

Inescapable Judgment, part 2

(Romans 2:1-16)

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Introduction

Tonya and I end many of our days in front of the TV watching 30 minute recorded episodes of Judge Judy.

The show has been on for almost 25 years, and it is still very entertaining.

In fact, it has been the highest rated daytime television show for a number of years.

And the reason for that is that Judge Judy is a no nonsense kind of judge.

She doesn't put up with foolishness or excuses.

Now, Tonya and I have learned what to look for in terms of people on the show.

There are some people that Judge Judy just loves to pick apart.

If you come in with attitude, she will send you out and make a judgment without you.

If you try to talk in circles and talk your way out, she cuts you off pretty quickly.

My personal favorite is when people come on the show without any paperwork or evidence or witnesses.

They just simply show up and feel that they they can win their case without any evidence.

But Judge Judy is all the evidence.

She wants receipts.

She want to see lease agreements.

She likes pictures before and after.

And when asks people for evidence and they say that they didn't bring any, she will often say..

“Did you think you were going to the beach today?”

“You can just take yourself to the beach but when you come to court, you bring evidence.”

I laugh every time she says it, but it is true.

Courts are blind to opinions but have their eyes opened by evidence.

And the reason for that is simple.

The greatest judge of all time is also concerned with evidence.

In fact, no one will talk their way into victory when they stand before the Lord.

There will be no sob stories on the day of judgment in hopes of securing eternal life.

There will be no ridiculous excuses on the day of judgment in hopes of talking your way into heaven.

There will be no pleas of ignorance on the day of judgment in hopes of persuading God to let you in to heaven.

On judgment day, you won't even be allowed to speak.

The evidence of your life will speak loud enough.

And the verdict will fall fast, sure, and forever based on the evidence presented to the Lord.

So what will be the evidence in terms of God's judgment?

The deeds of your life.

Now that may shock you.

Isn't salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone?

And the answer is yes, yes, and yes.

But understand this.

The basis of salvation is faith, but the basis of God's judgment is works.

And today in Romans 2:6-11, we will be reminded of that as we continue our look at this incredible book in the Bible.

Now to review a bit, the book of Romans was written to a church in the city of Rome in the 1st century.

From what we can tell, this church was faithful even though they lacked all the truth about the gospel.

In fact, Paul had heard good things about the church in Rome though he had been unable to go there.

So they were living right and sharing the truth about the gospel but they needed more instruction.

Therefore, the Lord inspired Paul to write them a letter that detailed all the glory of the gospel, which is the good news that Christ came to offer the righteousness of God to the guilty sinner.

But before Paul can get into the nature of the God's righteousness, he must first convince his readers that they need the righteousness of God.

And so Paul sets out in Romans 1:18 to convince the Gentile and the Jew of their need of Christ's righteousness.

He began with the Gentile in verses 18-32 of Romans 1, and he offered reasons why God's wrath was coming to them.

First off, they ignored the evidence that God had given them in creation.

Then they elevated their own thinking above the wisdom of God.

And eventually they exchanged the truth of God's existence for the lie of an idol that is man made.

In turn, God gave them over to their sin, and the spiraled out of control into heterosexual sin, homosexual sin, and ended up with a depraved mind.

Which is a mind that cannot function properly.

It cannot determine right from wrong, sin from obedience, male from female.

The only end to the downward spiral is the final unleashing of God's wrath in judgment.

So the Gentiles are deserving of judgment, but Paul is not done.

In chapter 2, he begins to demonstrate why the Jew is equally deserving of the judgment of God's wrath.

Now the point of addressing the Jew's guilt before God is simple.

The Jews thought they would escape judgment.

In their minds, they weren't nearly as bad as the Gentile.

On top of that, they were God's chosen nation.

We talked last week about their belief that Abraham sat by the gates of hell to prevent the Jew from entering.

But the Lord wants to make it clear through Paul that they hold no advantage over the Gentile in terms of judgment.

In fact, we learned last week that they are in a sense more guilty than the Gentile because they commit the same sins as the Gentile, even though God had specifically told them about those sins in the OT law.

Look back of Romans 2:2..

2 And we know that the judgment of God [b]rightly falls upon those who practice such things.

The key word in that verse is know.

The Jews knew what sin was because God had given them his Word in the OT.

They had the law of God.

They were aware that murder was wrong, that adultery was wrong, that coveting was wrong, that homosexuality was wrong, that gossip and slander were wrong.

So when they pointed out the guilt of the Gentiles in committing these sins, they were also pointing out their own guilt.

And they were also pointing out the fact that they were deserving of God's judgment.

It is the illustration of the the old saying that when you point a finger at someone else, they are there fingers pointing back at you.

Ultimately, judgment was coming to the Jew because his knowledge of God was equal to if not greater than the Gentile.

And since God judgment is based on knowledge, the Jew was in trouble.

But Paul is not done indicting the Jew just yet.

There are two additional aspects of God's judgment that spell trouble for the Jew as well.

The second aspect of God's judgment is found in verses 6-11..

God's judgment is also based on deeds or works.

II. Judgment according to works (6-11)

Let me warn that there is opportunity for confusion this morning if we don't get a few things straight in our mind.

#1 - Salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone.

You have seen it enough times in the Bible to know that salvation is never of works.

One of the foundational verses of Christianity is ***Ephesians 2:8-9.***

You ought to memorize and know it and use it in evangelism.

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and [h]that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

This is what separates Christianity from every false religious system.

Christians are made right with God on the basis of faith alone in Christ alone.

That is the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

That truth was the basis of the Protestant Reformation.

That truth is non-negotiable because the Bible is non negotiable and the Bible teaches justification by faith alone from Genesis to Revelation.

Man has never been saved by god works and never will be saved by good works.

The righteousness of God is only available to the sinner through faith alone.

Set that in your mind.

Lock that in your heart and throw away the key.

That is gospel truth.

The second thing to keep straight is this.

#2 - Salvation always produces good works.

If you hope to understand what Paul is going to write in verses 6-11, you must also know that true salvation leads to good works.

James 2:17

17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is [p]dead, being by itself.

I have said this before but it bear repeating.

No one is saved by good works, but all truly saved people produce good works.

So with those truth non-negotiable truths in mind, let's go to verses 6-11.

Since 2:6 is a continuation of verse 5, I will start reading in verse 5..

5 But [d]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, 6 who will render to each person according to his deeds:

Verse 6 is simply a main idea of what Paul is about to unfold in verses 7-11 and that is the fact that God's judgment will be according to a person's deeds.

Now, this idea of judgment according to works was nothing new to the Jew.

In fact, Paul is quoting Psalm 62:12, which reads...

12

***And lovingkindness is Yours, O Lord,
For You recompense a man according to his work.***

Jeremiah 17:10 also taught this concept.

10

***“I, the Lord, search the heart,
I test the [e]mind,
Even to give to each man according to his ways,
According to the [f]results of his deeds.***

Though salvation has always been a matter of faith.

Judgment has always been a matter of works.

In fact, Jesus affirms this truth in the NT.

Matthew 16:27

***27 For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of
His Father with His angels, and will then repay every
man according to his deeds.***

This is why the works of a person's life matter.

Though they works won't save them, they will certainly be a basis for judgment.

Verse 6 says that God will render to each person according to his deeds..

The Greek word is apodidomi, which means to pay back, and it could mean a punishment or a reward.

So which is it?

Will God reward or punish based upon a person's deeds, and the answer is both.

Verses 7-10 speak of 2 different types of rendering.

We will begin with the positive in verse 7 and verse 10...

7 to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;

Then skip down to verse 10..

10 but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Verses 7 and 10 are clear.

God renders a reward to those whose life shows evidence of true faith.

Whitmire has a train track that runs right through the middle of town, and when I was a little kid, I loved to watch the train pass.

So when my granddad heard the whistle, he would grab me up run to his truck and throw me in so we could go watch the train go by.

And the fun part was clouting the cars of the train, but the giveaway to the number of cars was the engines that lead the way.

One engine would mean about 50 cars.

2 engines 100 cars, and 3 engines would be the lead for at least 150 or more cars.

And we would sit and watch and count the cars until the caboose came.

If you picture salvation as a train.

The engine is faith, and the cars that follow are good works.

The engine drives it all, the cars are simply along for ride.

It would be silly to think that the cars push the engine.

In fact, if we got to the tracks late after the engine had passed, we could count the cars and guess the number of engines at the front.

The cars became the evidence of the train engine.

Look, faith is the engine of salvation and good works are the train cars that follow behind.

And all Paul is simply saying here is that saved people have a whole host of good works that follow their engine of faith.

The cars are pushing the engine.

The simply follow the engine.

I love the word that Paul uses to describe those who are rendered a reward in verse 7.

Those who by perseverance.

Your translation may say patient continuance or persistence.

But perseverance is the best translation because it describes what saved people do.

They persevere to the end.

It comes from the Greek word hupomonay, which means to endure, to press on, to persist, to continue.

The point is simple saved people don't persist to the end to stay saved.

They persist to the end because they are saved.

And that perseverance becomes evidence that these people should be rewarded.

And what are they rewarded with?

Glory, honor, and immortality, eternal life and then verse 10 adds peace to the list.

The reward of glory is not some self centered recognition.

True believers simply seek to share in God's glory when they leave this earth and head to heaven.

The reward of honor is also not self-centered honor.

It honor that comes from entering into the glory of the Lord and hearing "well done, my faithful servant."

Immortality comes from a Greek word that means incorruptible.

It was used in everyday Greek to describe something that couldn't spoil.

To be immortal is never decay or corrupt or age.

Everything in a sin filled world fades and spoils and ages, but in the sin free environment of heaven, there will be no corruption or decay.

And all of those rewards, -glory, honor, and immortality will continue for eternity to those whose lives evidenced the good deeds they proved from a life of faith alone in Christ alone.

And maybe the greatest reward of a life of faith evidenced by good works is the peace of verse 10.

Look, this world has given you nothing but trouble from the moment of birth.

Yes, life provides moments of joy and peace but they are short lived.

The reward of faith is an eternity.

Primarily that is peace with God, but there will also be peace with others and with your surroundings.

The good works of your life in a chaotic world prove that your faith is real, and the reward will be an eternity of peace.

So if those good works are the basis for a judgment of eternal reward?

What is the basis for a judgment of eternal punishment?

Verses 8-9..

8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. 9 There will be tribulation and distress [e]for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek,

In verse 7, Paul says that the person of faith seeks glory and honor and immortality.

In fact, his lifetime of persisting in good works proves that he is seeking to please God.

In other words, the man who escapes a judgment of punishment is God seeking.

However the man who receives a judgment of punishment is self seeking.

Verse 8 says that he is selfishly ambitious.

Instead a focus that looks up to please God, the man deserving a judgment of punishment looks inward to please himself.

Cain and Judas come to mind.

Men who were not concerned about their brother or their friends, but were only concerned about themselves.

They were self seeking men.

But not only are they self seeking, they are self-governed.

Paul says that they do not obey the truth of God.

Instead, they create their own truth and live by it.

And what is their own truth?

Look at the end of verse 8..

These people obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

Unrighteousness is simply sin.

1 John 5:17 says that all unrighteousness is sin.

So they are people of sin.

They are also people of wrath, which is idea of anger.

God's wrath is tied to his anger toward sin.

Man's wrath is tied to his anger of righteousness.

Look, some people are mad at you simply because you obey the Lord.

You don't have the say a word.

Just do the right thing, and you will incite unbelievers.

Their wrath against holiness and righteousness is real.

Their bad deeds consist of hating the good deeds of others.

And then we see indignation, which is the emotion of unrighteousness and wrath.

And the reward for that kind of life is found in verse 9..

9 There will be tribulation and distress [e]for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek

If eternal peace is the reward for the righteous, eternal trouble is the reward for the unrighteous.

In other words, if unbelievers think this world is bad, just what until they see the world that awaits them.

This is why the phrase "rest in peace" only applies to the believer.

For the unbeliever, there will be no rest or no peace, only tribulation and distress.

And I don't say that with joy, I say with warning to anyone who thinks that everyone ends up in the same place in death.

Romans 2 is crystal clear.

Those who put their faith in Christ and demonstrate that faith through good works will find an eternity of glory, honor, and peace.

But those who put their faith in themselves and demonstrate through their lives of evil deeds will find an eternity of tribulation and distress.

And this isn't a reference to 7 years of tribulation that ends.

It is a reference to an eternity of tribulation that never ends.

Now to not miss the point of verse 6-10, Paul simply writes in verse 11...

11 For there is no partiality with God.

The saying in the legal system of our country is that justice is blind.

In other words, the courts are not swayed by the persons on trial.

You could be rich or poor, educated or uneducated, male or female, unknown or famous and still get a fair trial because the court system is only concerned with the law.

Sadly that doesn't always hold true in human courts, but I can assure that it holds true in God's court.

God is not swayed by the person.

He looks at the evidence of a person's life only.

And why does Paul put this here?

One reason and one reason only.

The Jews thought they would escape judgment because God would show partiality to them.

They were the apple of his eye.

The people of His nation.

The descendants of Abraham.

But Paul makes it clear that God is only concerned with the evidence before Him.

And Jews who have led lives of evil are in as much danger as Gentiles who have done the same.

Being in right family tree won't protect you from the hurricane of God's wrath.

All the dead trees whether Jew or Gentile will fall in the winds of his judgment.

In fact, Jews will be at the front of the line for God's judgment according to verse 9..

Tribulation and distress will fall to the unbelieving Jews first and then the Gentile.

And what a scary thought that was.

The Jews loved their privilege, but Paul tells that that they will get to be first in line for an eternity of hell if their lives offer evidence of a lifetime of evil.

Now as this point in chapter 2, the seat of the unbelieving Jew was almost on fire, but Paul will add the match next week..

Conclusion

So what do we Gentiles take from this?

#1 - Works don't save, but works matter.

If there has been one problem plaguing the church for the past 50 years, it is the idea of easy believism.

We have talked about it before, but easy believism is the idea that persons has to give mental ascent to the gospel followed by verbal affirmation.

In other words, believe and receive and then live as you want.

Though the Bible would say that salvation is simply a matter of belief alone, it never says that true belief is followed by a life of sin.

Understand that there is no good work that you can offer to God to save you, but also understand that saved people do good works.

You won't ever find a true believer who doesn't follow that belief with good works.

Even the thief on the cross became an evangelist to the other thief after he was saved.

Remember, the cars of the train don't push the engine, so good works don't push salvation.

But also remember that the engine is followed by the cars, and true faith is always followed by good works.

#2 - Judgment doesn't play favorites, but it fall first on some.

When I was in high school at Whitmire, being a senior meant you got a parking space right behind the building and it meant you could go to the front of the line in the cafeteria.

It was awesome to be able to break into the food line.

But one day on pizza day, the first pizzas in the oven were left too long, so the crust on all of them was black.

And cutting in the line meant that you got the ones that were burnt the worst.

The underclassmen loved it and gave us a hard time for breaking in line.

Sometimes, being first is worst.

I know I said this last week but it bear repeating.

Privilege is wonderful unless you squander that privilege.

To be born in a country of religious freedom and a land of churches and bibles and preaching is truly a blessing from the Lord.

Look, the Jews were a blessed people.

To get the law of God.

To be given charge of caring for the OT.

To have the historical record of God's activity in the world put the Jews in an enormous place of privilege.

Sadly, they squandered that privilege and abused God's word and ended up killing the Messiah who was sent to save them.

But even their privilege doesn't compare to your privilege.

Not only are you people of a land that has incredible access to the truth of God, you are people who have a NT that fully details the gospel of Christ.

You lived 2000 years beyond the cross in the midst of a culture that has the freedom to worship and serve the Lord without government intrusion or hindrance.

As I said last week, to much that has been given, much is expected.

Do not squander the privilege or you will end up in the front of the worst line in human history.

You will be at the front of God's line for judgment.

And you will be there because you have ignored the knowledge you were given and you have lived a life of evil deeds.

Today is the day to put your faith in Christ alone.

Today is the day to depend start obeying the Lord and begin compiling evidence that your faith is real.

Because one day, it will be you and the Lord and the evidence of your life will speak volumes about the faith that you profess in Christ.

Let us pray.

III. Judgment according to law (12-16)