

Romans 2:11-29

"The Impartiality Of God"

*W/out exception, all humanity, throughout all human *history* stands guilty (categorically) before God. Some indulge in gross immorality, others pride themselves on moral superiority, or all the trappings of religiosity, but all are guilty, nonetheless. That's the principle that Paul is developing here in Roman's Ch 2. & By the time we conclude Ch 3, having demonstrated that every man's a sinner, we'll be able to clearly see our need for a Savior... enter J.C.

But here in Ch 2, we last left off w/Paul making plain that God is going to judge the world in righteousness & will render to each one according to his deeds. (Which that statement itself is enough to terrify *me*. Because the last thing I want to do is stand before God based on *my deeds*, I'm going all in on what *Jesus has done!* I dare not trust the *sweetest* frame, but *wholly trust* in *Jesus* name.)* Having said that, we see that God will judge each man equally, for (Vs 11) there is no partiality w/God. Meaning?

Vs 12-13

I'm sure that you get the general gist here. * God plays no favorites, He has no "pets", everyone stands on equal ground before Him. He's no respecter of *persons*. This is sometimes hard for us to receive. (I think we agree academically, but the way we're wired emotionally we sometimes act differently). I remember as a new believer, learning of pastor Chuck Smith & the incredible ways that God *had used* & *was using* his life, I'd think, "Man, if I could just get pastor Chuck to lay hands on me, & pray over me, surely then God would accomplish great things, & do wonderful works." Or when you're sick, you're thinking, "I bet if pastor Chuck were to lay hands on me, & pray for me, God would heal me!" & That thought pattern lends itself to the fact that we think God *does show* partiality. That somehow *this guy*, or *that lady* has a special kind of access to God & that God would really move if *they* were in your corner & interceding on your behalf.

I'm more than happy to pray for anyone who would ask me to pray for them. But I don't have an inroad w/God that you or anyone else in Christ doesn't have. God doesn't say, "Hold the line, Jeff's on the phone, I need to hear what he has to say!" You are covered in the same righteousness of Christ that I'm covered in. I'm not the mediator between God & man, *Jesus* is the mediator (the go between, the bridge builder, the access granter)! We are given audience w/God predicated upon His work on our behalf, nothing less, & certainly nothing more.

The author of the book of Hebrews put that like this, *“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*¹ We all have the same audience before the throne of God’s grace, due to the sufficiency of the ministry of J.C. on our behalf. God shows no favoritism. *

Now, the opposite is true as well. *God’s *judgement* will be w/out partiality. God’s not going to let certain things slide based on who you are (a famous celebrity, someone who moved up the ranks politically, or because you volunteered in the community... you get the idea). No one is going to stand before God & say, “No, I never received J.C. *but* I did go to Calvary Chapel quite a bit, & my dad (or my grandpa) was a preacher! My parents were believers! I was an upstanding, outstanding citizen!” That’s all well & good. But the fact is, you’re a *sinner*, the question is, do you have a *Savior*? *

You see, here, Paul is beginning to draw the religious individual in as well as the moral individual. Because there was a belief that God *did* show partiality as it pertained to judgment. He would judge the Gentiles one way, but the Jews would get a pass because they were Abraham’s descendants, they had the covenant of circumcision, they were given the oracles of God... so they rated a little bit higher in God’s sight (this was the thought).

Again, no different than someone thinking, “Well, I’ve been baptized, I’m a member of the ‘so & so’ church. I haven’t missed a Sunday in years, surely that mean’s God will go it easy on me...” So again, you want to lean *on*, trust *in* what you *do*, not what Christ has *done*?

But Paul is saying, “Look, all those things you think are an advantage to you, are really of no value at all regarding the indictment of God against the sin in your life.” He says, “As many as sin w/out the law will also perish w/out the law. Those who have sinned *in* the law, will be judged *by* the law.” What’s that mean? It means that condemnation isn’t tied to whether you have the law or don’t have the law, (know the Bible or don’t know the Bible) it’s tied to the fact that you have sin in your life!

This is an important point because many people rely on the fact that they go to church, they listen to the preacher, they hear God’s word, they “feel good” about it, mission accomplished.

¹ *The New King James Version* (Heb 4:14–16). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

But it's *not* the hearer of the word who is just (righteous) in the sight of God, it's the *doer* of word who will be justified.

(Now last week we were talking about how to make it to heaven apart from Jesus. You just have to do good, only & always, which translates into keeping the law perfectly). It seems Paul is still leaning into that & making a case for the futility of seeking to "earn" your way to heaven by being a good boy or a good girl... *If you could keep the law (which you can't, you've already broken it. In fact, you bore false witness the 1st time you cried as an infant when there was really nothing wrong. You didn't lie, therefore become a liar, you were already a liar due to that pesky sin nature of yours & the lie only proved that), you could make it to heaven of your own merit... That seems to be the interpretation.*

But there's *application* in here for us that we do well not to miss. *Many people seem to take comfort & confidence in the fact they're church goers. But it's not hearing the word of God that translates into what it means to be a Christian. Being at church doesn't necessarily bear witness to the reality of Christ in your life. Many of you are familiar w/what Jesus had to say about this, but let's look at it together. **Matthew 7:24-27**

*Don't fall into that category deceived into believing that learning it & living it is the same thing, it's not. If God's word isn't making any difference in your life, it's not guiding you, directing you, correcting you... then you do well to make your calling & election sure. Jesus was clear, "If you love Me, keep My commandments."² It's not learning it that bears witness to a changed life, it's living it. **

Vs 14-16

Back in Ch 1 Paul demonstrated how God is completely justified in judging man based on creation alone. His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made. Having said that, there's another metric that Paul points out here that God will utilize as well. –

**It's interesting, there is a moral code written on the heart of every man. Every culture across every spectrum recognizes that murder is wrong, that adultery (being w/another man's wife) is wrong, that stealing something that belongs to someone else, is wrong. There is a moral compass (we call the conscience) that is embedded, hardwired in every human being from the factory... How did that get there? Evolution provides no answer for that. Evolution provides "survival of the fittest", "might makes right".*

² *The New King James Version* (Jn 14:15). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

Scripture teaches that *God* put it there. Just like God put eternity in the heart of every man. There's something in the heart of man that says, "There's got to be more than just this life. What's the *point* of life, why are we here?" It's like a homing device that God placed in the heart of every man, so that we might seek Him out. *

But (back to our text), Paul is saying that not only will the *creation around* a man witness against him, so will the *conscience w/in* a man. All will be w/out excuse in the courtroom of God! So again, could a man be saved, (never having had the Word), if he would simply follow (honestly & w/integrity) the dictates of his own conscience? Theoretically, yes (at least that's what Paul appears to be saying). However, he quickly demonstrates that it's a moot point because no man has ever done that. Every man has violated his conscience (just like every man has violated the written word of God).

& We should also point out that the conscience (though important) is not impervious to corruption. The Bible is clear that the conscience can be *weak*, it can be *corrupted*, it can be "*seared*" through unrepentant sin in a person's life (1 Tim 4:2) ... It can also be *cleansed* from corruption through the blood of Christ (Heb 9:14).

So the point comes back. Do you want to stand before God on the merit of what *you do*? Or on the merit of what Christ has *done* for you? Because (don't miss this, Vs 16) ***the day is coming when God will judge everyone who's ever drawn breath. & Let's not forget what we took in last week (Vs 2) the judgment of God is according to truth. Not what people put forward, not what others may think, or how they would evaluate you, God will weigh the true you in the balance & believe me when I tell you, you will be found wanting. Because even if you've done everything right outwardly (perhaps like a Pharisee), God will judge the secrets of men by J.C.**

Jesus said that like this, "**For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light.**"³ Now if you're anything like me (& I suspect that you are), that's a horrifying/traumatizing thought! **I would put all the money I have in the bank (which might get you one house payment) down on the fact that there's not a person here who still doesn't do things that they try to hide from others. It may be a conversation we've had, something we've said, something that's popped up on our screen, thoughts that have coursed through our mind...**

³ *The New King James Version* (Mk 4:22). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

Things that, if they were to come to light before others, we'd be absolutely mortified, embarrassed and ashamed. (& Of course, those who found out would feign shock & chagrin at the news of what we've done, what we've thought, even though should the secrets of *their* heart be revealed, it would more than likely look much the same...)

Ladies & gentlemen, this one statement, "God will judge the *secrets* of men by J.C." should be enough to cause every human being to flee as fast as they can to the feet of J.C. to be saved! I don't want my secret sins brought into the light... I want them washed away by the blood of J.C.! *

The lustful thoughts we've entertained, the text threads we've been a part of, the emails that have been sent or received. "*For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.*"⁴ The point Paul is making is that everyone is going to know that God's judgment is fair & just. No one is going to be unjustly, unfairly, inaccurately judged by God.

On the flip side of that, one measure of maturity & growth can be realized in how much of my life can I live out in the open? Unashamed of *anyone* finding out? — But absolute accountability before God was part of the message that Paul preached. "According to my gospel." Not "his gospel" in the sense that it's something he made up. "His gospel" in the sense that he's not ashamed of the gospel. Like a soldier might speak of "my colors". He owns it, stands *by* it, & is unashamed *of* it.

Vs 17-20

If Paul was speaking to the moral man up to this point, he's certainly speaking to the religious man now. & Paul knew that the religious Jew pretty much hung his hat on 2 things. #1 Their possession of the law (God gave the Jews His Word). & #2 They were the offspring of Abraham w/whom God made His covenant. & These things (to them) confirmed their status as a specially chosen people & insured their salvation.

& I trust that you can tell by the text that each of these areas of contrast show how they would kind of "look down their noses" at the poor blind & stupid Gentiles... After all, they knew the *will* of God, (meaning they were instructed in the *law* of God). They were "*guides to the blind*" (the blind being the Gentiles), "*light to those in darkness*", "*instructors to the foolish*" & "*teachers of babes*".

⁴ *The New King James Version* (Ec 12:14), (1982). Thomas Nelson.

& Family, this is something we need to be careful of. There you are, you've got a few miles on you in Christ, you've walked w/Him, you enjoy a relationship w/Him... & It can be subtle, you start thinking you're a little above those poor ignorant unbelievers. **The truth is the only difference between us & them is the saving grace of God & we want them to experience that as well! — But rather than our heart going *out* to others, we start to get a little puffed up, a little elevated in our heart *over* others & now here we are... do you see how subtle the sin of pride can be?**

Vs 21-24

Vs 21, "You who teach another, do you not each yourself?" The answer to that question is, "Yes"! (Or at least it should be). How many times someone has approached me with, "Man that was just for me." & I'm thinking, "It was just for me too!" Believe me, when you teach God's Word, you don't by any means escape the *conviction* of God's word. **The Holy Spirit is teaching me, convicting me, challenging me just the same! But Paul's point is that it's not just knowing the Bible, it's not just preaching its principles, it's not simply being able to see the sin in someone else's life. The light of God's word shines in the teacher's life too! You can apply it to others, can't you see how it applies to you?**

(I won't spend a ton of time on this because Paul will speak more [later] to the fact that the word of God is aimed at the inward man, it was never intended to merely regulate the outward actions, but the inward attitude as well.) But suffice it to say for now that be it in action or attitude, most of us (meaning probably all of us) can *preach it* way better than we're able to *practice* it.

& Paul is still bringing home his point that it's not hearing it (or knowing it) that justifies you, it's *doing* it. – "You've heard it said you shall not commit adultery" (Jesus said), "But I say to you that whoever *looks* at woman to lust for her has *already* committed adultery w/her in his heart." You're telling others not to commit adultery. Do you commit adultery? Do you see what's happening here? The whole world will stand guilty before God if they try & stand upon their own merit.

You tell others not to steal, but will a man rob God? If I don't fulfill the tithe (Malachi 3:8) I'm stealing from God. I've "robbed the temple". Ladies & gentlemen, what would people think about Christianity (or who God is) upon close examination (or maybe even a nominal evaluation) of your life?

Last week we spoke of David's downfall w/Bathsheba. He took Uriah's wife, had him murdered on the battlefield... God exposed it all. When He did, David repented of his sin.

& Upon his repentance, Nathan (the prophet who was confronting him said), *“The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die.”*⁵ If we claim a relationship w/the Lord, our lives should reflect that relationship. It’s not a matter of the *words of our lips*, but the *way of our lives*.

Vs 25-29

This was the rationale of the ancient Jew. I made mention of it earlier, “Look, I have the law, I’ve been circumcised (the sign of the covenant), I’m of the lineage of Abraham (w/whom God made the covenant w/him & his offspring), I’m good to go.” The point being that they checked every box, salvation was eminent.

But Paul is saying that their rites, rituals & religious ceremonies are of zero value if what they do *outwardly* isn’t matched by who they are *inwardly*. The circumcision of a man is the removal of his foreskin, a “cutting away” of the flesh. It was to speak being “separated” from a life lived after the flesh that you might lead your life after the Spirit. In essence it was the sign that you were choosing to live for God, rather than after your own wants/desires. It was (as we say) the “outward *demonstration* (or identification) of the inward *transformation* of your heart”.

& Paul isn’t diminishing the rite, (or the ritual) here. He’s simply saying that the act in itself isn’t what brings justification/salvation. If you were to be circumcised, but continue to lead a life completely void of godliness, it’s not going to do you any good, it won’t do a thing. By the same token, someone who comes to know the Lord, is transformed by the Lord & leads a life set apart to the Lord, even if they never get around to being circumcised, they’re saved!

Today, the church has rituals that identify us as believers as well. Communion & baptism. & Many people believe that because they were baptized as a child, they take communion at the church service... they’re saved! But Paul would say, “Your baptism is only of value if it truly demonstrates outwardly what’s happened inwardly in your heart.” If you go to the creek & get baptized (saying, “I identify w/the death & resurrection of J.C., I’ve died to myself, it’s no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me & the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me & give Himself for me”) but nothing changes about your life... (You still party, you have a foul mouth, you’re into pornography... you get the idea), your baptism didn’t benefit you at all!

⁵ *The New King James Version* (2 Sa 12:13-14). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

By the same token, if someone gives their life to Christ, they're transformed from the inside out by the Spirit of God, they love God, they long to honor God... but they never get around to being baptized, they're saved! It's all about the inward experience, not the outward expression. **Close**

Abraham's son Ishmael was circumcised, that didn't make him a son of the covenant. It's not the outward *formality*, it's the inward *reality* that God is after...

Last week at baptisms I made the reference to a label on a can. That's what baptism is like. If the label on the outside matches what's truly on the inside, it serves its purpose. But if the label says one thing, but what's inside is actually another, not only does the label do no good, it could actually be harmful rather than helpful... When you're born again it changes what's on the inside (that's 1st) then you put the appropriate label (baptism) on the outside. *

You can go through all the religious motions & receive the praise of man, "Oh look what he's done, what she did, isn't that wonderful!" But that doesn't get you to heaven. The evidence of a right standing w/God begins in the heart (for w/the heart one believes unto righteousness) & it will reveal itself in the fruit that comes forth from that changed life.

Don't settle for the praise that comes from man. Give your life to J.C. & receive the praise (the commendation/affirmation) that comes from God.

Prayer Points:

Father we long to be found well pleasing to You. Forgive us when we substitute the ritual for the reality, religion for a relationship. Teach us to crucify the flesh, the walk in the Spirit & mature in our relationship w/God, to live in humility & depend upon You desperately, continually. Be glorified in our lives.

God wants to be glorified in *your* life. It begins by absolute surrender to Him. No longer hoping that you're doing good enough (you're not). Going all in on what's He's done for you in the Person of J.C. Believe on Him & be saved.