Judged by The Law
Romans 2:7-16 November 1, 2026

I. Opening Prayer
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help your group learn and hear what He would teach and encourage your group with today

II. Weekly Sermon Discussion (20-40 minutes)
- Read the scriptures, and discuss what stood out to you from the sermon and scriptures.
- Don't rush. It's not intended that you get through everything. Spend time in what speaks best to your group today, but keep it on track with the scripture you are reading.
- If needed, there are insights and possible questions provided to help generate discussion.
- Focus your conversation on the scripture and how it applies to you. Be careful of straying off the topic. If someone begins to stray, ask "How does this scripture / topic apply?".

Read Romans 2:7-16, James 2:8-11

The System of Performance: The Law
The sin in Romans 1 which is pervasive in our culture is sexual immorality. The sin in Romans 2 which is pervasive in the church is the idolatry of morality. In this section, Paul continues his relentless case against human self-righteousness. When we condemn someone, we introduce a standard of performance which we must be compared against as well. That standard is God's perfect standard: The Law, of which we too stand condemned. The immoral cannot escape God's judgment, but neither can the moral, religious, or respectable person. We all face the same reality: God's judgment is perfectly fair, and His standard is perfect obedience.

- Why do you think it is easier to compare ourselves to other people than to compare ourselves to God's standard?
- In what ways does a judgmental spirit toward others reveal blind spots in our own lives?

The Problem with The System of Performance
Romans 2:7-11 describes a system of judgment based on performance. The standard is simple: perfect obedience results in life, while breaking the standard brings judgment. God shows no favoritism because true justice must be impartial. If salvation were based on performance, everyone would receive exactly what they earned.
At first this may sound reasonable. The problem is not with the standard; the problem is with us. Paul is not teaching that people can actually earn eternal life through their obedience. Rather, he is exposing the impossibility of anyone meeting God's requirements. The law demands perfection, not improvement. As James later explains, stumbling in one point makes us guilty before the whole law.

- When you hear the phrase "performance-based relationship with God," what comes to mind as areas where this is true for you?

- Why do we often drift back into trying to earn God's acceptance even after we understand the gospel of grace?

The Law Written on the Heart

Some might object that they never received God's written law. Paul answers this concern by pointing to the conscience. Even those who never possessed the Scriptures demonstrate an awareness of right and wrong because God has written His moral law on the human heart. This explains why people across cultures instinctively recognize concepts like justice, fairness, truthfulness, and human dignity. While the conscience has been damaged by sin and cannot be trusted as a perfect guide, it still bears witness that we know more than we often admit. Every person has enough knowledge to be accountable before God. This reality levels the playing field. No one can claim complete ignorance, and no one can claim moral superiority. Humanity stands together as lawbreakers before a holy God.

- Why is "let your conscience be your guide" not a biblical teaching?
- How does understanding that everyone possesses some awareness of God's moral law affect the way we view unbelievers?
- How can this understanding impact our evangelism efforts?

The Judgment We Deserve and the Grace We Need

The most sobering part of this passage is that God will judge not only public actions but also the secrets of every heart. Nothing is hidden from Him. Thoughts, motives, private actions, and hidden sins all fall under His perfect knowledge. If our hope rests on our record, none of us can stand. This is why the gospel is such good news. Paul's goal is not to leave us condemned but to prepare us for grace. The law reveals our guilt so that we will stop trusting ourselves and run to Christ. Jesus accomplished what no one else could. He perfectly obeyed the law, bore its penalty on the cross, and offers His righteousness to everyone who believes.

The gospel introduces a completely different system: not performance, but grace; not our righteousness, but Christ's righteousness; not confidence in what we have done, but faith in what He has done. The law says, "Obey and live." The gospel says, "Christ has obeyed; believe and live."

- Why do you think people often resist the idea that they need grace rather than simply trying harder?
- What practical difference should it make this week to live under grace rather than under a performance mindset?
- Where are you still living under a performance system in your relationship with God?

III. Share & Prayer (20-40 minutes)

Time to ‘take off the mask’! Jesus doesn’t want us to be hypocrites who wear masks.

- A personal life update, your current spiritual condition. Use emotional language to be real!
- Challenges or victories that you are experiencing

- What's really going on in your life? How are you doing? How can your group pray for you?
- Are there applications from the Discussion that you need prayer support?
- How can your Group support you this week?

When sharing prayer requests, include your personal prayer needs. Example – rather than simply sharing "Please pray for my friend's cancer journey", include personal prayer: "Please pray as I'm struggling with my friend's cancer journey, and I need guidance on how to encourage her in this season".

Have someone, or everyone, close your time out in prayer for one another.