

God is not a partial Judge. He judges all by their works, and by that standard, all of humanity is guilty before Him.

Last week we saw that **religious people need the Savior Jesus just as much as the “notorious sinners”** (2:1-3), and that **“the kindness of God” is meant to “lead you to repentance”** (2:4). This week we look at God’s standard for judgment and a key truth in rightly understanding the Gospel.

Wrath Instead of Repentance (2:5)

2:5 But 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...

Paul and John the Baptist

- Paul’s warning about repentance before the coming judgment is an echo of the first preaching of the New Testament by John the Baptist: *“...Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, ‘You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, “We have Abraham for our father”; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire’”* (Matthew 3:5-10).
- Nobody is exempt from the call to repent before God’s judgment. Nobody. Notice the elements in the Gospel of Matthew echoed by Paul here in his letter to the Romans:
 - Some of the Jews came with repentance: *“...they confessed their sins”* (3:6). These

are the ones who, even though they were Jews, knew their sins required repentance and divine grace.¹

- John the Baptist called the hard-hearted to *“bear fruit in keeping with repentance”* (3:8) instead of trusting in their own righteousness, good deeds, or covenant status (*“We have Abraham as our father,”* 3:9) to save them.²

The Need of a New Heart

- Paul speaks of an *“unrepentant heart,”* and the wrath that stores up for judgment. The Old Testament teaches that human beings all need new hearts from God, and that God was going to do that in His true people.
 - *“Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the LORD’S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today*

¹ We just considered the command and promise in 1 John during last Wednesday night’s Bible study: *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1:9). Jesus also teaches us to make this humble repentance a daily practice: *“Pray, then, in this way: ‘...forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors’”* (Matthew 6:9,12).

² Today a Christian might say, “I’ve been in Church all my life – the new convert from a blatantly sinful life needs to show more fruit than me! After all, I’ve got a lifetime of good works and this person’s wasted their life.” The truth is we are all equally depraved apart from Christ, and it is only by the graceful election of the Father (Ephesians 1:3-6) and regenerating work of the Spirit (John 3:5-8) that any of us are saved. He gets the glory. You – all of you – must show forth the daily humble fruit of your faith and repentance.

*for your good? Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day. So **circumcise your heart**, and stiffen your neck no longer. For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God Who does not show partiality”*

(Deuteronomy 10:12-17).

READ Jeremiah 3:3,4.

- God promised in the Law (Deuteronomy 30:6) and the Prophets (Jeremiah 32:39; Ezekiel 11:19,20; 36:26,27) to make a heart-change in the future for the Jewish people. The accomplished work of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit fulfill this promise in the new covenant (Colossians 2:11). We will discuss this further when we get to Romans 2:29 on March 20 (Palm Sunday), Lord willing.

The Nature of God’s Judgment (2:6-11)

Old Testament Foundations

2:6...Who will render to each person according to his deeds...

- Paul began this letter pointing back to the Old Testament: “...the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures [the Old Testament], concerning His Son” (1:1-3). Remember, **the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a whole-Bible Gospel**.
 - The New Testament is not an interruption, parenthesis, or separate Book from the Old Testament. The New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old Testament, and the two together are one Book – God’s one’s Book.

- The Old Testament points to the coming of Jesus Christ.³ The N.T. quotes, alludes to, and is woven from the very fabric of the O.T. There is not a single part of the O.T. that is not fulfilled in Jesus Christ’s coming and work.
- The O.T. and N.T. do not contradict each other, but are the inspired work of the unchanging God.⁴ There is a progressive revelation as the Bible proceeds – what came before is more fully explained by what comes later. Things that were originally given in partial, symbolic, or shadow in the O.T. are fully revealed in the N.T.
- Paul is alluding to the Old Testament book of Proverbs:
*“One who plans to do evil,
Men will call a schemer.
The devising of folly is sin,
And the scoffer is an abomination to men.
If you are slack in the day of distress,
Your strength is limited.
Deliver those who are being taken away to death,
And those who are staggering to slaughter, Oh hold them back.
If you say, ‘See, we did not know this,’
Does He not consider it who weighs the hearts?
And does He not know it who keeps your soul?”*

³ READ Luke 24:25-27,44-49; John 5:39,46; Acts 3:18; 13:29; 1 Corinthians 15:3,4. Paul even preached Christ from the O.T. (Acts 17:2,3; 18:28; 24:14; 26:22,23; 28:23), something I think all believers should make a personal goal. Remember, too, that Paul says the O.T. cannot be understood except by those who have come to Christ by faith (2 Corinthians 3:14-16). “All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, Who is Himself the focus of divine revelation” (Baptist Faith & Message 2000, I).

⁴ Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29; Psalm 90:2; 102:27; Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 1:12; 13:8; James 1:17.

And will He not render to man according to his work?” (Proverbs 24:8-12).

- Paul has spoken of the evil nature of humanity (1:18-31).
- He has also spoken of the highest sin – knowing God has sentenced sinners to death, yet encouraging people toward this death (1:32).
- This is the natural way of fallen humanity – to build a society without regard for God and His commands or ways.
- While Proverbs 24:8-12 matches Paul’s teaching in the letter to the Romans up to this point, the promise that God will “*render to man according to his work*” is found throughout the Old Testament.⁵

The Challenge

- This series of verses (2:7-10) are a test of our Bible interpretive skills. Taken by themselves, these verses seem to promote a works-based salvation where people receive rewards or punishments at the judgement based on their own deeds in this life. Unqualified, this denies the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which says we are not saved by works.⁶
- When Paul speaks about reward for those “*doing good*” (2:7,10), he’s setting up the reader for a surprise. In 3:12 he will pronounce, “*there is none who does good, there is not even one.*”
 - This is a quote from the Psalms:
“*The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God...’*
...there is no one who does good.

⁵ Job 34:11; Psalm 28:4; 62:12; Jeremiah 17:10; 25:14; 32:19; 51:24; Ezekiel 33:20.

⁶ Acts 13:39; Romans 3:20,28; Galatians 3:11; Titus 3:5-7 (for O.T. passages, see Job 25:4; Psalm 130:3; 143:2). Paul goes so far in Galatians 2:16 as to say it three times in this single verse!

God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men

*To see if there is anyone who understands,
Who seeks after God...*

...there is no one who does good, not even one”
(Psalm 53:1-3).⁷

- A “religious person” may respond, “I believe in God – that doesn’t apply to me!” But unless we come to God through Jesus Christ, Who died on the cross because of our sins, we are not really believers in the one true God described in the Bible.⁸ If you are not believing in the God of the Bible, you are not really believing in God, but a figment of your imagination.

Judging a Life (2:7,8)

- There is a parallel to this passage in John 5:28,29.

Rewarded with Eternal Life (2:7)

2:7...to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life...

Rewarded with Wrath (2:8)

2:8...but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

- There is an obedience factor to the Christian faith. We are saved by faith alone in Christ alone, but saving faith always produces obedience to Christ. Paul speaks of an obedience-producing faith in this letter: 1:5; 6:16; 15:18; 16:26.⁹

⁷ This is titled as a Psalm of David. David’s son Solomon said this: “*...there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins*” (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

⁸ Matthew 11:27//Luke 10:22; John 14:6; 2 John 9.

⁹ The New Testament speaks of obedience and disobedience to the Gospel: John 3:36; Acts 6:7; Galatians 3:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:7,8; Hebrews 5:9; 1 Peter 1:12; 4:17.

Restating the Single Standard for Humanity (2:9,10)

Rewarded with Tribulation (2:9)

2:9 There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek...

Rewarded with Glory (2:10)

2:10...but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

God Doesn't Play Favorites (2:11)

2:11 For there is no partiality with God.

The Impossibility Solved Only by the Gospel

- **How do a people who cannot do good works gain a reward given for good works?**
 - Jesus Himself told Nicodemus, “*everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God*” (John 3:20,21).
 - “*...by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them*” (Ephesians 2:8-10).
 - “*...work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God Who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure*” (Philippians 2:12,13).
 - “*Now the God of peace, Who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His*

sight, through Jesus Christ, to Whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen” (Hebrews 13:20,21).

GETTING THE ORDER RIGHT:

ETERNITY IS AT STAKE!!!

- Please, please, please learn this: getting the order right between salvation and works is the difference between **every** false, man-made religion and the biblical saving Gospel of Jesus Christ.¹⁰

False religion works to gain salvation:

WORKS → SALVATION

The Gospel saves us to produce works:

SALVATION → WORKS

God the Father will acquit those whose saving faith in the Son is shown by Spirit-created good works, bestowing on them everlasting reward.

Those who stand before God in the judgment with only their own righteousness or good works will be judged guilty and go into everlasting punishment.

¹⁰ When I say **every** false, man-made religion, I mean it. From the animal sacrifices of pagans to the works of Muslims to grace-gaining sacraments/penance of the Roman Catholics to the good deeds of Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons or Hindus or Buddhists or even atheists to the meditation of the mystic, they are all the same – man's efforts to gain favor (however that is defined) from a higher power (however that is defined – for the evolutionist it is survival, and for the atheist it is the self or collective humanity). Biblical Christianity alone says God saves us completely apart from our efforts through His own gracious, unmerited actions.