

Victorious – The Plague of Pharisee-ism

9/14/25

Romans 2:1-11

Sunday AM

In case you're unaware, I'm a huge baseball fan. I started playing baseball when I was 5 and played into college – and of course, my son is a freshman pitcher at USM – and I can hardly wait to see him throw.

NOW – as you likely know, baseball is a game of failure where if you get a hit in just 3 out of 10 at bats – you could become a Hall of Famer.

But could you imagine what might happen if the MLB Commissioner decided to raise the standards for induction into the Hall of Fame by declaring that position players had to hit 1.000 w/ zero errors across their career and that pitchers had to throw a perfect game every time they took the mound – 27 up | 27 down w/out ever surrendering even a walk.

If you know anything about baseball, you know these are impossible feats. In fact, the best fielding season ever was by Randy Hundley, who caught for the Cubs. In 1967, he committed just (4) errors in 152 games.

The best hitter in his career was Josh Gibson who hit .372 in 14 seasons in the Negro Leagues w/ a best single season of .466. The last player to hit over .400 in a single season was Ted Williams in 1941. And pitchers – LJS in baseball history there's been only 24 perfect games thrown – in some 475,000 games.

POINT – there is no such thing as a perfect baseball player, nor will there ever be – b/c all have missed the mark of the commissioner's perfect standard.

Such is true for all of humanity as it relates to God. B/c of the infection of sin, we all miss the mark of God's holy perfection – *there is no one who is righteous and all have fallen short of the glory of God.*

Yet there appears to be this *little Pharisee* inside of each of us who enjoys expecting perfection in others while expecting grace/patience for ourselves.

Listen – I'm just telling it like it is. And remember – if you can't say AMEN – at least say OUCH!

Last week – we began a series in the book of Romans entitled – **Victorious**. In this series, we're hitting the (24) high points of the Christian life and their relevance to our daily lives.

In **Romans 1** – Paul spent time painting a portrait to what occurs when a culture rejects the existence of God or decides to live as if God doesn't exist – noting that that culture plunges into a *depravity death spiral* that devours them w/ self-centered consumption.

To read this list of depravity in Romans 1:21-32 – too often, in our arrogant piety, we can be tempted to hop up on our spiritual high horses to hyper-spiritualize our faith and condemn the paganism around us. But in Romans 2 – Paul (not quoting Lee Corso) says – **NOT SO FAST my friends!**

While Roman society was beyond lost and degenerate, Paul changed direction in **Romans 2** by telling these Roman believers to not only see the utter wickedness *around* them but also the wickedness *w/in* them.

In many ways – in Romans 1, Paul is exposing *their* sin – while in Romans 2, he is exposing *our* sin.

See – in **Romans 2** – Paul turned the spotlight on those of us who think we're morally/spiritually superior b/c of our faith, goodness, and religious heritage – and in doing this, he's confronting the *Pharisee-ism* w/in us.

BTW – Jesus spoke to the same issue in the SOTM when He asked His audience – *Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?*

Let me cut to the chase. Paul looked at the Roman believers and said – ¹b/c all of us are capable of the most heinous of sin just like the pagans around us – and ²b/c all of us are sinners in need of a Savior – don't get on your moral high horse thinking you're more special than the lost around you – b/c you're not. He says, the truth is – when you condemn others for their sin, while you're as capable of committing the same sins as they commit – you're actually worse b/c you know better – making you a hypocrite.

So, who are you to judge/condemn anyone w/out first dealing w/ the plank of sin in your own eye?

You have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge, you're condemning yourself, b/c you who pass judgment do the same things. Now, we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So, when you, a mere human, pass judgment on others and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? But b/c of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart, you're storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God "will repay each person according to what they have done." To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth to follow evil, there will be wrath/anger. There will be trouble/distress for everyone who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God doesn't show favoritism.

Question – who here has ever heard someone say – The Bible says – ***Thou shalt not judge***? I'm assuming all of us have heard such a statement at some time. And it's an absolutely inaccurate/misunderstood statement.

To understand this text requires that we understand the words and the context. There are (2) primary words in the Greek translated as **judging** or **judgment**.

krino – to render a verdict of condemnation inferring that we serve as judge, jury, and executioner.

dokimazo – to discern or to test and approve what aligns w/ God's will to heal and restore.

In Romans 2 – Paul uses **krino** to teach us that we have NO right/calling to render a verdict of condemnation over anyone – we have neither the responsibility or authority to serve as judge, jury, and executioner.

This verse isn't a call to suspend our critical faculties or to renounce all criticism/rebuke of others as wrong. It's rather a prohibition of standing in judgment over other people and condemning them, which as human beings we have no right to do, especially when we fail to condemn ourselves. Stott

YET – we do have a duty/responsibility to evaluate what is of God and what's not – to discern truth from untruth, right from wrong, good from evil – otherwise we will fall prey to the *appetites* of the flesh, the *ambitions* of the world and the *aims* of the demonic.

WTM – let me reiterate an important truth that I've learned the hard way that I shared w/ you a few months ago that I believe applies here.

As Jesus-followers, we're never called to **condemn** the sin in others, b/c it usually pushes them harder in the direction they're headed away from God. Nor are we to **condone** their sin b/c that gives them a license and excuse to continue in the negative direction they're going. Instead, we're to **confront** them in love to point them to God's truth to allow H.S. to do what only the H.S. can do to work in their lives.

WTM – let me offer us some encouragement about judgment and discernment.

I The **PROBLEM** of Condemning Judgment

You have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge, you're condemning yourself...

If you want a picture of condemning judgment, look no further than the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in **Luke 18:9–14**. One man marched into the temple w/ a pristine spiritual résumé (or so he thought); while the other limped in w/ a sad reality. And yet it was the sinner who went home justified – not the religious star.

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable. “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He wouldn’t even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ “I tell you that this man, rather than the Pharisee, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” Luke 18:9-14

While there are many lessons in this parable, to me the Big Kahuna *is our tendency to condemn in others what we excuse in ourselves*.

Let’s be honest – *we often judge others by their actions and ourselves by our intentions* – yet in this parable, Jesus is telling the disciples (and us) to put down the *binoculars* and pick up a *mirror*.

In this parable, the Pharisee couldn’t see the sin in his own life b/c he was too focused on the sin in the lives of others – giving him a huge blindspot to his own sin.

You know what a blindspot is? It’s an area in your life that you can’t see – that others can see – that’s hidden from you b/c of where you’re positioned.

Example – the spot over your left shoulder b/w your rearview and side mirrors that you can’t see that to see it, you either have to turn or have someone else look.

Can I let you in on a vital truth – *spiritually speaking*, the more you focus on the problems/issues of others – usually the bigger the blindspot in your own life.

This is why being in a church, in a LIFE or GROW group, is so important. We need others to help see the spiritual blindspots in our lives.

Point – God hasn’t called one of us to be the president of the *Speck Inspectors Union* – and yet, we all do it! We ignore the plank in our eyes by focusing on the speck of dust in the lives of others causing us to be *nose-blind* to the stink in/around us.

And LBH – we’re all really good at it – at least I know I am. The problem is such a judgmental spirit is a demonic trap intended to dull our sense/sensibility to spiritual truth and to ignore our own fleshly appetites and ambitions. So, *we baptize our sin in the pool of other people’s short-comings to make us feel good about ourselves in our sin* – and this is Pharisee-ism!

II The **POWER** of Corrective Judgment

Corrective (constructive) judgment is living w/ a concerned, compassionate discernment rooted in God's kindness/patience that's always seeking to reconcile, restore, and build up others.

IOW – when we practice discernment over damnation, we enable God to move in a powerful way for good. I think of the situation in **John 8** where the woman was caught in adultery. The Pharisees wanted to stone her but Jesus opted to help her. And while He in no way turned a blind eye to her sin – He said... “*Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more!*”

Lesson – *Grace never winks at sin – it wins over sin!*

I think Paul is trying to help us to realize that the church (and Christians) haven't been called to be a courthouse for conviction, but a hospital for healing. The goal isn't to win a case, but to win a person. Thus, we're called to be **doctors**, not **district attorneys** – to diagnose to help/heal, not to indict in order to punish

Sadly – in our social media world, it appears that too many of us (Christians included) have been deputized as district attorneys – w/ no law degree required. We say whatever we want w/out any concern for the harm it might bring – and w/ zero accountability.

We need to **drop our gavels for grace** and be prepared to treat others the way that we want to be treated – especially when we deserve justice and not mercy.

Let me get real practical w/ you. I call this the Drop-the-Gavel Plan. It's (3) checks to protect your judging.

- Look in the Mirror – Have I confessed my sin
- Check Your Motives – Do I want their good | my win
- Frame Your Methods – Are my words helpful/hurtful

Tim Keller put it appropriately – *Truth w/out love is harshness; love w/out truth is sentimentality—the gospel gives us both.* Truth calls sin what it is; while love kneels beside the sinner to carry them to Christ. This is the power and place of corrective discernment.

III The **PROMISE** of God's Perfect Justice

Unlike us – God only dispenses perfect judgment.

While our judgment is often partial/hypocritical b/c *we seemingly can't help but to condemn in others what we excuse in ourselves* – God has the ability to see our hidden motives and evaluate them w/out favoritism. Then, in spite of our guilt, He displays kindness as a means of inviting us to repentance in place of wrath.

Thankfully – God's judgment is **impartial** cutting across every boundary/obstacle to teach us that Jesus is an *equal opportunity Savior* who has zero partiality.

SO – it doesn't matter *who you are, where you are, or what you've done or haven't done* – God sees you as He sees everyone – as a sinner in need of a Savior – and so He stepped out of heaven into humanity to save us.

I think of Jonah. When God wanted to offer mercy, Jonah pouted b/c he didn't think Ninevah deserved it. Yet b/c God is perfectly just, holy, and loving – He gave the fish-slappers of Ninevah what they neither deserved or could earn – His grace/forgiveness.

This is what Paul was explaining in Romans 2 – there are only (3) ways to find forgiveness.

(1) if you die as an infant before you're old enough to have reached the age of accountability. Yet, if you're here today and can understand what I'm saying – then that option has passed.

(2) if you can live your entire life from the moment you were born until the you die w/out committing (1) sin – either an act of commission or omission, then maybe God will let you in – except no one is perfect.

OR (3) you can realize that you're a bankrupt sinner w/ zero ability to do anything to please God – so instead of trusting in yourself, you turn to one and only solution God has provided – Jesus to be your advocate – admitting to God that you've missed the mark of His perfection and accepting that Jesus' finished work on the cross serves as a satisfactory sacrifice to rescue you from sin and to reconcile you to God.

IOW – God did for me exactly what He did for you – which is exactly what He did for the worst of sinners and the best of sinners – HE DIED FOR US!

God demonstrated His love for me and you in this way, while we were sinner, Jesus died for us. 5:8

B/c God so loved us. He took our place on the cross so that His perfect justice could be serve. And as a result, His grace is sufficient for the least of these and the best of these. It's for everyone, everywhere w/ no strings attached. And just as we can do nothing to earn it – we can do nothing to spurn it. All we can do is decide by faith whether or not we want to believe it and receive it – or neglect it and reject it.

SO – if you will confess that you're a sinner in need of a Savior – and by faith, lean into God's grace/mercy for salvation, then you will never stand before God in his condemning judgment b/c Jesus settled your case out of court on an old rugged cross.