

EXPOSITION OF ROMANS

Message #9

Romans 2:1-16

It is so easy for “moral” people to look at depraved people and realize they are headed for hell; however it is most difficult for moral people to look at themselves and realize they are headed to the same destiny. Moral people view themselves as “good people.” They read through a list like Romans 1:24-31 and don’t stop to realize they have done some, if not all, of the things in the list a time or two in their own lives. They don’t realize that their self-proclaimed goodness cannot ever measure up to the righteousness and holiness of God.

Some believe Paul had in mind here the moral Jew. Others believe he had in mind the moral Gentile. The text is not quite clear on this, but what is clear is the spirituality of the one Paul is addressing. Paul is talking about the person who believes that he is right with God and headed to heaven because he is a good moral person. John Calvin called this person the sanctimonious “saintling” (*Epistle to the Romans*, Vol. 19, p. 84).

PEOPLE WHO VIEW THEMSELVES AS GOOD AND MORAL ARE ALSO GUILTY. BEFORE GOD AND WILL BE JUSTLY CONDEMNED BY GOD.

I want you to notice in **verse 1** the change of pronoun from “they” (1:25, 28, 32), to “you” (2:1). No matter how good you think you are or how moral you think you are, apart from faith in Jesus Christ you are guilty before God and you will be condemned.

REASON #1 – Because the moralist does not judge himself honestly. **2:1**

The conjunction “therefore” (διό) is the strongest inferential conjunction in the Greek language which means “on account of which.” Now the interpretive problem among grammarians is one of connecting this conjunction to previous thought. 1) Some suggest “therefore” is connected to the entire preceding context, meaning every human has a knowledge of God and a knowledge that God has a right to abandon people, therefore, no man is without excuse. 2) Others suggest “therefore” is connected to verse 32, meaning in view of the fact that all men are aware of the pending judgment of God, no man is without excuse for rejecting Christ. Both interpretations are true for the moralist. Moral people have a knowledge of God and moral people have a knowledge of future judgment. Moral people acknowledge this and live their lives believing this.

In fact, the words “without excuse” are forensic, meaning not able to offer a legal defense or excuse at a trial. The term “judge” is a forensic decision. The term “condemn” means to pronounce a sentence of condemnation on one judged guilty.

Paul’s point is this - the moral person who is judge and jury of the depraved sinner, actually condemns himself because (“for”) he can see the same sin and guilt in others, and he can also see it in himself and should be able to honestly condemn himself for his own sin and in view of that trust Christ. All you have to do is try your own case in light of the above list - **1:24-31**. There is nothing so damning as a dishonesty with oneself before God.

REASON #2 – Because God will judge the moralist honestly. **2:2-16**

Feature #1 - God's judgment will be based on truth . **2:2-3**

Two key thoughts are brought out here:

- 1) God will judge people who continually practice evil . **2:2**
- 2) God will judge those who have continually judged others but not themselves. **2:3**

In fact, **verse 3** drives home a point by asking a question - namely those moralists making judgments will not escape the judgment of God.

In this life you can commit a crime and many things can happen:

- 1) You might get away with it because no one catches you.
- 2) You might be chased and flee and escape and go to another country beyond the boundaries of legal jurisdiction.
- 3) You might be caught, tried and even though guilty, be released through some distortion of justice.
- 4) You might be caught, tried, convicted and sentenced to be punished and escape .
- 5) You might be caught, tried, convicted and punished .

Any of these options are possible for one who commits a crime. But not so with God !

Make no mistake about it, the moralist will be judged and he will be damned .

Feature #2 - God's judgment will be based on man's ignorant rejection . **2:4**

Those words “think lightly” refer to think little about something or to think down about something.

Now watch this - the moralist holds to a high view of the mercy, love, kindness, forbearance and patience of God. A moralist is one who never wants to think of his own sin and pending judgment .

What the moralist doesn't realize is that God's kindness and patience is to give him time to repent . The Greek word “repent” means to change one's thinking. The moralist is a sinner and the moralist needs a Savior and the only reason God is not right now pouring out His deserved wrath is because He is giving people time to repent.

The moralist is confused . He thinks no judgment is happening because God is such a loving God. Truth is, God's wrath is on the way and the time gap without judgment is a time gap for repentance.

Feature #3 - God's judgment will be based on man's works . **2:5-10**

According to Revelation 20:12-15, people who are judged out of the "works books" will be eternally condemned.

The word "storing up" (**verse 5**) is a banking term which means to store up riches. The phrase "day of wrath" refers to storing up something until the day God judges and pours out His wrath. Absolute justice is demanded by God as payment for sin and if one rejects Christ, absolute justice is what one will get.

The moralist is actually storing up wrath before God. Berkeley Mickelsen writes: "God's anger stored up in heaven is the most tragic stockpile a man could lay aside for himself."

Verse 6 clearly informs us God is the One who will "render" to every man according to his works. That word "render" is one that means to give back or return . God will return the judgment savings account due a man based upon his works . His stockpile of wrath is being stored up against the works of man. Remember the words of Isaiah : "... our righteousness is as filthy rags" (**Isaiah 64:6**). God keeps works books and His wrath is being stored.

(Group #1) - The group that receives the positive reward. **2:7, 10**

The issue at stake is obeying "the truth" (articular) of the Gospel (**2:8**), **which is only by faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 1:5)**.

This first group is the group that has trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and are living for Him. They seek to glorify God and to honor God and have trusted in Jesus Christ to give them eternal life.

This person is not saved by relying on his works; it is that he has totally trusted Christ for salvation and lives in the light of that reality. He has acknowledged "the truth" that he is a sinner and must totally rely on Jesus Christ for salvation.

(Group #2) - The group that receives the negative reward. **2:8-9**

This second group has never trusted Jesus Christ. They have not responded to the truth that they are a sinner and need a Savior .

Feature #4 - God's judgment will not be based on partiality . **2:11-12**

Deuteronomy 10:17 says God is a mighty, awesome God "who does not show partiality." There will be no partiality or favoritism shown with any of God's judgments. When any human being stands before God, we may be absolutely certain there will be no . favoritism that will enter into that judgment. It makes no difference if one does not have the Law or does have the Law.

Verse 12 would seem to refer to one who would claim to be right with God based on his Jewish heritage. Paul makes it clear both the Jew and Gentile are guilty.

Feature #5 - God's judgment will be based on God's righteous standards. **2:13-16**

Is it possible for any human being to keep God's Law? The answer is no (Gal. 2:16, 21)! What then does Paul mean in **Romans 2:13**? His meaning is this: the person who will be declared righteous by God is one who is able to keep the Law and since no human being has ever been able to keep the Law, the only one who will be righteous in God's sight is one who has placed his faith in Jesus Christ, the One who nailed the Law to His cross (Colossians 2:14).

To be a hearer of the Law would be one who hears the Law condemn him and refuses to trust Christ. To be a doer of the Law is one who hears the condemnation of the Law and places his faith in Christ. To be "just before God" means that God must declare one to be righteous by a judicial decree and He will only do this to one who trusts Christ.

Now what about those moral people who do not have the Law? How is it possible for them to be guilty of a Law they do not possess?

Paul answers that question in **Romans 2:14-15**. Every person is born with a conscience that recognizes moral law. It is an "instinct" (**2:14**) within every person. This is something every human is born with. Every person in this world has done things or said things his conscience says is wrong.

According to **verse 15**, people with this moral conscience will respond in one of two non-repentant ways: 1) Accusation or 2) Defense.

People with a moral conscience either judge and accuse the guilt of others or they excuse or defend the guilt of others, but they do not admit their own guilt of the same thing.

If one studies God's written Law, he is without excuse.

If one does not ever study God's written Law, he is without excuse.

Verse 16 informs us that God will have a judgment day and a judge - Jesus Christ. All judgment goes through Him. It makes no difference how good or moral you have been. The Gospel of God declares there is only one way to be saved - believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot ever be good enough or moral enough for God to let you into His heaven. As this verse says God will judge even the "secrets of men."

How do you want God to judge you? Do you want Him to stack up your supposed good works against His righteousness? If so, you are a fool no matter how moral you think you are. God has provided everything you need to give you His righteousness. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, once and for all, now and forever!