

Inescapable Judgment, part 1

(Romans 2:1-16)

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Introduction

In July of this year, the world's best athletes will gather in Tokyo Japan for the 2020 Summer Olympics.

It is always fun to watch all the different events.

Swimming, basketball, archery, gymnastics.

The Olympics offer it all, but I especially love track and field events.

I have ever since I was a kid, and I especially love events that deal with jumping.

There is the long jump and the triple jump.

But even some running events like the steeple chase to jump over wooden barriers and then large puddles of water.

Then you have the hurdles where men and women run all out while jumping over hurdles that are a little higher than the steeple chase hurdles.

Then you have the high jump where folks run and jump to heights of up to 8 feet.

And then my favorite event of all is the pole vault, where people run with a pole, plant it in the ground, and jump as the pole propels them up in the air.

Last week, on February 8th, a new world world record was set in the pole vault as Swedish man named Armand Duplantis jumped 20 - 2 3/4”.

That is incredible to go the height of two basketball goals in the air and fly over a fiberglass pole.

With that in mind, let me ask you this.

What category of person must clear the highest obstacle to come to the saving knowledge of Christ?

In other words, what category of person is the hardest to evangelize?

From a human perspective, what kind of person is the most difficult to get to see their sin and their need of Christ?

Some would say the atheist.

Here is someone who doesn't believe there is a God.

Here is someone who has rejected God.

Yet, the Bible would say that the atheist doesn't have the highest hurdle to jump.

Some would say that the Muslim or the Buddhist or the Hindu has the highest bar to clear, seeing that that worship a false god.

But the Bible wouldn't necessarily say that those trapped in false religion face the highest hurdle.

The person with the highest obstacle to overcome in coming to Christ is the moralist.

It is the person who thinks they are well that poses the biggest challenge in Christianity.

I think I have told you this before, but I would much rather speak to an atheist about the gospel than to speak to a Baptist who is lost but thinks he is saved.

It is so hard to convince a good person how bad they truly are.

It is easier to vault over a pole 20 feet in the air than to show a good person how utterly lost they are.

This is why evangelism is so hard in the Southern United States.

Most people here and even in this country at large think they are moral people.

And why is that?

Well there are a number of reasons.

First, most people define morality in terms of their environment and surroundings.

So they look at their neighbors and they listen to the news, and examples of horrible sins actually comfort them.

And the comfort in this voice in their head that tells them that they aren't THAT bad.

Second, people define morality by who they associate with.

If they show up at church a few times a month and the people there accept them, that same little voice in their head comforts them and tells that God is pleased with them.

People also find comfort in associating with a political party.

In our political system, the little voice in their head tells them that they are good people because they cast a vote for the more moral party.

Third, people define morality in terms of their family tree.

That demonic voice in their head tells that God has always been pleased with their family, and so God must be pleased with them personally.

Despite their sin, their unrighteousness, their disobedience, their good family name will be all they need to get to heaven.

But this is what the moralist does.

In order to soothe his guilty conscience, he elevates himself by comparing himself to horrible sinners, by associating with moral people, or by holding on to his family tree.

And ultimately, he makes himself into someone that even God can't condemn.

But in case you thought the moralist is a modern day problem, it is not.

Moral and religious people have been around forever.

In fact, I think it is highly likely that Cain was a moralist when he brought his sacrifice to the Lord.

Though God had most likely asked for an a blood sacrifice, Cain brought some fruit of the ground thinking that God would never think of rejecting the offering of the first son of Adam and Eve.

Yet God did.

And history is full of people who have underestimated God's and overestimated themselves.

But the greatest example of this in history has been the Jewish people.

When God to Abraham in the book of Genesis, he made Abraham 3 promises.

The first is that his descendants would be a great nation.

The second is that his descendants would get a land of their own.

The third is that his descendants would be a blessing to the whole world in delivering a Messiah from their family tree.

And while all those promises were incredible blessings, the reality is that Abraham and his descendants were nothing special.

They weren't morally superior to their neighbors.

They weren't some special race of people.

They were simply going to be the people that God chose to use as a vessel for his work in the world.

That was it.

However, the Jews let their privilege go to their head.

They took the blessing of knowing God and being used by Him and simply elevated themselves to a place of spiritual superiority in the world.

They took the law that God gave them and used it as a stairway to heaven for themselves.

Like many today, the Jews saw themselves as people who deserved heaven simply because they weren't as bad as everyone else.

But today in Romans 2:1-16, Paul is going to remind his people that their privilege and supposed morality carries no weight with God.

But understand this passage applies to any moral or supposed religious person.

God does not judge based upon our standards.

God judges based solely upon His standards.

And that puts everyone squarely in the bullseye for God's wrath.

So this morning, we are going to look at 3 aspects of God's judgment that destroys the most moral and most religious of all men.

Though Paul is addressing the Jew of his day, this passage is so appropriate for those in the church today who think their morality or religion will be enough in the day of judgment.

So take these words to heart.

Examine you life in light of them, and use this section to help others move from morality to failing on the mercy of Christ alone.

Let's begin in verses 1-5 which teach us that God's judgment is according to knowledge.

I. Judgment according to Knowledge (1-5)

For us to rightly understand verses 1-16, we have to remember the flow of Paul's letter to the church at Rome.

Remember, he is writing that church to help them understand the glory of the gospel, which is the truth that Christ lived and died to offer the righteousness of God to the unrighteous sinner.

The gospel says that wicked man can be declared righteous in God's eyes through faith in Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

And though the church in Rome had put their faith in Christ, they lacked a deeper understanding of the gospel.

So the Lord inspired Paul to write them a letter that describes the gospel in detail, and the key word or phrase in the righteousness of God.

Man is in desperate need of God's righteousness.

As we have seen already, God's righteousness is the key to heaven.

A person needs to be as righteous as God in order to enter heaven.

And the good news is that God's righteousness is available in the gospel.

The only problem is that man fails to see his need of it.

So Paul begins this letter to the church in Rome trying to show how unrighteous man truly is.

For the last two weeks, his focus has been on the Gentile's needs for righteousness.

In that section that ran from verses 18-32, we saw the incredible spiral of sin that the man who rejects the truth of God finds himself in.

When man gives up God, God gives man over to his sin.

And last week, we got a close up look at that downward spiral that begins with heterosexual sins like adultery and fornication and progresses to homosexual sins and ends up with a depraved mind.

Long story, when man abandons the God that he knows exists, God abandons him to to sin that corrupt his body and then corrupts his mind.

Now, the Jew reading about that downward spiral into sin had one reaction, and it was this.

Well, thank God that we aren't like that.

Thank God that we are moral people.

Thank God that we are the Jews.

A common saying among the Jews was this.

“God loves Israel alone of all the nations of the earth.”

In fact, Jews were taught that Abraham sat outside the gates of hell to prevent any Jew from entering in, no matter his level of wickedness.

This was their level of spiritual arrogance, but Paul is about to expose that arrogance of the Jew.

And he begins his assault on their self-righteousness in verses 1-5 of chapter 2.

Let's read it now.

1 Therefore you have no excuse, [a]everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. 2 And we know that the judgment of God [b]rightly falls upon those who practice such things. 3 But do you suppose this, O man, [c]when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape

the judgment of God? 4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? 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

As Paul begins to address the Jew, he begins with a familiar phrase.

1 Therefore you have no excuse

In chapter 1, Paul told the Gentile that he was without excuse in terms of God's judgment because God had revealed himself in nature.

But the Jew is also without excuse in terms of God's judgment because had revealed Himself to the Jew in creation but also personally thought their nation's relationship to Him.

The Jews were very much aware that God existed.

Not only did the world around them point to God, but God had come to them with his word and with his law.

Think of this way, yall know me, but my family really knows me.

And the Jew really knew God.

But what did the Jew do?

He used his knowledge of God as an instrument of judgment on everyone in the world but himself.

Look back at verse 1..

Therefore you have no excuse, [a]everyone of you who passes judgment

And who was the Jew passing judgment upon?

The Gentile.

In fact, there would have been a lot of “amening” from the Jews in Romans 1 as Paul described the sins of the Gentile.

The Jews would have been nodding his head and saying “that’s right” all the way down the list of sins in Romans 1.

But as they passed judgment on the Gentile, they condemned themselves.

Look back at verse 1.

Therefore you have no excuse, [a]everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

In other words, as the Jew nodded his head in agreement with the guilt of the Gentile, he was nodding his head in agreement with his own guilt as well.

Paul says that the Jew practiced the very same things that the Gentile did, but he was unwilling to admit it.

I want you to take your Bibles and turn back to the book of 2 Samuel.

2 Samuel 12:10.

Most of you know the story of David, the second king of Israel.

He came to power after the death of Saul.

And David was Israel's greatest king, but he was not without sin.

In the midst of his reign, he commits adultery with Bathsheba and then murdered her husband Uriah to cover it up.

But David fails to see the horror of his sin, so God sends a prophet named Nathan to see David.

1 Then the Lord sent Nathan to David. And he came to him and [a]said,

“There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor.

2 “The rich man had a great many flocks and herds.

3 “But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb

Which he bought and nourished;

And it grew up together with him and his children.

It would eat of his [b]bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom,

And was like a daughter to him.

4 “Now a traveler came to the rich man,

And he [c]was unwilling to take from his own flock or his own herd,

To prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him;

Rather he took the poor man’s ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.”

5 Then David’s anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan, “As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this [d]deserves to die. 6 He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion.”

7 Nathan then said to David, “You are the man! Thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul. 8 I also gave you your master’s house

and your master's wives into your [e]care, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added to you many more things like these! 9 Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon. 10 Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.'

In the same way that David was blind to his sin, so was the Jew.

So when he judged the Gentile, he condemned himself.

And then here is the key phrase in verse 2.

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

In other words, God doesn't judge according to some unknown standard or law.

God judges based upon the law that he has revealed to man.

And the Jews were very much aware of his law.

If I can take our mind back to the Olympics for a moment, gymnastic events are based upon the scores of judges.

There are standards of perfection for each event, whether that is the floor exercise or the vault or the balance beam.

And competitors are very much aware of the standards of judgment.

In fact, their routines have to meet some standards of judgment before they even qualify to be judged.

So competitors are made aware of the standards before they even compete, so that when they do fail, they know where they failed.

The same is true with God.

God gave his standards and laws so that man is without excuse on the day of judgment.

And if that applied to the Gentile, it certainly applied to the Jew who knew God's law well.

God's judgment is not based upon what we don't know, it is based upon what we know.

And the Jew very much knew God's standard and therefore very much knew he deserved judgment.

Look at verse 3..

3 But do you suppose this, O man, [c]when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?

Though the Jew knew he deserved judgment, he still supposed that he would escape God's judgment.

This is the great deception of moralist or the religious person.

They think they will escape judgment because their good works will overcome their bad.

Or they think they will escape judgment because their family line will be enough.

Or they think they will escape judgment because their sin isn't that bad.

Or they will escape judgment because they come to church or vote for the right party or give money to the poor.

And part of the reason that the Jews thought they would escape judgment is because God is allowing people to escape judgment all the time.

Look at verse 4.

4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

You see, God is kind to the sinner.

Despite man's constant sin, God delivers consent grace.

For instance, you have sinned this week but you are still alive.

God would be justified in ending any of our lives this week for just one lie that we told or one evil thought we had.

But he extends grace to those sins to lead us to repentance.

He lets sins go by so that we are drawn to him.

But man takes advantage of that grace and continues to sin.

But worse, man sees those escapes as proof that he may escape final judgment.

Listen to what John MacArthur says,..

“There is always something in (sinful man) that tends to let him off the hook of final judgment. Man will say things like, ‘Oh God would never do that to me’ or ‘it will be all right in the end. Things will work out fine for me.’ Listen to me. We are so used to God not killing us when we sin that we expect not to be killed. Yet the Bible says the wages of sin is what? Death. Every time you sin, God has a perfect right to snuff your life out. But we are so used to mercy, that instead of seeing it for what it is, we abuse it, you see. “No, He’s not going to kill me for that. It’ll be all right.”

But the reality is that God will offer a final judgment on everyone.

Just because you escaped this week, don’t presume that God will let you escape forever.

The Jews were especially guilty of this.

They had a history of disobeying God as a nation, yet here in the 1st century, they will still around as the people of God.

And that only furthered a false sense of security.

And that only drives people deeper into sin and deeper into trouble.

Look at 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,

Because the Jews ignored the knowledge of their own sin and because they Jews ignored the knowledge that they deserved judgment, God began storing up wrath for them.

Listen, to those who much has been given much is expected.

But I would add that to those whom much truth and knowledge has been given, much wrath is to be expected if that truth and knowledge is ignored.

God declared his existence to the world, but He declared his heart to the Jewish people.

And for them to ignore the knowledge of their own sin and the knowledge of their own judgment was to put themselves in the worst of positions.

Let me tell you something, southern Baptist church in South Carolina.

Much has been given to you.

Many of you grew up around the church, if not in it.

Many of you had Bibles in your home, if not multiple copies.

Many of you heard the name of Jesus from a young age.

Many of you knew what sin was from a young age.

Many of you heard the gospel from a young age.

You have an incredible amount of knowledge of God compared to the Muslim born in the middle of nowhere in the Middle East.

And though you may complain about his sin and rightly so, you are equally guilty before God and maybe more so since your knowledge of God is so much greater.

Be careful of sitting in judgment of other.

You may be condemning yourself.

God will judge based upon the knowledge that he has revealed to us.

And though every man has the knowledge has enough knowledge to be sentenced to hell, make sure you don't end up in hell from a front row seat on Earth.

So God's judgment is according to knowledge but there are two more aspects of his judgment that we will see next week.

Conclusion

This morning, I want us to go to the Lord's Table together.

And the context and content of this passage of this verse may seem like a strange transition to the Lord's Table but I assure that it is not.

The best time to think of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf in the midst of a season on wrath.

Because Christ shines best against the darkness of God's wrath.

Why do we love Christ so?

Because we have no excuse before God.

Our sin is great.

Our guilt is great.

And our condemnation is deserved.

Yet in Christ, we find relief.

We find forgiveness.

We find hope and assurance.

In Christ, we are no longer condemned.

For the believer in here this morning, we fully agree with Paul in Romans 1 and 2.

We see our need for God's righteousness, and we have found that righteousness in Christ alone.

And this morning, we get to express our thankfulness for that in observing the Lord's Supper.

This morning as we gather, we eat the bread and the cup which symbolize the body and blood of Christ, which are the only source of God's righteousness in the world.

To be declared righteousness by God, man must come to Christ alone in faith alone.

And today we celebrate that great reality as a church.

If you have come to faith in Christ alone, you are welcome at the Lord's Table.

If you have not put your faith in Christ, I must warn of taking part in this supper.

The Bible say that doing so may bring severe judgment into your life.

The same would be true for the believer who lives in sin.

So examine yourself before you take part in the Lord's Supper this morning.

I would also ask parents to talk to their young children about taking part in this Lord's Table.

This is not something to be taken lightly.

Though we rejoice in the death of Christ as our Substitute, we want to honor in how we come to His Table.

Our deacons will gather down front now to serve us.

Let me pray.

Judgment according to works (6-11)

Judgment according to law (12-16)