

The headline theme of judgment continues from chapter 1 into chapter 2 so we need to keep that greater context in our minds. But now in this chapter, we see an additional provocation of God's judgment and wrath. Chapter 1, you remember, the basic problem was a rejection of God after knowing God. Four different words were employed by Paul with 4 slightly different Greek meanings for knowing. And the case is made that no matter the degree of knowledge, truth is generally rejected all the same. So that's the headline of this part of chapter 1 and that is a reason for God's wrath being revealed from heaven against such willful, deliberate sin of refusing God and being disloyal to God and then many other sins spin out as a consequence of that wrath. But the root reasons for God's present wrath and future wrath and judgment as well as condemnation of sinners are all firmly established in Chapter 1. Paul's still standing on that basis as he continues that argument in chapter 2 to the Roman church. Chapter 2 and part of chapter 3 will build on and progress from that same basis; the basis of the rationale, the reason for God's present wrath and the repercussions of it. Thus all the way to chapter 3 verse 20. But each point is connected directly to vs. 16 and 17 back in chapter one. So you are going to give your thumb a workout, I hope, skipping back and forth through the context constantly. Because, in 21 of chapter 3, the teaching of the gospel as something powerful in saving us from all of this justified wrath in actually providing to us the righteousness of God which God requires at judgment: providing that to sinners, making it manifest to them, and providing it in those sinners That argument resumes. Verse 21 in chapter 3 will pick up immediately from chapter 1:16, 17. While we have an issue of a possible parenthetical statement here in chapter 2, in the greater context, the entire section, 1:18-3:20, is all a philosophical parenthesis in the positive teaching of the gospel. The main thing Paul is talking about is the gospel. That is what he proposed, that is what he has established as a powerful deliverance from the righteousness of God which is our only protection in judgment. Those made righteous that way, those being made righteous that way are believing continuously, progressively, steadily, they are persevering, walking by faith, that's how these people live who are escaping the wrath of God. And he'll pick up that thought in 3:21. We are studying the parenthesis.

So you know we've always got to approach any scriptural text in its proper, immediate or surrounding context. Someone said a text without a context is a pretext. It is risky to focus deeply and intensively on a select subset of verses, as we are doing. That is always risky. Because you really ought to read the entire thing any time you address any part of a thing. We've got to constantly orient to the proper context of these verses. So as we break this study down, as we go, into smaller sections it is imperative that each of us maintains our proper bearings by reading and considering the entirety of the context and put our present passage in the light of the context. Constantly do that, both before and after our considerations. Sometimes, of course, the scriptural context is quite small and that's not that difficult to do in a chapter. There might be several different subjects in a chapter as you read through the Bible. But in this case the immediate context is quite large. And so we've got to keep in mind the complete immediate context as well the original point of temporary departure from the greater context of the book of Romans.

The main subject we are talking about is the gospel. This is not foreign to the gospel. Paul will say, in this chapter, "this judgment that I'm talking about is part of my gospel, its part of that story". So keep all that in mind because we are in a pause after verse 17 if chapter 1 and we are going to resume the play after that pause in 3:21. In the overall context of the book, we're

learning at the moment why the gospel must be so powerful. It is in the face of all this information, that we are presently studying, that Paul says “I am not ashamed of this gospel cause it will get you out of that, it will spare you from this judgment that is absolutely, dead—certain to happen and most people will be condemned in that judgment, but the gospel is powerful”.

We’re also learning why, as we will be later taught, why we who own that gospel must engage in it, must participate in it so intensively with, literally, all that we are; must be “ministering it to each other” (chapter 12) so intensively, (as the writer of Hebrews put it) “every single day” because you need. In fact, we need this judgment that is going on in this immediate section. We need to do it a little better than the folks in chapter 2 are doing it, but we need it because our deeds are going to be judged. The reality of who we are is producing the deeds that we’re doing and God is going to evaluate that and we are each others’ keepers. You can see things about others that they would never see about themselves. You need that judgment, it is a vital part of it, but you can’t be a hypocrite while you do it.

In our immediate context, here in this giant parenthesis, we’re learning why God is so angry and worse than that, why his anger is so justified and why he wouldn’t be holy if He wasn’t angry and how His judgment and condemnation is so certain and so just and why the gospel is so necessary. There literally is no other way, there is no hope facing this judgment. But God has provided a justified way. His judgment against sinners is absolutely holy, absolutely justified. God is justified in condemning sin; He would be unjust if He did not. He would unjust with regard to truth if He did not judge sin. He would be unloving with regard to His own goodness and purity and holiness if he did not judge sin. And so there is also provided, in these tenuous and climactic last day of this planet earth, a salvation that is also justified and that’s the wonderful story of the book of Romans. But we have to have the story in its context so it makes sense. And so we see the need for the power of it, not just the academic story.

Our salvation is also fully justified. We’re seeing here how wrath is justified; we are going to see how salvation is justified. It is justified in the light of the full consideration of the just demands of truth and holy love and you can pass that scrutiny if you are in Christ. That is the good news! It is wonderful beyond imagination, but you can’t participate in it at arms length. You can’t just add it to your resume. It’ll take all you are and all you’ve got or else you’ll just be a false believer. That is the good news! That is the gospel; wonderful beyond imagination! But it is a very exact in a very narrow way, that’s how Jesus described it. That good news is the overall theme.

Our present study is a sub-theme of the reasons for God’s justified wrath and the reasons for His judgment, which is already scheduled. If we become, I think, sufficiently fearful of God’s holiness and purity in judgment, we will appreciate, very deeply, that other path of justice that he has provided for our salvation in his mercy and grace by the work of Christ for us. Remember in the study of the first century church in our study of the book of Acts, how they got themselves in trouble quite early on, whenever glib familiarity replaced respectful, reverent fear of God. You don’t dare get what we would call chummy with God. When God struck someone dead then the fear returned to that congregation.

This present sub-theme of judgment must address and it must reinforce the proper place of Godly fear in our lives, because without it we cannot be holy. Without holiness no one is going to see the Lord. The good news of the gospel does not remove reverent fear from our hearts. In fact, the more we understand about how the gospel works, the more respect and fear we will have for the God from whose wrath we’re being saved. In the gospel, we learn even

more extensively, the wonderful relevance and the scope of the gospel's power to take over every aspect of our lives, even every aspect of our consciousness. But we are called to duty to walk by faith; not some of the time or part of the time, but all of the time. And to walk in the spirit; he'll say that very straight in chapter 8. It's: you're walking in the flesh or you're walking in the spirit. If you are walking in the flesh you are under this condemnation we're studying right now. But he will say in verse 1 chapter 8 that there is no condemnation to those who are walking in Christ. But walking in Christ is not an occasional thing; it's not just something you do when you feel like. The gospel is to take over our lives, every aspect of our being, inside and out as we learn to walk by faith and learn to walk in God's spirit as Jesus is saving us from God's wrath. Our believing is a continuous process. You remember that from 16 and 17 in chapter 1.

In some passages of scripture it is difficult to know where the context changes, as we said, or even if the immediate context is relevant. As you go through the book of proverbs it's really hard to tell from one verse to the next, if there is a context involved. Here our discernment is relatively easy because we can just follow the connective words that Paul uses. And so the headline word here is the word *therefore* with which chapter 2 begins. That's our vital connection to chapter one and especially verse 32 in chapter 1 which is a real bridge verse. In other words, Paul is continuing to developing what he was already saying. He didn't split this up into chapters and verses he just wrote a letter. And we've noticed that the case of prosecution, so far, has primarily and generally justified the judgment and anger of God against Gentiles—that is everybody who is not a Jew, everyone who is not God's favored and chosen God's people of the OT. This has been basically talking about them. That doesn't mean there aren't some Jews living in the same kind of way and they certainly have in their history, so they would be included. But generally that has been the prosecution so far. He has been judging them.

Paul has been judging. It is easy to imagine Jewish folk in general to be in hardy agreement with all he has said so far. And it is easy to suspect that all of us are in enthusiastic agreement with everything Paul has said so far. Cause we're thinking, "Yes, those stupid evolutionist, those perverted people, those homosexuals, those idolaters." That's our attitude. Now we think he's not talking about us. But we said along the way, be real careful here. If we plow what he says in chapter 1 in real deeply as he does in verse 32, if you are participating or supporting or endorsing or tolerating in any way, you're in that crowd and now you might be in this second crowd.

It is easy to imagine Jewish folk being in hardy agreement with all he has said so far. But now he says very, very ominously, very profoundly, as he introduced this in vs 32, *therefore you*. You are inexcusable. Who is inexcusable? Whoever you are that are judging these kinds of folks. Whoever you are who are agreeing with me when I say why God should be mad at these folks. You're in trouble too. And this is proper judgment they should be judged, they are going to be judged, they are under the judgment of God, they are in for worse than that if they don't repent. You see, Paul could be speaking to or for devout practicing Jews here, certainly this point includes them but more directly he's speaking to legalistically minded people in the church, perhaps predominantly Jews maybe not entirely. And by extended principle he's speaking to any legalistic believer, which in our day would be a much larger group than it was in this first century church in Rome because now we have masses of Gentiles that would be in the same vein, the same viewpoint as these original Jews were. So this is the setting of the text and we will quickly see that as the cause of God's wrath in chapter 1 was the willful rejection of known truth, knowable by your senses, by your perception though by verse 32 you know more

than that, you know a revelation of his word. But in general, you are judged by knowing and refusing.

Here in chapter 2, God's wrath is caused by the hypocrisy of people who presumably belong to Him, who have voted for Him. They know Him far more extensively and in far greater detail than do those less fortunate folks in chapter one. But the danger is that they are only acting. They are pretending. They're pretending believers in some cases. You remember that hypocrite and actor is the same word. Acting is the enemy of sincerity. Hypocrisy is the enemy of truth, it is the enemy of the gospel so be careful when you are saying amen to Paul's prosecution in chapter 1. That's his point to the Roman church. The key question here is, "Am I an acting, pretending Christian or am I a born-again Christian?" Because there is a big difference as this book of Romans is going to show. There's a big difference. It is not as simple of just signing yourself up; this is a matter of continuously believing and being something entirely different than you were before you encountered Christ. Are you an acting Christian a pretending Christian or are you a Christian? The one exudes holiness, delights to fellowship with God and to hear from God. The other pretends good works, pretends to be good by doing works. So it's with a focused eye on vs. 32 of chapter 1 especially, and on this word *therefore* in 2:1 and on all that follows, we've got to apply these words to ourselves. So that our study here becomes part of the gospel's powerful work that Paul's already talked about.

We need to be participants in it not just observers. We need that power, it needs to change us, it needs to work on us, it needs to save us from this wrath because we deserve the wrath as much as anybody whose name or face came to mind as we studied it. We need to become a participant in the gospel's powerful work rather than a merely interested historian or merely someone doing the novelty of an academic study here. The scriptures are to be preached; that is to say, they are to be applied. Whenever you are reading them and that is not happening, you've got a problem. You'd be better off not to read them. Cause hearing them is very, very dangerous, Jesus said. The issue is to become a doer. Scriptures are not for interesting and novel amusement. They are not for just academic interest. They are for deeds. They are for the production of deeds, for doing things that will be judged at God's judgment.

If you investigate the remarkable parallels here in Paul's logic and go back to that OT story of the prophet Nathan who showed up to address, on assignment from God, David's sins; you'll readily see, I think, how in a similar fashion, these challenges of chapter 2 might be brought to bear for our own application. Remember, when Nathan told David a story about a guy and a pet sheep, he was just up in arms instantly: "I agree, prosecute that guy; kill him, in fact." Really? Kill someone for a sheep? Then Nathan says to David "Well, you're the man, you're the one." Thank God, the light came on 'cause many times it doesn't. But that's the situation of these Jews in vs. 1: "Yeah, we agree. Those people are filth, they are the scum of the earth. They deserve God to be mad at them." Paul says, "Hold on a minute, that's you. That's you, you are implicit in this. You're not pure either."

So chapter 2 has to be brought to bear for our application or it isn't going to do us any good. Those who are interested and even intrigued, but not applying it will be the hypocrites who are addressed in this chapter. Because, by the time Paul concluded this parenthesis in vs. 20 of chapter 3, there's no room for any of us to hide. And you'll need a gospel that is powerful or you're still under His wrath and facing worse. The Jews were entirely in agreement with Paul when the vile and perverse aspects of Gentile rebellion were prosecuted. But then Paul says, "Therefore, in accord with your own moral laxity" in vs. 32, "your own accommodation, your own tolerance, your own support of these very things in the same spirit of wickedness and evil

and worldliness, that causes them also causes a thousand of other things that you tend to enjoy. You're inexcusable yourself." "Given now the additional fact," he says, "that you know enough to understand God's judgment, but to apply it." In other words, "You can accurately judge this; you actually know what God's going to judge on judgment day. You're already able to do it." But instead of saying, "Good for you;" Paul says, "But you're a hypocrite." He doesn't say, "Don't judge." He says, "Don't be a hypocrite. Make sure you're not false because you'll be caught in the same judgment." Because in the long run there isn't any difference in the folks in chapter 1 and the folks in chapter 2. They end up in the same place. "What you fail to do," Paul will essentially argue here, "is you fail to apply it to yourself." In all our judging, you see, we are actually prosecuting ourselves; we are entering a record that will be used against us. That's what Jesus said. The answer to that is not to stop judging. That would be a stupid response. That would be to say, "I'll go on strike and that way God can't judge me." No, you'd be judged as a fool. The point is that you are showing what you know when you judge somebody else; you are showing who you are when you do what you do yourself. Judging ourselves is a normal, welcome ingredient of Christian care and ministry. It's not saying "Don't do it," its saying, "Do it righteously before the God who sees and knows everything," not only about the person you presently don't like or the person you think you can judge. Your judgment should be an expression of love because you believe in a gospel that is saving us from all this judgment. You need to be ministering to them. That's what it will say in chapter 12.

So we've got to consider ourselves to appear in verse 1 here, if not in verse 32, as we vigorously agree, for example, that all these perverse behaviors deserve judgment. Yet the Holy Spirit must say to us, "Yes, but you essentially approve of similar productions of worldliness." The same people that are the fans of homosexuality and idolatry and abortion are producing the movies that you watch. They are producing the things you like to think about. They are producing the imagination you pursue. What's the difference if you're in God's shoes, in God's throne? There isn't difference, except you are more accountable.

The point he's going to make in chapter 2 is: you Jews are going to be judged worse than those people are, more harshly. (That's a scary thought, because the doctrine of Hierarchalism weighs in here.) So all this fire and thunder in chapter 1 is getting more heat, not less, as we get into chapter 2. We are essentially approving of similar worldliness, similar amendments of God's design and God's work, little snippets of executive privilege we take for ourselves regardless of God's design and God's word. We accommodate ourselves; that's all those folks were doing. And so, "therefore" he says, "you are inexcusable" for more reason than the folks in chapter 1 are inexcusable because you have an ability to discern and to judge. You know how God judges 1:32 "You know His decrees." And because of your refusal to honestly apply that truth and purity to yourself in proper love and humility, and rather, you would actually take something you know of God and use it to pound on someone else with while being a hypocrite yourself. You are in a worse way facing God's judgment than the worse heathen you've ever met. That's the whole argument in chapter 2. He is extremely redundant in chapter 2. That is the only point he makes. He makes it three different ways when you add in the rest of the chapter. But it's the same point.

And so Paul will systematically, in chapter 2, prosecute this hypocrisy just as vigorously as he prosecuted the folks in chapter 1. We've got to submit to any truth of such prosecution ourselves. We've got to submit while there is still time to be affected by this wonderful gospel, that he's already introduced and which is his main theme. We need to respond while there's time to be driven to repentance and to holiness and to the production of the fruit that will stand the

judgment of God to the glory of Christ, rather than just have all that truth amount to a calamity. Let's orient to our study of this chapter by realizing the profound and somber truth about God's wrath and judgment: we're under it also, the church is under it also. Paul's addressing a church and he's already complimented them very much for their great faith, and yet, in chapter 2 he brings them a warning, a serious warning. And he's saying that the judgment of God is not only for the pagan and the heathen and the behaviorally perverse, it is for everybody God has created. We've simply got to realize and we have to know and it is part of the gospel: that God will judge every person he's created. We have to know (1) who it is he's going to judge. We have to know (2) on what basis he will judge. And we have to know (3) what is the only alternative to condemnation at judgment. That's the only alternative.

The theme of judgment is so consistently stated throughout Scripture that it should be impossible to overlook. It is everywhere you read. But in the selective teaching, writing, and reading that is so popular these days, the subject is essentially avoided because we have invented a gospel that eradicates it. But that's a false gospel. Paul says, "This is all part of my gospel." So, he is really still talking about the gospel that he introduced in vs. 16 and 17. But Scripture says the fear of God is where the beginning of wisdom is. And fear of judgment is a perfectly suitable motive for seeking the salvation provided by Christ. That would be an intelligent thing to do.

If people, in chapter 1, were suppose to look at the sun, moon and stars and do something about it with it with regard to their Creator, what on earth do you think we're suppose to do about it, knowing enough of God's judgment to apply it ourselves to somebody else. How much more accountable are we for knowing God's judgment than they are for seeing the moon and the stars. And they're fully accountable, make no mistake about it, they can be damned for what they did not do knowing about God by his revelation in creation.

Chapter 2 is people who have his word, have his revelation in detail. The fear of God and the wise regard of judgment is entirely appropriate in our life under the gospel because it moves us to a careful, vigilant, circumspect pursuit of His righteousness and His holiness and His glory. In fact, this text in chapter 2 tells us that perseverance in doing good in the pursuit in the pursuit of honor and glory and immortality, that is the essential activity of sanctification. That is what justification is for. It clears the books so that you can do that. It clears the way for you to do that. Jesus says, "Don't be afraid of him who can only kill the body; be afraid of the one who, after he kills the body, has the authority to cast you into hell." That's what judgment is about and that's what the gospel is about.

The writer of Hebrews says, "If we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, then there no longer remains any sacrifice for sins, but instead there remains only a certain and terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of fire that will follow it and consume all of God's adversaries." This theme of judgment reveals very explicitly the character of God's own character. If you love God, you have got to appreciate and love this aspect of who He is and most Christians have never even thought about that. Because you have to love and regard and respect the way He judges and you are suppose to do it yourself in ministry to others. Judgment that we do now saves people from the judgment that God going to do later. Indeed you need to know how to do the judgment that these folks in chapter 2 are doing. Just don't you dare—as Ananias and Saphira dared come before Peter and lied to the Holy Spirit—lie before the Holy Spirit about yourself. We must judge righteously and helpfully. Knowing, all the while, that the insight we are given by which to judge the other brother or sister, must be brought to bear on ourselves. Paul says in vs. 16 judgment is part of the gospel. Make sure you don't leave it out.

If the realization of truth about God's justice and the judgment that is necessarily involved in that justice makes it hard for you to love God, then the God you love might simply be a self-constructed figment of your own imagination. It might not be God, after all, that you thought you signed up to follow, because this is what He is like. When he judges you, it doesn't matter who you are, you have no friendly, chummy connection that will let you get a pass regardless of your deeds. You're judged by what your deeds say and what they show. That's a life of justice. That's how we are supposed to be living. That's part of the gospel. Only the gospel has the power to let you live that way; not only live that way, but pass. If you have a hard time loving God who is just and angry with sin, then you might not be loving the real true God after all.

Now maybe many folks today are doing the same things in response to God's judgment as the folks in chapter 1 are doing in response to God's creation. We've got to ask that question of ourselves, "Am I doing that?" It is absolutely clear that God will judge, there is no question about that. ... You can just about play Bible roulette and just let the pages fall wherever they are and find something about judgment.

So let's be clear, not only that God will judge, but who is it he is going to judge. In verses 5 and 6, Paul says, "according to your hard and unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself." Now he never said that to the folks in chapter 1, you noticed, they're living in wrath, they're living miserable lives, they're doing sins and more sins as a result of having abandoned God and been abandoned by Him. But he says, "You people who know God's judgment and are applying it as hypocrites, you're storing up wrath. You are building a literal IRA of wrath. Storing it up so that on the day of wrath; it will be poured on you because you won't have any excuse. You won't have the excuse that the folks of chapter 1 have. You're storing it up for the day of wrath and the day of the righteous judgment of God who will render to each person according to his or her deeds.

Chapter 1 presented a progressive case of judgment facing all sorts of Gentiles who are relatively ignorant of God's word. But beginning in 1:32 and now into chapter 2, Paul is making the same case against those who do know God's revealed word. And he says, "God's judgment will fall on you as well." And in fact, we know, that those who have greater knowledge will have greater judgment, greater punishment. The Jews were given, of course, much more access, much more knowledge of God, much more privilege before God, much more blessing by God. Therefore their accountability is greater, similarly in our day, 2000 years later. They are a people who are very familiar with God's word. How much have we read it, how much have we heard it? We know the teachings of the Christian religion, inside and out, frontward's and backwards. We are precisely parallel to these Jews of Paul's day in chapter 2.

And that's Paul's point in verses 9, 10 and 11 of this chapter. There is going to be tribulation and distress as a result of judgment, for every soul of the person who does evil, to you people in chapter 2 first, notice that, and to the folks in chapter 1 second or also. Or there will be glory and honor and peace. Imagine that! You can go to God's judgment and receive glory and honor and peace. But you have to be a person who does good and that will also be the advantage to those in chapter 2 but also to those in chapter 1. Because at the end of the day, the bottom line is: there is no partiality with God. When He goes to judgment He will not favor the Jews. And He won't favor those voted for Jesus and call themselves Christians. That wouldn't be fair, that would not be just. In justice it only matters what you did not what your explanation is or who you know. There is no partiality with God. In other words, it doesn't matter who you are. Only your record is judged not your explanation of it. Boy, these are the days of explaining our records away. That's not how God judges.

The answer to the question of “who will be judged?” is everyone will be judged. Too much is given much will be required. No one will be exempt. No one will be favored. God respects none of the things we tend to see as substantial excuses or at least, modifications of judgment. Justice is blind to everything but truth. So we should be doing the kind of judgment that educates people as to the kind of judgment God is doing. We aren’t ministering properly if we don’t do that. You are ministering properly to your children if that’s not how you are teaching them what justice means and what judgment means. ‘Cause this is how God judges, and we should be getting used to that and learn how to do it as we minister that same justice to each other. God’s judgment is of the true heart of each person as it actually is, measured by the deeds that proceeded out of that heart.

There is no mystery here. The industry of psychology is making billions of dollars of profit for themselves, but they are lying. They are saying between that heart and those deeds there’s a great, big, colossal mystery. Jesus says, “No, there isn’t.” When you see the deed you already know the heart. Judge it. Proceed in order to you’ve just seen. Address it. Secret things are open things to God’s judgment. We need to realize that, because we don’t really have any secret things. We think we do, but we don’t. God knows and sees and it’s all piling up for judgment. When Adam and Eve sinned the first thing they did was they hid from God. They hid from the truth. They hid from their own true record. But before God there is no hiding. And He called them out. He said, “Where are you, Adam?” It’s not as if God didn’t know, it’s Adam who didn’t know. He didn’t know the half of it, of where he had gotten himself.

When Jesus asks you as He asked Peter, (we thought about this a few weeks ago) “Do you love me?” you’d better answer with the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth which He already knows. Knowing the answer and not being a hypocrite is the starting place. When Paul completes this prosecution in chapter 3, he is going to declare that there is no real distinction between anybody in this regard, no real difference in the folks of chapter 1 and the folks of chapter 2. All have sinned and all fall short of God’s glory. All willingly, willfully pursue the course of life that is so much fun while doing both of those things. Any difference that there is, would involve greater judgment for the folks of chapter 2 not less. They have no favored status; they actually are at a disadvantage in judgment if they are living as a hypocrite before the truth that they do know.

That is precisely why we have to have a powerful gospel and a powerful ministry of the gospel including judgment as we minister it to each other in our dedication to walking by faith and walking by the Spirit of God. We can not have an informational gospel only and think that will get it on judgment day. We need the Spirit of God to plow that gospel into us. We need the Word of God to plow that gospel in. And we need to be doing that ourselves to each other constantly, vigorously. You need to be under that application of ministry by other people and you need to be giving that ministry to others. That is where chapter 12 will take us.

So what will be the basis of judgment? Let’s be very clear on that as well: verse 6 “God will render to every person according to their deeds.” This is a matter of, verses 9 and 10, doing evil or doing good. That is the bottom line. This is very simple, very clear; there is not any mystery about it. It includes, of course, the genuine reality of being good and of being evil. There will be both kinds of people at judgment. Paul’s not only talking here about the judgment among believers, just keep that in mind. In verse 32 of chapter 1 and in chapter 2, he’s addressing those in the Roman church and those folks would all call themselves as believers, no doubt. And he’s giving them a warning. Paul is saying here, with regard to judgment, there is a lifestyle that indicates participation in the gospel, participation in the kingdom of God and there

is a lifestyle which signals exclusion from the kingdom of God, and exclusion from the gospel. That means you go to judgment on your own, just as you were when you were born. Thus, according to the gospel, being and doing are inseparably linked so that the one explains the other.

Now we have a problem when we're doing the ministry of judging in that we don't know the totality of being and we don't know the secrets unless a person tells us. Often if they do tell us, we judge them more harshly so they learn not to tell us and that is the essential end of Christian fellowship, but that is not the way the gospel is supposed to work. God does know the secrets of the heart and He includes that all in but it takes us longer to read the same fruit, doesn't mean we aren't supposed to dedicate ourselves to doing it.

Being and doing good is accounted only by the new birth, it's the only explanation of it. Being and doing evil is accounted for by merely being born and being normal and natural and living your life and dying and facing God. But to be good and to do good involves the new birth. The million dollar question is, "How can we be saved by grace through faith and not by works and yet face final judgment that is according to works or deeds alone with no favoritism to people that say they love the gospel?" How can that be? We need to cross that and we will elaborate on it more intensively as we go, but I think we need to get on that bridge to start with in our study.

Well, Jesus said that the mouth speaks out of the fullness of the heart. That's not a theory that's the fact He assumed. The good man, Jesus said, brings forth what is good out of his good treasure. And the evil man does the same thing: he brings forth evil out of his evil treasure. Then Jesus added, "you will give an account, on the Day of Judgment, for every careless and idol word that you speak." So, words are deeds; that's even more intimidating. The process of judgment is explained here. Then Jesus continues to say, "By your words you will be justified or by your words you will be condemned." The exhibit will simply be your deeds, in this case the deeds of your words. At judgment we'll be judged according to deeds, including words, because deeds are an infallible sign of that which fills the heart and is true of the person. You judge a tree by its fruit, that's the other most well-known analogy. And you judge a person by his or her deeds. Thus, we're even called upon to bring every thought captive. (That's a full time job!) But we're called upon to take every thought captive in this striving for a circumspect life so you can't have any lazy days. There are no off days; there is no vacation from this. If you want one, then you would question whether you actually love God. Because God's people are delighted to be like God; they are delighted that the gospel powerfully has made a way that you can do that. If that's just a hard and tedious chore, then maybe you're wasting your time anyway

So don't make a mystery where there isn't one. How does judgment square with salvation by grace through faith? Because those who are saved by such a powerful gospel, as God has provided, are well equipped to meet God's requirements. They do so with grave respect but also with privileged joy, trusting in Christ that in Him they can do all things because He strengthens them for it. In other words, you are living and walking in the supernatural, you are enjoying the miracle power of the gospel, not as a boon to flesh but as the development of the Spirit with an eye on judgment. But this is all because, as we said to start with, in the gospel, God is providing what he requires. What is that? It's righteousness. You ought to love righteousness. If you are a good person by the work of Christ, you absolutely love righteousness. You are becoming a person who can't stand unrighteousness: you just can't stomach it, can't tolerate it, have no interest in it, can't have any fun in it, and can't be amused by it.

On judgment day, God will prove Himself just. Don't forget that! He's not just saying by executive privilege, "You're just 'cause I said you are." He doesn't have to go through all these

things in history and put Christ through the agony that He did just to pull “executive privilege.” God is going to prove Himself just in calling you just. That’s why your life matters and every thought and every deed and every action and every motive counts. God will show those He has saved by His gospel to be justifiably rewarded with eternal life. Their deeds will prove the truth and the reality of their profession of faith, and it will prove, also, the truth and purity of God’s declaration of them as justified as well. Remember that Paul has already said that the gospel shows the righteousness of God provided for believers by faith. What are those kind of people doing? They are living by that faith. These justified ones are living by that faith. The true believer is living out that righteousness, walking by that faith. That is a product, that is an experience, of the power of the gospel in which we are participants by faith in His promises. So, trying to make the righteous requirements of the law by obeying the law in your natural state is absolutely futile. It will make you a liar if you think you’re doing it, in fact. But walking by faith, walking in the Spirit of God by whom we were born again, does achieve that result.

And Paul will explain, as we go, that sanctification follows justification and glorification follows sanctification. And all through that the justifying process is continuous. Paul describes again in vs. 7 in this immediate chapter, he describes the action and the process of sanctification. Our participation in the gospel by faith is a participation in this power provided for salvation in a continuous present sense. What’s going on in the gospel? The righteousness of God is becoming apparent in those God has saved. God proceeds, as someone said, to make good those He, first of all, calls good. God knows, full well, the power of His gospel. The same power brought Jesus alive from the grave and it is fully capable of achieving Christ’s intended result which will stand the scrutiny of God on judgment day. Such an achievement is, furthermore, absolutely legal; there are no tricks, no bureaucratic shenanigans here. It’s not God pulling rank saying “I am sovereign; I can do what I want.” It is absolutely legal and justified in perfect justice. So judgment can be safely made of the end result because there is only one way by which those end results could be good results. That is by the powerful way provided by the work of Jesus Christ, by which we access and by which we participate both initially and continuously by faith in God’s Word and promises.

So be very aware of this focus in chapter 2 on the hypocrisy of religious people. Be very alert to the hypocrisy of people who know the Word of God and are very familiar with the Christian religion. Be careful of religion that has a form but has no power, has the choreography. It’s all orchestrated. They jump on command. They sit up, they sit down, they read, they sing, they do everything on cue, but it’s a form. It has no power to it. It’s deceptive, it’s deceptive religion. Judgment day will reveal the truth, which, at present, may be secret, may be hidden.

Yet the ministry of present judgment is one of the most life-giving, helpful, hopeful things we can do. But don’t do it as a hypocrite. Do it as a co-participant in humility. Paul will say here that sometimes God’s name is blasphemed by the very folks he just judged in chapter 1. Why? Because of the hypocrisy of people who know God better than they do. What do they give? mixed signal, legalism, false judgment, judgment with no hope, judgment with no humility. If we cause the gospel to appear to be powerless and weak, we are misrepresenting God’s name, we are blaspheming His gospel. We’re impinging upon His reputation if we claim to have His power and then don’t live in it. If we cause God to appear to be unjust and untrue to His Word and arbitrary, then we are causing His name to be blasphemed. We’re causing a warped world view to take grip of people’s lives. But on judgment day, God will prove Himself to be just, as well as powerful; to have provided righteousness to the people saved by His Son. They will be justified and He will be justified because the verdict will be just. It is the obedience

of faith, remember, that glorifies Christ; not the talk of faith, not the academic preoccupation with the subject.

So imagine, as you begin to study this chapter, the courtroom of God Himself with all the world's residents who have ever lived, assembled before Him. And if you read into the book of Revelation, John had a little bit of a picture of this and it is so glorious that we don't have the words to describe it. It would be the most intimidating thing you could ever imagine. Every one of those people assembled before Him guilty; in the timeline of their life, from the time of their birth to the end of their lives guilty. You can't possibly imagine anything more formable than this. Yet some will be acquitted by justice, and others will be condemned because the perfect scrutiny of God will be the determiner. Yes, one group has been justifiably forgiven and the other hasn't. What Paul says is that in that courtroom, on that day, an infallible, unimpeachable witness will be called to testify to the veracity of those who claim to have faith because He will be judging the presence of faith or the absence of it. The witness of proof will be the record of our deeds; that's what he says in chapter 2, not only the talk, but the deeds. We will not be called on for an explanation or a defense or an excuse because none of that would matter. The deeds of mind and mouth and body will speak, themselves, in the power of the gospel in changing our lives; or they will testify of our preference for the resources of self, which we chose to enjoy instead.

So, indeed, no one can prepare for this judgment by deeds of natural effort. You must be born again. If you are born again, then follows a justified and legal liberty and freedom in which deeds and works of righteousness can now flow from your mind like living water and into your behavior. It is by grace you are saved through faith, not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. It is that faith that now fills your heart; fills your mind; causes you to look anew to the promises of God, to come back again to the requirements of His word with new power and liberty to make a new start because you are now a new creation in Him. Thus, our deeds do not earn salvation, but they do, most certainly, exhibit salvation. Just as, in Ephesians chapter 2, the most famous verses are most often read but we forget that it continues to say, in vs. 10, for (or therefore or because) we are a now God's workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus. What for? to do good works. Which works God has prepared in advance for us to do. Those deeds do glorify and justify God's great and gracious work of redemption and they do reward His Son with the honor and the credit that He deserves. The gospel is about God's provision of the righteousness that He requires.

Judgment is no threat to the gospel, because it is a powerful gospel. That's Paul's first point. All this judgment and wrath is no threat to the true gospel, just make sure you are a true believer. Don't be a hypocrite. Jesus has saved us from God in this sense. The gospel is so powerful; you don't need to be ashamed of it before man. You don't even need to be ashamed of it before God Himself, because it is, by faith, powerful for salvation from God's wrath and powerful for deliverance from His judgment. Because, it produces the deeds that will not only pass God's judgment, but they will glorify God's Son. So the gospel was powerful to do that which, as Paul will say to us later, the law was not powerful to do.

But judgment is a most deadly threat to actors. But it is no threat at all to the gospel, no threat at all to genuine believers. But it is a deadly threat to hypocrites and pretenders who only hold the gospel as a form of religion while not living in the power of it. The law informs but it does not deliver. The gospel delivers; Christ delivers whoever will receive it. Remember he said that in chapter 1:7 whoever will persevere in doing good as they seek for glory and honor and immortality. That is the activity in a continuous sense to which we were introduced in 16 and 17 of chapter 1.

So, salvation begins when righteous works are impossible. Judgment begins at the end results and judges backward to conversion and all without partiality or favorites. The raw assessment of the result of the gospel by the outcome of the new birth will justify the salvation of all who have lived in pursuit of that by faith. Meanwhile, many who have made themselves familiar but not identified with Christ will hear Him say “I never knew you.” So that’s the question, “Does Jesus know You?” “Do you love Him?” The gospel provides the only alternative. That’s our final point: “What’s the alternative to condemnation?” the gospel. To those, who by perseverance in doing good, seek glory honor and immortality as they are believing continuously in Christ, walking by faith; to those God will give eternal life.

Jesus said that judgment is as simple as proving a tree by its fruits. We will close with this analogy and think about it as we continue our study. In salvation by grace through faith, as a result of the new birth, achieved entirely by the Holy Spirit; the tree that you are, in that analogy of judgment, is planted in that activity, justifiably planted and established. Because you belong to God and Christ paid for Adam’s sin on your behalf. In what we call sanctification, which is the continuing act of justification, that tree that you are grows up in Christ in righteousness, towards glory. That’s its destiny, no exceptions. At judgment, it is quite a simple matter to evaluate the fruit and prove the tree, taking for granted how it got there. It that’s all to the joy of the believer, and it is all to the praise and glory of the Savior who did all that work. And, no doubt, it will be to the sheer and utter amazement of everybody else in the crowd. But that’s how wonderful the gospel is. That’s how powerful it is. Just make sure it is real in your life and you’re not hypocritical about it.

Let us read and receive chapter 2 in this context with the intensity that the judgment deserves. Let’s be alert to the hypocrisy that lurks in every one of us and lurks near us. Satan will take every opportunity to turn us into a hypocrite. Let us resolve to live with no secrets before God. Let us judge ourselves. Let us judge each other because that is a vital ministry. But let’s do it in love with humility. A trusted, true friend will see things about you that you would never, in a hundred years, see about yourself. They need to minister and you need to submit. That’s a vital part of the Christian life. Again, chapter 12 will get there.

Let us live in the light of God’s scrutiny now and minister that, so that on judgment day we are in good shape instead bad shape. How absurd to pretend to hold thoughts, imaginations, desires, wishes, preferences and motives, much less words and behaviors, aloof from God’s awareness. How dumb it is to live like that. Beware of this allusion of this secrecy from God that Satan will try to bring to you. Well, Paul said to the Philippians, “Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just (the word for justice), whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, things that are of good report, things that are full of virtue, praiseworthy things, fill you mind with those things.” Think on those; meditate on them.

Listen to His words to the Colossian church. As the elect of God, holy and beloved, (The whole point every time Paul calls believers that is that God is calling you holy now you make God’s calling of you holy justified or else you’ll exclude yourself. ) Holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, bearing with one another. If any one has a complaint against one another, bear with it even as Christ forgave you, so you must do; but above all these things put on love because that is the bond of perfection and let the peace of God referee you mind. Let it blow the whistle on everything that shouldn’t be there and eliminate it because you were called to the peace of God. Maintain that peace in your life and you will have that peace at judgment. You were called also, not as one single individual, by yourself, verse 15, you were called as one body all together. You should be thankful for that. Its not just

you trying to be holy by yourself, you have the judging eyes and heart and love of everybody around you who loves Christ. That's how you let the peace of God rule.

And let the word of Christ dwell in you, richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another (from that resource,) in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts before the Lord. And whatever you do, whether it is in word or deed, do it all in His name. (Perish the thought that it would be that His name would be blasphemed. Do it in the holiness of the name of the Lord Jesus) giving thanks all the while to God the Father through Him.