

The Basis of God's Righteous Judgment

Romans 2:6-16

Romans 2:6-16 - "Who will render to each one according to his deeds" ⁷ eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; ⁸ but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, ⁹ tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; ¹⁰ but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹ For there is no partiality with God.

¹² For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law ¹³ (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; ¹⁴ for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) ¹⁶ in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."

Background Notes

Acts 4:12 says, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." And of course that "name" is Jesus! In John 14:6, a well known verse, *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.* "But wait a minute," someone might say, "I thought 'all roads lead up to the same mountain'! I thought the sincere Hindu could make it to heaven -- just by a different road." "No!" says the Bible! There is only **one** "road up the mountain" to the one true God.

But what about the people who lived before Christ, or what about the people who have never heard about Christ? The Epistle to the Romans answers these questions. In Romans 1 we learned that God has given enough evidence of Himself to everyone, so that everyone can and should respond to the one true God. But down through human history, most of mankind has rejected the evidence, so all the world is guilty before God.

Here in Romans 2 we learn that even upright and moral people are guilty before God. Why? Because they are self-righteous, and they refuse to admit that they fall short of God's standards of righteousness. They think that they can make it with God apart from the grace of God. Your average neighbor, or the average person that you work with here in America -- they fall right into this category, right? They don't doubt the existence of God; they don't even doubt the wrath of God against big sinners -- it's just that they don't consider themselves big sinners. They think they're OK, and God will overlook their little sins. That would be like saying that an umpire in baseball only calls players "out" for **big** outs! That's ridiculous!

So all the world is guilty before God, and God holds people accountable in this moral universe that He has created. God must and will judge sinners. The judgment of God is certain and universal. Romans 16:5 and 16 both talk about the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

Here in this second section of Romans 2 we see the principles on which the coming judgment of God is based. We have already seen one principle in our first section of Romans. Not circumstantial evidence, but facts. But not **man's idea** of what truth is, but **what God has revealed** as truth. No relativism with God! The judgment of God is according to **truth**. Now here in this section before us, in Romans 2, we have three more principles on which the judgment of God is based.

Doctrinal Points

1. The coming judgment of God will be according to works.

In verses 5-6 we read that in the coming day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, God will render to each one according to his **deeds**. When you move on to verse 7 it sounds like people can gain eternal life by good works, doesn't it? Verse 7, *"eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality..."* And also verse 10: *"but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."* How do you harmonize these verses with verses like Ephesians 2:9 and Titus 3:5, which clearly say that salvation is not of works?

Well, the point here (and in the overall context) is **not** that good works can save a person, because no one (apart from salvation) does good works! Look over at Romans 3:12 *"There is none who does good, no, not one."* So you see, good works is not a **means** to salvation -- good works is **evidence** of salvation. So Romans 2:7 is telling us that these "good works" characterize and give evidence of salvation. They're **not** the means of salvation. But to those who are self-seeking, and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness (v8) and do evil (v9), their works are evidence of unbelief. They characterize the unbeliever who must face the wrath of God.

Listen to the words of Revelation 20:12-13, that describe the judgment of unbelievers: *"And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works."*

2. The coming judgment of God will be according to privilege.

I'm sure that you have heard that expression "Rank has its privilege, but rank has its responsibility." The same is true in the spiritual realm. Look here at verses 12-13: *"For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified..."*

The Jews had the Law of God given to them -- this was a great privilege, but it was also great responsibility! Gentiles didn't have the law of God given to them, but they did have their God-given moral conscience and the evidence of God in creation, as we've seen in Romans 1. God takes all these factors into account when He judges. Because of these differences, there are degrees of punishment in God's judgment. Our Lord Jesus said in Luke 12:47-48: *"And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."*

God is just and fair! The coming judgment of God will be according to privilege.

3. The coming judgment of God will be according to conscience.

Verses 14-15: *"For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) ¹⁶ in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."* Everyone has a moral conscience. No matter where you go on the face of the earth, people have a sense of what's right and what's wrong. Why? Where did man's moral conscience come from? Did it evolve? No way! The truth is that **man's moral conscience is God-given**. It is right in line with God's moral law as given in Scripture, as we see here in verse 15: *"who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness..."*

Now it's true that man's moral conscience may become hardened, but that conscience is there, and it is a basis of God's coming judgment of mankind. At the final judgment, God will not have to repeat the Ten Commandments to those who never had the law who are being judged. All He has to do is let them listen to a "tape recording" of the standards and statements of their own moral conscience.

No one will have an excuse! The coming judging of God will be according to the conscience.

Practical Applications

1. Remember, no favorites and no secrets!

When the final Day of Judgment comes, there will be no favorites and no secrets! Verse 11: "*For there is no partiality with God.*" That means there are **no favorites!** And verse 16: "*in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.*" That means **no secrets!**

These verses are directed primarily toward the unbeliever, but they do have an application to the believer as well. Believers will not have to stand before the Great White Throne of Revelation 20, but believers will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, where our lives will be reviewed. (Read 2 Corinthians 5 and Romans 14 in this connection.) The same principles will apply to us there – no favorites and no secrets!

Don't think that because you're a particular denomination (or no particular denomination) that you go into a special line at the judgment seat of Christ -- and don't think that will get you a special place in heaven. No way! No favorites! And don't think that some of those secrets that you've been hiding will be hidden from the Lord. Remember, no favorites and no secrets!

2. Is "Paul's gospel" your gospel?

Verse 16, once again: "*in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.*" What did Paul mean by "my gospel?" He doesn't mean that he came up with the gospel, but rather that God had specifically revealed the gospel to the apostle Paul. In addition, God had entrusted the apostle Paul to communicate that gospel, particularly to the Gentiles. And that gospel not only included the love of God, but also the judgment of God, the subject of this section. Some people don't like that side of the gospel, but it's the truth. Is "Paul's gospel" your gospel?