

Romans

September 6, 2009

Romans Chapter Two

Continuing from the last lesson “No Partiality With God”

This is the sixth lesson in our series on the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

Romans 1:16-17

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ”

Last Sunday we did not finish Part 1:2: 1-11

The impartiality of God’s judgement.

Read Romans 2:1-6 to refresh our thoughts before we conclude this first part of **The Wrath of God Upon the Jew {2:1-3:8}**

We will break this subject into four parts:

- Part 1: 2: 1-11 the impartiality of God’s judgement.
- Part 2: 2: 12-16 the universality of man’s accountability to God.
- Part 3: 2: 17-29 the Jew fails to live up to his privileges.
- Part 4: 3: 1-8 the unbelief of the Jew.

2: 7-10 The principle is expanded - it applies to:
The righteous {7} and the hypocrite {8}.

2: 11 The summation: **“For there is no partiality with God.”**

From Douglas Moo:

Paul presents a logical “chiasm.” Named after the Greek Chi, and shaped like our X. Parallelism.

A God will judge everyone according to his works {6}.
! B People who do good will attain eternal life {7}.
! ! C People who do evil will suffer wrath {8}.
! ! C Wrath for those who do evil {9}.
! B Glory for those who do good {10}.
A God judges impartially {11}.

Romans

Is Paul teaching salvation by works {2:6}?

Of course not; Biblical Theology compares Scripture with Scripture and we have to follow Paul to 3:20 and to Ephesians 2:8-9.

As Brother Gables pointed out last week, “Justification is by grace through faith alone, but judgment is according to works.

The irony is that many people have been taught and do believe that their acts of obedience actually have some sway with God.

I want to mention this phrase that Paul uses three times: in 1:17; 2:9, 10

“... the Jew first and also to the Greek.” {Greek here simply means Gentile}

The world is not divided into Jew and Gentile, as the Jew assumed; but into the righteous and the unrighteous.

It is true that the Word of God was given to the Jew first.

The Gospel came first to the Jew.

Jesus, the Messiah, is a Jew.

Jesus told the woman at the well, “... salvation is of the Jews...” {John 4:22}

The Gospel came first to the Jew; but also to the Greek.

The Gentiles were not left out!

In fact, Paul will go on to show that it was the failure of the Jew to apprehend the Gospel that led to the cutting off of the Jews and the ingrafting of the Gentiles.

God does not show favoritism {11}; a lesson Peter had to learn.

When sent to Cornelius: “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.” {Acts 10:34}.

We will keep coming back to this question: “What about the billions of people who have lived and died under the wrath of God and who will never hear the Gospel.” That is why it is so important to really grasp the grace of God. There is no conflict between 2:11 and the doctrine of election.

Romans

There are those who believe that God has made salvation possible but not certain. They are sometimes referred to as Arminians. They believe that God has given to each person the ability to respond to the Gospel by an act of their “free will.” Their response, their “decision” therefore, is the deciding factor. Many Baptists call it a “making a decision for Christ.” By that they mean that God is willing to save anyone who will make the “decision” to permit God to do so. If I believed that I would have to face this dilemma: Either God does not, in fact, condemn men based on His revelation in creation; or there must be another way for men to find acceptance with God apart from “the righteousness of God” in Jesus Christ and in Him alone!

We who are Calvinists, since we must use labels to make certain distinctions, by contrast, teach that because man is “dead in trespasses and sin,” that the first cause of any man’s salvation is his election by God before the foundation of the world in Christ; those so chosen must be drawn by the Father and come to faith in Jesus Christ and His righteousness.

Many {yea, most} of my Baptist preacher friends are willfully ignorant of the Doctrines of Grace or Calvinism. To many of them all Calvinists are hyper-Calvinists. Anyone who believes in God’s sovereign choice in election is to them a hyper-Calvinist.

But the hyper-Calvinist denies the use of means in calling a person to faith and they have a perverted understanding of God’s sovereign choice in election. They teach that an elect person will be saved even if they never trust Christ in this life.

But the God who chooses before the foundation of the world predestines the means for those so chosen to hear, repent, and believe the Gospel.

The true Calvinist argues that God will, in His sovereignty, and providence arrange circumstances so that every person He has chosen will hear the Gospel, repent, and believe the Gospel.

Having determined the end, God will also enact the **means**. God’s decree provides for the complete renovation of those elected {2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:10; 2 Thess 2:13-14}.

Recalling a statement from E.W. Johnson, “Justification waits on faith.”
Eternally chosen but not eternally justified.
And in His sovereign choice, “... there is no partiality with God.”

Romans

Has God the Holy Spirit so touched your soul? Can you acknowledge God as God? Have you seen, perhaps for the first time, that God is the Judge of all the earth and He must do right.

In His holiness and justice everyone is condemned.

Do you agree with God?

Has your mind been enlightened to the truth of the Gospel?

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Now we will continue with Part 2: 2: 12-16;

The universality of man's accountability to God.

Title: "The Law Written on the Heart"

The key to understanding the Book of Romans; yes, the very Gospel itself, is to grasp the meaning of the phrase, "the righteousness of God."

The Gospel is the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ alone!

Many people are offended when confronted with the truth that justifying faith is in the righteousness of Jesus Christ alone. They are, like *Ignorance* in Pilgrim's Progress, who agree with the facts of Jesus' death for sinners. But they will not agree that they have absolutely no part in their being justified before God!

My great problem with what passes for evangelism today is the definition of the Gospel. Is salvation by grace, apart from works, or is salvation the result of a response to a proposition? Where are the millions of "saved" people this morning? Many have agreed to a proposition and believe that they are saved but they have no interest to assemble with the people of God to worship!

In 1:18, Paul declares: "For the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold down the truth in unrighteousness."

You have no biblical concept of the Gospel if you dismiss the doctrine of the wrath of God. So if I tell someone, "Jesus died for everyone, and He really wants to save everyone, and if you will decide to let Him save you, you too can be saved." That seems to get results. But if I tell them the truth, that everyone is under the wrath of God; and I leave them no refuge of lies, then I must trust the Holy Spirit to convict them of their condemnation and reveal the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ.

Romans

Read 2:12-16

Part 2: The universality of man's accountability to God. 2:12-16

Paul has established the guilt of the pagan {1:18-32}, and has now declared that the Jew, although the Jew did not believe it, was also under the wrath of God {2:1-11}.

But there remains a question of equity, or fairness of God's judgement. The Jew had no problem seeing the pagan being judged because they thought that since they {the Jews} had the law, God had judged the Gentiles by not giving them access to the law.

If God's judgement is impartial {2:11}; what then is the basis for judgment? How does God determine how to judge?

The Jew says, the pagan is judged because he does not have the law. The pagan says, "I should be acquitted on the grounds of ignorance."

But the heathen is **not** ignorant of **law**, even though he may have never heard of the written commandments of God given to Israel through Moses.

vs 12 God says, "You have **conscience** and **nature** {1:19-20}, therefore you will be judged by these two witnesses and not by the written law.

The standard of judgment will be the **law they have**: the Jew will be judged by the law given by God to Moses; the pagan by the law of conscience and nature. Now these are **not two separate sets** of law; they are essentially the same. The Law of Moses simply codifies the law implanted on the heart and conscience of every man.

The following line of thought was suggested by Douglas Moo:

Paul uses two terms that we need to understand: "**law**" and "**nature**."

The Law: What does Paul mean by *nomos*, "**law**."

How many ways do we use the term "law"? The police; the laws of physics, e.g., gravity & entropy; the body of law contained in federal and state constitutions.

Romans

Most of the time when we read the Bible, “the law” conveys the sum total of God’s requirements for holy living.

The key to expository preaching is for the teacher or preacher to tell you what the writer of Scripture meant. Else you have not preached the Scripture.

And let’s be reminded of what Brother Gables pointed out; that we must also make the application to our hearers.

But Paul was a Pharisee. He was a Jew who lived in the Scripture; he lived in the Judaism in which he was trained. To Paul, “the law” is the Torah, the law that God gave to Israel through Moses. Thus Paul can claim that “the law” was given 430 years after Abraham {Cf. Gal 3:17; Romans 5:13-14}.

When Paul uses *nomos* over 70 times in Romans, he almost always means this specific body of law, i.e. the Law of Moses.

Therefore, in vs 2:12 & 14 , “... apart from the law,” or “without law,” Paul means the law God gave to Israel through Moses.

But Paul sometimes uses “law” in a broader sense; Cf. 1 Cor 9:19-21.

Here as in 2:12, “those under the law” are the Jews and “those not having the law” are the Gentiles.

Paul himself claims that he is “not under the law” in this sense of the word. He no longer feels bound to follow the specific law of Moses, the Torah.

But, he quickly adds, this does not mean that he is “free from God’s law.” Clearly this last use of “law” must encompass God’s moral demand generally.

Nature:

In 2:14, Paul uses a broader sense of “law.” The Gentiles, who do not have “the law,” are “a law unto themselves.” Paul brings in the word “nature” {*physis*}. For the Greeks, the “natural law” or “unwritten law” was an important concept, establishing the basis for universal moral norms and for the “positive law,” as it was called, which was enacted by the Greek city-states. The Stoics, a school of philosophers influential in Paul’s day, rooted this law in nature. Jews familiar with this tradition then used *physis* in a similar way, to illustrate the universal applicability of the moral standards found in the law of Moses. Paul clearly reflects

Romans

this tradition in 2:14, and first-century readers would have immediately understood that he was endorsing this wide-spread tradition about the universal moral law.

Everyone agrees with the unwritten law or conscience even though they may have never heard of or seen a Bible. For example, everyone knows it is wrong to steal. A man may be the biggest thief in town and has long ago seared his conscience by stealing from others; but he knows it is wrong to steal. It is easy to prove that he knows that it is wrong to steal: Let someone steal something from him!

The idea of “natural law” that Paul endorses here helps to establish a foundation for universal moral norms, thus a “positive law,” which will not be undermined by the whims of society or for the convenience of the majority. Francis Schaeffer warned us about thirty years ago about what he called “**the tyranny of the 51 percent majority.**”

We have current examples of this in the U.S. Senate: Republican or Democrat. A senator switched party affiliations and changed the leadership of the Senate. What if all law was decided by simple majority rule? The law could change moment by moment based on the whims of society. Today’s technology could easily give everyone eligible to vote an ID number and a password and a way to vote on on the issue of the day.

For more than thirty years I have been saying that when the problem of our aging society becomes too expensive or inconvenient, we have in this country, already gone over the crest of the “slippery slope.” Because of the majority’s approval of abortion on demand for reasons of convenience, embarrassment, and expense, we have adopted a **culture of death** in American society.

A nation that will kill babies who are inconvenient will have no problem rationalizing the killing of old people. Some of you are thinking, “We would never do that.” May I remind you that I am **only** 73 years old and I can remember when less than fifty years ago when the vast majority of Americans would have said the same thing about making abortion on demand legal: “We would never do that!”

What is legal is not always moral. It was legal in Nazi Germany to murder the Jews and anyone else considered inconvenient.

Here is your wake up call. The government of the Netherlands has decided that it is in the common good to allow people to put to death their aged and sick relatives.

Romans

The idea of “natural law” is a necessary concept to grasp if we are to understand Romans 2:12-16.

The fact that the Jew had the Law does not mitigate the guilt of the pagan. Both pagan and Jew are under the wrath of God. By having greater privilege, the Jew had greater responsibility, not immunity from guilt.

vs 13 Translators differ on how to punctuate this passage. You have been taught that the Greek does not have punctuation. So the translators have to decide where to put periods, commas, parenthesis, etc. Three of the Bible references that I use offer three different views: One says that vss. 13, 14, 15 are parenthetical: read vs. 12, then vs.16. Another says that vss. 14 & 15 are parenthetical, so you would connect vs 13 to vs 16.

The third suggestion is from William Hendriksen. The syntax is not strained and the meaning is enforced if you follow this translation: vs 16 reads:

[All this will become clear] on the day when, according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge men’s secrets.

vs 13 Another uncomfortable fact, conveniently forgotten by the Jew, is made plain. It is not enough to be a diligent hearer of the Law. The Law demands perfect obedience if you are to be *justified* by the Law. This is the first use of the word **justified** and Paul will later show {3:20} that no one can be justified by keeping the Law.

To myself I say, it is not enough that you have read the Bible countless times, that you have taught others, that you have preached the truth, witnessed to others, visited the sick, given of your goods to help the poor. Jim, if you are to be justified, you must possess the righteousness of God, and consider your personal righteousness as dung!

It may seem trite, but the word *justified* has been defined as:
“Just -as -if – I’d never sinned.”

Discuss **justification**. God, in His sovereign mercy, by fiat, declares the actually guilty sinner, “not guilty.”

Justification is always the opposite of condemnation.

We will stop at this verse and continue next week, D.V.