



The Righteous Judgment of God

Romans 2:1-5

1. The Warning (verse 1)
2. The Truth (verse 2)
3. The Error (verses 3-5)

Religious people are often the most judgmental people in the world. After all, they are interested in God. They are interested in the Bible. And they hear things about what God requires of us. And they try to abide by those things. In the process, they become very good at identifying what is right and what is wrong. And they become very good at identifying those who fail to live up to God's standard. And, sadly, they often become very judgmental against those who fail to live up to God's requirements for us.

Case in point: the Pharisees of Jesus' day. They were meticulous students of God's law. They knew all about God. They knew all about his commandments. They sought to keep his standards. And they looked down upon those who didn't keep their same standards of living, because they knew that God's judgment would be upon such people.

Jesus showed their attitude in the parable he told of the Pharisee and the tax collector. "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector' (Luke 18:10-11). The Pharisees trusted in themselves that they were righteous, because they were good law-keepers (Luke 18:9). And the Pharisees treated others with contempt (Luke 18:9).

This can easily happen to those who are religious. They see the "sinners" in their "sin," and they become judgmental. They think highly of themselves, and they think lowly of others.

Again, the Pharisees provide us with an example. Jesus was a guest in the home of one of the Pharisees (Luke 7:36). And a "woman of the city, who was a sinner," (Luke 7:37) came to the Pharisees home. And while they were eating, this woman was at the feet of Jesus, weeping. Her tears were flowing onto the feet of Jesus, and she was wiping them off with her hair. She was kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment that she had brought to the house (Luke 7:37-38).

The Pharisee was appalled. He said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, we would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39). He was appalled at Jesus for allowing this "sinner" to touch him. How dare he? If he were truly a righteous man, he would never let such a low-life even touch him.

This is the sort of attitude that Paul confronts in our text this morning. Our text comes from Romans, chapter 2. If you haven't done so already, I invite you to take your Bibles and find Romans, chapter 2. I want to read for you the first 11 verses of the chapter.

Romans 2:1-11

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality.

Paul begins by addressing the "man" who is judging others.

Romans 2:1

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges.

This comes right out of chapter 1, in which Paul has just laid out God's rightful anger (and judgment) upon those who are without God and are engaged in sin.

Romans 1:18

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

And the easy tendency for all of us is to say, "Amen!" It is especially for us who are in church every Sunday, who know the Bible, who love the Bible, who want to follow the Bible.

When we look upon those outside the church who don't have any care for God; who don't have any understanding of the Scriptures; who live in blasphemy against the Lord, it is easy for us to look upon such individuals with contempt (Luke 18:9), just like the Pharisees. "God revealed himself to them. He gave them every chance. But they have rebelled. They deserve God's punishment upon them."

But what's so easy to overlook is that we can be guilty of the same thing. Look again at all of verse 1, ...

Romans 2:1

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.

Verse 1 is what I call, ...

1. The Warning (verse 1)

It's a warning to those in Rome, probably to the Jews in the church, who had the Scripture and were seeking the Lord. But by way of application, it's also a warning to all of us. It's a warning to us who are in the church who have the Scriptures and are seeking the Lord. It's a warning to those of us who would hold a judgmental spirit toward those who are living sinful lives without God. Because, we may very well be guilty of the same thing.

I tried to press this last week when we were looking at the 21 sins listed in chapter 1 and verses 29-31. Yes, the verses in chapter 1 are directed upon those who are without God and without Christ. Yes, the verses in chapter 1 are as a result of God giving people over to their sins. But, as I pointed out last week, we can easily be guilty of the same sins.

In some measure, it makes it worse for us, because we sin against all knowledge. Peter said this of those who sin in this way that, "It would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them" (2 Peter 2:21).

Consider some of the sins of chapter 1--covetousness, envy, strife (Romans 1:29). Being haughty, boastful (Romans 1:30), foolish, or faithless (Romans 1:31). Do any of these sound familiar? Any of these touch your life? These things come into the church. Think of covetousness. We live in America. We are surrounded by stuff. Advertisements are designed to make us want more and more.

Envy: Are you ever jealous of those who have more than you do? Strife: A prominent sin in the church. Haughty: We all deal with pride. Boastful: I have heard plenty of boasting in the church. Foolish: We all fail to live faithfully in the ways of the wisdom of Proverbs. Faithless: I think that we all could admit to times of failing in our faith. And, truth be known, we in the church are just as guilty before God in our sin as those who are outside the church.

Jerry Bridges has written an excellent book, entitled, "Respectable Sins." The subtitle is, "Confronting the Sin We Tolerate." In the preface of the book, he writes, "The motivation for this book stems from a growing conviction that those of us whom I call conservative evangelicals may have become so preoccupied with some of the major sins of society around us that we have lost sight of the need to deal with our own more 'refined' or subtle sins." [\[1\]](#)

In his book, Bridges deals with some of the sins mentioned in Romans 1, like pride and envy and worldliness and judgmentalism. He addresses this idea that we are better than someone else, that they deserve scrutiny but we can hide our sins. And this is exactly what Paul is getting at here!

We have sin in our hearts. But we look past our sin. And we take out our microscope and look intently into the sins of others. We look at the terrible sins of the world, like immorality; like homosexuality; like pornography; like the divorce rate; like the crime rate. And we comfort ourselves that we are not like that. And we even take pride in ourselves that we are able to discern between right and wrong.

And we look at the presidential candidates and say how wrong they are. We say, "They lie." And we comfort ourselves by thinking that we aren't guilty of that! We say, "They boast." And we comfort ourselves by thinking that we aren't guilty of that! We say, "They are corrupt." And we comfort ourselves by thinking that corruption isn't in our own heart.

We decry that it's so bad in the world today, as if it's all out there. But we fail to look at our own sins. We are good at looking outside, but we aren't so good at looking at the sins of our own heart. Jesus said it like this, ...

Matthew 7:3-4

Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is a log in your own eye?

This begs for an illustration. I have two things in my hands. I have a speck. I have a log. And this speck is in your eye. And this log is in my eye.

And here's the amazing thing. I can actually see the speck in your eye. I can.

And I actually want to help you get the speck out of your eye. I really do. But, I am blind to the log in my own eye. I don't see it. I really don't.

This is the way that human nature works. We are always looking at the sins of others. We are good at looking at the sins of others. Jesus said, "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5).

In other words, deal with your own sin before dealing with the sins of others. And Romans is all about dealing with our own sin! This is where Paul is going in this section of Romans.

Paul's point is this: Realize that you are sinful! He began with the pagan world (Romans 1). He's moving now to the moral world of the Jews (Romans 2:1-3:20). He's working towards Romans 3 and verse 10, "As it is written: None is righteous, no, not one;" (Romans 3:10). That means you. That means me. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Continuing on in 3:24, Paul tells us how to deal with our sin. We deal with our sin through Jesus. We deal with our sin through believing in Jesus. We are, "justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). Chapters 3, 4, and 5 are going to explain that redemption. We simply need to believe in Jesus. We need to believe that Jesus took our place upon the cross. And that's how you deal with your sin—not by looking to others and decrying how bad they are, but by looking to Christ and trusting in his work upon the cross for your sins.

And the warning to you this morning is that you who judge others actually "condemn yourself." Because you know of the judgment of God. That's exactly where Paul is going. Look at verse 2, ...

Romans 2:2

We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.

I'm calling this, ...

2. The Truth (verse 2)

This is the reality of the world. That God's judgment rightly falls upon sinners. In fact, this verse is where I get the title of my message this morning. "The Righteous Judgment of God." God will judge. He will judge righteously.

Did you notice how many times the word, "judge" or "judgment" comes up in this passage? In the first 5 verses, it appears some 7 times! We live in a time and an age where the judgment is often denied. The world doesn't think that there will be a judgment. The world thinks that the universe came to be in an instant, and life has evolved. When you die, you die. That's it.

And Paul does everything that he can to affirm the judgment of God.

Romans 2:2

... the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.

This has been his point all along. We saw in Romans, chapter 1 that everyone in the creation knows that there is a creator. They know of his eternal power (Romans 1:20). They know of his divine nature (Romans 1:20). But, often such knowledge doesn't lead people to honor the Lord or give thanks to him (Romans 1:21). Instead, they go their own way. And God lets them go in their sin.

But, it doesn't mean that God is done with them. No, the gavel will strike! And his judgment will come. Hebrews 9:27 says, "It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment." It will come upon every soul of man. And to those who are practicing sin, God's judgment will fall hard. That's the point of verse 2.

Romans 2:2

We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.

But Paul returns again to those who fail to see their own sin. He writes (in verse 3).

Romans 2:3

Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?

I'm calling this ...

3. The Error (verses 3-5)

The problem here that Paul is facing, isn't that people are denying the judgment. It's that they are denying the judgment upon themselves! The problem here is that they think that they will escape.

These are the same people that he is addressing in verse 1. You can see that with the vocative, "O man!" And so, it would be good, once again, to have this picture in our minds.

Those who are sinners don't look to themselves in their sin. Rather, they are concerned about the sins of others. And, according to verse 3, they think that the judgment of God will fall upon others, not realizing that the judgment of God will fall upon them both.

This is the error. This is the error of many. And it only makes sense, if you are convinced of the judgment, that it falls upon sinners. And if you are blind to your own sin, but see and acknowledge sin in others, you rightly conclude that the judgment will come upon them but not upon yourself. Because, they have the sin, not you. But what we need is not a magnifying glass, but a mirror.

I did a little research this week and stumbled across a poll taken in 2014. It shows America to be less religious than a decade ago (which isn't suprising). [2] In this survey, there were a few questions about "heaven" and "hell." 72% of those surveyed said that they believe in heaven, — defined as a place "where people who have led good lives are eternally rewarded." 58% of those surveyed said that they believe in hell, — a place "where people who have led bad lives and die without being sorry are eternally punished." [3]

To me, those numbers are shockingly high. Nevertheless, I wish that they had asked one more question to those who believed in both places, "Do you believe that you are going to heaven or to hell?" My guess would be (totally unscientifically) that close to 100% of those responding would say that they are going to heaven. See, people simply don't believe that they will face the judgment of God.

In verse 3, we see those who readily believe that others with sin will face God's judgment, but that they, themselves, will escape it. Now, it is interesting here how Paul deals with this error. He first points to the kindness and forbearance and patience of God. Look at verse 4, ...

Romans 2:4

Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

You say, what draws people to God? Certainly, many things draw people to God. God uses people to draw others to God: parents, friends, authors, preachers. And all sorts of circumstances draw people to God: a financial crisis in their lives or some terrible illness or the death of a close friend. But, at the end of the day, through all of these things, it is the kindness of God that leads people to repentance.

Parents and friends and authors and preachers point to a gracious Christ who loved us and died on the cross for our sins. The terrible circumstances of life--illness and death and accidents and calamities--often bring a grace that God spared you for this moment. "Will you turn to him?"

Consider the Biblical story of the prodigal son (Luke 15). When off and gone astray in his life, the prodigal knows of the kindness of his father. He knows that he can return home. He thought that he would return as a slave, not realizing that he would return as a son! God's kindness was more than expected. Yet, "... the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.'" (Luke 15:2).

Consider the woman at the well (John 4). Jesus didn't condemn her for her five failed marriages or for her immoral living situation. Rather, he showed compassion to her, revealing himself as the Christ. She went and told the town, and many Samaritans came to faith (John 4:39).

When the tower in Siloam fell and killed 18 people, Jesus responded by addressing the kindness of God to those who are alive, "... Do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:4-5).

Did you notice what Jesus did here? He put forth the kindness and patience of God. Then, he transitioned to repentance and the consequence of an unrepentant heart. That's exactly what Paul did.

Romans 2:5

But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

God's judgement will come. And if you don't repent, it will come upon you.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 30, 2016 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Bridges, Jerry. "Respectable Sins," p. 9.

[2] <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/11/03/u-s-public-becoming-less-religious/>

[3] <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/10/most-americans-believe-in-heaven-and-hell/>