law and they see you don't even keep it.

Then sliding down to verses 28 through 29, Paul kind of wraps it up like this. He says, "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God." In other words, you're not a Jew just because you have the law. You have to obey it in your heart. You have to do what it says. You have to let it drive you to Christ. You're not saved just because you have a Bible.

One pastor said, "Going to church, sitting in church, no more makes you a Christian than sitting in the garage makes you a car." You have to take off the mask and let it penetrate your heart. He says, "For circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter." In other words, going back to how we started this off, this taped-up paper won't work. It just won't work. It takes more than this to please God. It takes more than this to make him happy. It didn't work for Israel, it won't work for you. It didn't get them into heaven, and it won't get you into heaven either. Like we said, no amount of tape could put Humpty Dumpty back together again. So you have to tear this, rip it up, stop believing a lie, and you have to trust in this, Christ's perfect righteousness, instead. Trust in Christ instead.

When you do this, here's Paul's point in Romans 2 (this is how it all started anyway), when you trust in this, I promise you, you will not judge other people. When you cling to this, you will not condemn anyone. Can I just mention Paul had to be one of the most judgmental people of all time? When he became a Christian, he was out doing what? Judging Christians, to the nth degree, he was killing them. Paul says, "When I met this Christ, the judgment stopped."

An elderly bishop once boarded a ship and he went straight to the captain. He said, "Captain, can I keep my valuables with you because I've met my roommate, and I think he's a shady character." The captain said, "Sure." He said, "You certainly can. Oh, and by the way, your roommate just stopped by and he said you look shady too. He asked if he could have his valuables with us as well." My friends, we all look shady to God, if we were going to say it in those terms. We all look sinful to Him. Whether you identify with the people in Romans 1 or the people in Romans 2, whether you grew up in church or out in the streets, we should all perish for the sins we've committed, which is why God sent His son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Next week, if you come back, we're going to talk more about that in Romans 3 and Paul is going to just unpack all Christ has done for us on the cross. As a matter of fact, it says in Romans 3, "Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Not by the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ," and we will come back next week and see what that means.

For this week, let me just say, if you've never trusted in Christ, there's no better time than now. If you've never turned to Him in faith and repentance, just know that He came to pay the price of your sin in full, not part of it, but all of it. He came so that you didn't have to bring a roll of tape with you to heaven. He came to take all of this on himself and to give you His righteousness, if

you would believe in Him, which is what we're going to celebrate at the Lord's table now. Let's pray and we'll take the Lord's table.

By the way, afterwards, if you would like to know more about Christ and what it means to believe in Him, you come see myself or some of the men in our church, and we would love to talk with you about that. For now, let's pray.

Father, we thank You for the work of Your Son, for all He has done, so that we don't have to try to be self-righteous. We can be righteous in Him. We can be righteous in Christ. Lord, we thank you for Paul's clear words here in this chapter. We thank you for these humble words. I can't even imagine what it would've meant for Paul to write this. It would've probably been some tears on the page as he thought about this past life. Lord, maybe some of us are thinking about our past lives this morning. Maybe some of us are thinking about our present lives and how we are hard hearted and judgmental. If that is going on with anyone, Lord, I pray you would draw them to repentance. I pray you would draw us all to repentance, draw us all to Christ. As we take of Your supper here in just a moment, may You be pleased with it Lord. May we do so with pure hearts, and may Christ be exalted. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.