

GRACE ROAD CHURCH

Romans 2:1-5

October 8, 2017

Intro: We have been studying the book of Romans and last week we finished chapter one. And if you have been with us, you know that Paul's goal thus far in the book has been to reveal to us our absolute need for a Savior by demonstrating how none of us are sinless that we are all guilty of sin. So in Romans chapter one - he really levels each one of us showing that we are all sinners and none of us are better than another. All of us are in need of forgiveness and rescue. And so he calls out immoral behaviors and says people who practice these actions are guilty.

But even though Paul's purpose for the first few chapters of Romans is to demonstrate how we are all guilty of being radically flawed and sinful - that is difficult for us to hear because we tend to view ourselves in the best possible light. Especially as church people we don't think we are all that bad. In fact, we are actually quite notorious for saying other people are bad and we are the good guys.

So, in Romans chapter two - Paul is now going to begin to address the religious crowd who think their morality makes them acceptable to God. Those who think their lives are pretty much together and therefore are not really in need of a Savior. And he is going to continue to try and expose our depravity so that we understand how much we needed and need Jesus and His work on the cross.

Romans chapter two Paul continues...

Romans 2:1 - 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. ²We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.

Paul is getting after self-righteous hypocrites. Maybe we read that and think - YES, I hate judgmental hypocrites! I mean we all have someone we know like that - right?

But - who is Paul talking about here? The truth is... he is talking about all of us.

This is hard for us to see, because our self-righteousness does not want to see it. We are blind to the fact that we tend to judge others for what we are guilty of as well.

The concept of "judging" has been abused so I want to say first - this is not a call to never correct someone's hurtful or sinful behavior or call them to turn from it - but it is call to stop standing in judgment of someone - condemning them - when we are guilty of the same thing and fail to condemn ourselves as well. We have no right to judge someone self-righteously like we are better than them - when Christ had to die for our sin as well.

Example: So saying "Gossip is wrong" is not being a self-righteous, judgmental hypocrite. But - constantly gossiping about other people - saying things you would never say to their face behind their back... but then being absolutely outraged and appalled when someone gossips

about you - because IT IS A SIN TO GOSSIP! - is judging others *and* condemning others for the very same things you practice.

When you feel more righteous than them - you are doing what Paul is saying not to.

Unfortunately - this is all too common even among God's people.

To show how common this is and how prone we are to fall into this trap - let's look at someone the Bible refers to as a "man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22) - because if he can fall into this trap, it is safe to assume we all can.

2 Samuel 12 - If you are are not familiar with the story...

King David has been hanging out and enjoying the spoils of being a great leader and king.

One day, after he had sent his troops out to fight a battle, he was was relaxing in his palace staring out over his kingdom probably thinking to himself - "Look what I have accomplished." David was rich, he had all he could ever want in life.

As he is staring out he sees a beautiful woman out on a rooftop.

David sees her and asks some of his men to bring her to him. They said - Dude that's Bathsheba - she is married to your boy Uriah!

Uriah was actually a friend of David - part of a group of guys called "David's mighty men" that volunteered to risk their own lives in protection of David.

But he says - go bring her to me anyway. They get her and bring her to David and David ends up taking advantage of her even though she was married to one of the soldiers in David's army. As a result she gets pregnant. To try and cover it up, David orchestrates the killing her husband to cover up his sin.

David:

- *Covets another man's wife*
- *Commits adultery with her*
- *Murders a man - and*
- *Lies to cover it up*

He breaks 4 of the ten commandments.

So after David does this evil act... God sends a man named Nathan to confront David on this.

Nathan comes to David and says - Hey... My man... you got a second? You mind if I run something by you that I am dealing with. I got this scenario and I was hoping you could help me with it. (Nathan makes up a story to expose David's sin)

2 Sam 12 - And the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him & said to him, There were two men in a certain city, the one rich (David) & the other poor (Uriah). ² The rich man had very

many flocks and herds, ³ but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. ⁴ Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.” ⁵ Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, “As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, ⁶ and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.”

What is David upset about?

Someone took something that was not his.
Someone took something he did not even care about.
Someone took something he didn't need.

So he is angry! But then Nathan says in verse 7 -

⁷ Nathan said to David, “You are the man!

Nathan goes “You are the one I am talking about. You did this thing.”

You took something that was not yours.
You took something you did not even care about.
You took something you didn't need.

Nathan: David - you are angry about an injustice, you are outraged by an action... that you yourself are guilty of committing!

As we see this illustrated - there some things I want us to see that this passage teaches us about ourselves and how self-righteous judging behavior plays out in our lives.

1. When we are self-righteous - we see everyone's else's sin but ignore our own

David took another man's wife, committed adultery and murder - and when approached by Nathan - assumed he must be talking about someone else! He completely missed how he was guilty.

This teaches us we tend to see the fault of others crystal clear while completely ignoring that we are often guilty of the same conduct.

John Stott says “We are often as harsh in our judgement of others as we are lenient toward ourselves. We work ourselves up into a state of self-righteous indignation over the disgraceful behavior of other people, while the very same behavior seems not nearly so serious when it is ours rather than theirs.”¹

And as Christians we are often no different.

¹ John Stott, The Message of Romans (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1994), p. 82

Example: I don't know how many times I have met with a married couple and the man is outraged their wife doesn't follow the Biblical call to honor their husband - they will break out with the Bible - because after all they are Bible believers ... but at the same time they look at porn - but they think that is irrelevant. (So I am outraged that my wife laid aside God's word when it is not something she wants to follow - but when I lay aside God's word its no big deal.)

We judge and condemn - but practice the same things.

or another way this plays out

Example: Or we say we hate the division in America (both political and racial) and it saddens us but then take to FB to make posts and statements that only further divide. And maybe we get 15 likes from our likeminded friends - but we only further alienate the other side and further the divide.

We judge and condemn - but practice the same things.

or

Example: We get frustrated and angry at your kids for not being obedient right when you ask them to do something, but when Jesus calls you to something, that's suddenly "extreme" and you need some time to think and pray about it because your situation is different.

When we are self-righteous - we see everyone's else's sin but ignore our own.

And I know I am not the exception.

Illustration: Any time I preach I ask myself how do I struggle with this - and even try to give an example - for this passage I asked myself how do I do this? How do I judge people and yet practice the same things... I legit could not think of an example. THAT IS THE PROBLEM. We ignore our own sin. So - I asked my wife... and...she replied "Oh I can give you examples!"

We don't see our own sin well and when we do - we aren't as outraged by it.
Paul addresses this free pass we tend to give ourselves back in our passage...

Romans 2:3-4 - ³Do 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? ⁴Or 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?

We presume on the riches of his kindness, when we say our sin is different, and less severe than others or excuse it.

So, when we are self-righteous - we see everyone's else's sin but ignore our own. Another thing we learn from David is...

2. When we are self-righteous: we want others to be punished for their sins but want mercy and grace for ourselves.

Get this when Nathan shares the scenario with David, David demands justice!

In fact - *excessive justice!* David wants the person to die when there was nothing in the Mosaic law that said that offense was worthy of death - but he is furious and wants excessive justice, UNTIL he finds out that its him - and then he wants grace.

In Psalm 51 after the confrontation (once David realizes he is the one who coveted, lied, stole), he states...

Psalm 51: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

This is one of the things I love about the Scriptures - you just see human nature play out.

So we go from when Nathan said there was a man that had a sheep and this dude came and took it, David was like, "Kill them! Destroy them! They must die! Nathan said, "You're the man." Before you know it, David shifts and now its have mercy on me. Why - because when we are self-righteous we want others punished for their sin and want mercy and grace for ourself.

We understand our need for mercy when we sin, but when we are self-righteous we lack grace and want everyone else punished for their offenses against us.

Example: When you lose your temper - you have anger issues and need help... when I lose my temper, it was simply because I was provoked and no one is perfect.

Example: When you are late - you are inconsiderate and don't value my time, when I am late - there was extenuating circumstances.

We want to see people pay for their sins - especially the ones they commit against us - but cling to the cross and the grace and mercy it provides when we sin.

Lastly and ultimately what we have to understand...

3. When we are self-righteous - we are more like what we despise than we care to admit.

David was outraged by the conduct of the man Nathan discussed - he despised that conduct... and yet... it was David's actions being discussed. David was that man!

This teaches us that we have more in common with the depravity around us than we realize or want to admit. That is what Paul is conveying in Romans 2 and that is what David needed to come to see... that the thing that angered him was in his own heart and behavior.

I think this is why we like to find imperfections in everyone else - it gets our minds off our own struggles and need.

Thomas Hobbes, the seventeenth century political philosopher wrote of people who “are forced to keep themselves in their own favor by observing the imperfections of other men”²

What he was getting at is we like judging others because it makes us feel good about ourselves and makes us think we can replace our need for the gospel with the idea I am not as bad as other people.

But all of our self-righteous deeds do not replace our need for the gospel - in fact it only contributes to our need for it.

Romans 2:1-5 - 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. ² We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. ³ 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? ⁴ 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? ⁵ 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.

Our self-righteousness stores up wrath for the day of wrath. Now we will cover God's wrath and judgement later in Romans more fully - (*I am going to go ahead and pass that theological blessing onto Kevin*) but what this passage is saying is that every time you judge another as though we are better - we are not working our way to God - in fact we are **adding** to our sin account when we judge in an condemning way, as though we are better. That is sobering.

We all struggle with this and this is why we need a Savior.

The good news for self-righteous critics like us... is as Keller says:

“We are more sinful and flawed than we ever dared believe, yet more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.”³

Though we are so flawed and though we sinfully condemn others - Christ came - the sinless one - the righteous Judge took upon Himself the condemnation and punishment we deserved. Jesus went to the cross and though He was innocent - He stood condemned - so we could be forgiven of our self-righteous condemnation of others and so we could be considered guilt less. The Lord laid on Him the inequity of us all, so that we could be forgiven.

He took all the punishment our sin deserves. All of the wrath we were storing up - Jesus took that all upon Himself. When we understand that - we have no reason to judge, Christ had to be punished for OUR sin not only the sins of others.

And Christ has paid that price in full, so why are we demanding others to hang on that cross? He hung on the cross - paid the price and declared IT IS FINISHED. This truth should free us

² Hobbes, Leviathan, p.125

³ <https://twitter.com/timkellernyc/status/395296784568033280>

from self-righteousness that causes us to focus on others - and help us realize how sinful we are - yet how loved we are.

That no matter what we have done - There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. And the way we get "in Christ Jesus" is if we will cease from trusting in our own righteousness and good behavior and trust in Christ and what He had done for us at the cross.

Because where we fail - Jesus our Savior and rescuer succeeded. Though we were his enemies - He loved us so much He paid the price for our sin. That is how much we are loved by so great a Savior.

That is what Romans 2 is teaching - we are a mess... with no reason to judge others... but loved by God.

This should cause us to worship and love him more - the more we realize how flawed we are - how much we needed to be forgiven - we rejoice in so great a salvation.