



BETHEL  
PRESBYTERIAN

# MINISTRY OF THE WORD

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Volume 9 Issue 12

May 2, 2010

## The Justness of God's Judgment, Part 2

Romans 2:6-16, He will render to each one according to his works: <sup>7</sup> to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; <sup>8</sup> but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. <sup>9</sup> There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, <sup>10</sup> but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. <sup>11</sup> For God shows no partiality.

### God's Judgment and the Law

<sup>12</sup> For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. <sup>13</sup> For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. <sup>14</sup> For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. <sup>15</sup> They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them <sup>16</sup> on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. <sup>1</sup>

In Isaiah we read of an important warning to the then leaders of Judah.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible : English standard version*. 2001 (Romans 2:6–16). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

Isaiah 10:1-2, "Woe to those who... constantly record unjust decisions, so as to deprive the needy of justice, and rob the poor of My people of *their* rights, in order that widows may be their spoil, and that they may plunder the orphans."

It is hard to imagine how difficult it would be to live in a culture where those in leadership and authority were so crooked that court decisions were offered to the highest bidder. Yet that was a common problem in the ancient world including Judaism. Speaking of Samuel's sons:

1 Samuel 8:3, "His sons, however, did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice."

In fact, unjust judges were such a problem in the ancient world that Solomon penned a proverb about them,

Proverbs 17:23, "A wicked man receives a bribe from the bosom to pervert the ways of justice."

Micah 3:9, "Now hear this, heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and twist everything that is straight."

Listen the exhortation to the crooked leaders of Israel in Christ's day.

Luke 11:42, "But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every *kind of* garden herb, and *yet* disregard justice and the love of God."

Truly unjust judges were a common fixture in the ancient world and amongst God's people. That no doubt is why the Bible is quick to assert the integrity of God. Unlike the world in which they lived or even the gods of the nations which surrounded Israel, Yahweh was and is just! Moses boldly proclaimed this:

Deuteronomy 10:17, "For the Lord your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality, nor take a bribe."

Understand, this was a novel idea in that time. God, the Lord, wasn't "bribeable"? When David faced the treachery of partiality, he rejoiced in the Lord.

Psalms 25:9, "He leads the humble in justice, and He teaches the humble His way."

Ethan the Ezrahite, a Judean who lived prior to Solomon, wrote this:

Psalms 89:14, "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Thy throne; lovingkindness and truth go before Thee."

The Lord we serve is a just God. Truly such a god exists in no other religion that can be found among man. That no doubt is why Paul was so concerned that he not misrepresent God's justice in the text before us. Recall, that in the opening chapters of this epistle, Paul discusses God's wrath. In Romans 1:18 we learn of its nature, expression, objects, and cause. In Romans 1:19-2:5, 17-29 we learn of its recipients. They are:

- The Immoral Religious, the Gentile who has never heard the Gospel, (Romans 1:19-32).
- The Moral Religious, the Jew/Christian who has a unique relationship with God on account of His promise to Abraham, (Romans 2:1-5, 17-29).

Now the natural response in light of this teaching is to question the “fairness” or “justness” of God’s judgment. How is it that God could condemn ones who have never heard of Jesus? How is it that God could condemn ones who have done so much in His name?

It is in anticipation of these questions that Paul includes a very important declaration in his treatment of God’s judgment.

Romans 2:5, “But because of your stubborn and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous [or the fair, just] judgment of God.”

With the phrase “the righteous judgment of God” Paul digresses in his teaching to address “The ‘Justness’ of God’s Judgment” in Romans 2:6-16. Last time we saw that God’s Wrath is just because it is retributive. There is not a person in hell who didn’t earn hell.

### God's Judgment is Impartial

Secondly, Paul declares that the God's judgment is just because it is impartial.

Romans 2:11, "For there is no partiality with God."

The word for “partiality” is a compound of two words, “face” and “to receive.” It signifies the receiving of someone on account of who they are; their face. And thus, it amounts to partiality or the showing of preference based on the person standing before you. Yet here it is in the negative, “...there is NO partiality with God.”

From this we conclude that the criterion of God’s judgment is based NOT on our position, status, person, or privilege, rather (and this is important) when it comes to the Last Judgment who you are will make no difference. ALL STAND CONDEMNED! That’s Paul’s point in this verse. Notice that Paul begins this section in Romans 2:5-6 with an assertion of God’s just condemnation of all men. And in Romans 2:16, Paul ends this section with another reference to the final Day of Judgment wherein God “will judge the secrets of men [the implication is ‘ALL men’] through Christ Jesus.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus we conclude that when it comes to judgment, God is Impartial. All ( Jew, Greek, Slave, Free, Male, Female) stand before Him condemned! Truly “as all have sinned” (Romans 3:23), listen to Paul’s words in Colossians.

Colossians. 3:25, “For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.”

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<sup>2</sup> Verse 16 is in reference to Romans 2:12, 13 and God’s judgment which in Romans 2:5 is described as “the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” And it is on that day that men’s thoughts, words, actions, motivations, and secret things all will be uncovered!

Now this is a shocking truth, and Paul knew that. But, he doesn't leave us hanging, left to ourselves to wonder how this could be true. In Romans 2:12-15 Paul demonstrates his assertion by dividing all of mankind once again into two groups.

## The Gentiles Will Perish

The first group is those who do not have God's word, the Gentile. The Gentile will perish.

Romans 2:12a, "For all who have sinned without the Law [that is, the word of God and so the standard of God for right and wrong] will also perish without the Law..."

The key word in this context is perish. At the outset notice that this word does NOT first refer to physical death. RATHER it is used in the Bible to refer to eternal loss or destruction.

John 3:16, "For God so love the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

1 Corinthians 1:18, "For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

Christ describes the destination of those who perish.

Mark 9:48, "...where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched."

Those who have sinned without the Law "will perish without the Law." What this means is that on Judgment Day, all will be judged and condemned, yet the level of condemnation will be based on the amount of revelation given to them. Consequently, the Gentile who is without the word of God and so the standard of God will undergo a less strict judgment, will be sent to hell. But the suffering they experience there, as we will see, will not be as severe as those who have the Law.

Paul tells us, "...but where there is no law, neither is there violation." (Romans 4:15) Now this raises an important question: Is it fair then that the Gentile who does not have the Law could receive God's wrath? Paul answers this question in Romans 2:14-16.

Romans 2:14a, "For when the Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law..."

The word for "instinctively" could literally be translated as, "by nature or by instinct." The idea behind this is "without prompting or guiding" from an external written or oral source. From this we conclude that Gentile cultures uphold God's law by instinct. In every Gentile culture there are laws concerning...

- Adultery.
- Stealing.
- Lying.
- And any other immoral behavior.

Because this is the case, it demonstrates:

Romans 2:14b, "...these, not having the Law, are a Law to themselves."

In any given pagan society a consensus is formed regarding right and wrong. Now this consensus produces a law which in the truest sense springs from "within them." So while the Gentile does not have the Mosaic Law much less the word of God, they nevertheless live according to it! And therein they are judged. Christ's own words show us this:

Matthew 7:2, "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you."

So the non-believing culture produces a law system akin to the word of God such that they are without excuse when they are judged as violators. Now how does this work? Notice three elements.

Romans 2:15a, "...the work of the Law [is] written in their hearts."

This is not saying that Gentiles somehow have the contents of the word of God written in their hearts, but rather the "work" or "the results" of the word of God. What is the work of the law? What end does the law promote? For what purpose did God give His law? Listen to Christ's answer.

Matthew 23:23a, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness..."

What is the "weightier provision of the Law?" What is its end? What is the "work of the Law"? The weightier provision of the Law is this: Justice, mercy, and faithfulness (loyalty). On account of our creation in the image of God, these have been written in our hearts!

Because these passions are expressed corporately in society, laws are passed and criminals punished, and a justice is upheld which comports with the teaching of the word of God. And so while the Gentile here in question does NOT have the word of God, they nevertheless uphold much of the same ends in their society. And this demonstrates that in the inner man of every person God has placed the "work of the Law." And thus we read of the Gentiles:

Romans 1:32, "And although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death..."

How is it that ones who do not have the word of God nevertheless know the ordinance of God? How is it that they know that those who practice such things are worthy of death? Because God has written the understanding of justice, mercy, and faithfulness on their heart!

Matthew 5:46-47: "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not the Gentiles do the same?"

Where did this sense of mercy and faithfulness come from? Clearly from "the work of the Law... written

in the[ir] heart!”

Yet Paul is not finished with the explanation here. Notice a second element which works with the first.

Romans 2:15b, “...their conscience bearing witness...”

This comports with what we’ve already seen. The word for “conscience” in the Bible refers to the independent witness within every person that examines and passes judgment as to the ethical merit of one’s conduct; it is an inborn evaluator of actions committed. Now the “conscience” differs from the “inward writing of God’s Law in the heart” (Romans 2:15a) in that while the “inward writing” gives a longing for justice, mercy, and faithfulness; it is the “conscience” that evaluates the person’s conformity to these desires.

While the Gentile in question does not have a copy of the word of God, they nevertheless uphold much of the same ends. And once again this demonstrates that in the inner man of every person God has placed a moral witness that evaluates the ethical merits of their conduct. Now the “inward writing” and the “conscience” work together, and this results in their conscience making judgments.

Romans 2:15c, “...their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them”

Literally this reads that “their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending each other.” Again, in a given pagan society, there is both an individual and corporate consensus as to the judicial merits of a certain act. When violations are committed, the individual sense of right and wrong is expressed. This forms a corporate consensus that either judicially accuses or excuses the transgressor. When this takes place (and it does in every society) these not having a law are a law unto themselves (Romans 2:14b)! Sociologists have observed this and say this:

That is because for a society to function healthily, it has to uphold much of the Ten Commandments. Hence, Israel was one of many societies which taught the Ten Commandments.<sup>3</sup>

That is one explanation. In fact based on our text, it is a wrong explanation. Yet it reflects the truth of the text before us. Every pagan society produces a law system which comports to the teaching of the word of God! From this we see that the Gentile has a God-given law system by which they are judged. It is a law system which...

- Amazingly comports to the word of God.
- Will serve as the bases for condemnation!

Based on Paul’s analysis of the Gentile (Romans 1:32; 3:10-18), we know that on the Last Day the Gentile will stand condemned before God NOT because he lacks the law which the Jew possesses BUT because he sins against the Law of God which he does possess!

Thus, Paul establishes this truth. There is no partiality with God; ALL Gentiles stand condemned before God! And yet it is not just the Gentile; it is also the Morally Upright, the Jew who will be condemned.

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<sup>3</sup> This is what I was taught in college in a sociology class.

## The Jew Will Be Condemned

Paul continues that those who have God's word, the Jew, will be condemned too.

Romans 2:12b, "...and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law."

As we already have seen, the Jew believed that though they sinned they nevertheless would be saved on account of their possession of the Law, specifically the ordinance of circumcision. Recall the words of Rabbi Levi:

In the hereafter Abraham will sit at the entrance of Gehenna, and permit no circumcised Israelite to descend therein. (Scharfstein, 2008, p. Rab 48:8)

And Rabbi Menachem:

Our Rabbins have said, that no circumcised man will see hell. (Scharfstein, 2008, pp. fol. 43, Col 3)

Amazing! Yet this is false! The truth is this: Because God is not partial in His Wrath, the Jew on account of their sin will be "judged by the Law." Note that Paul does not say that they will "perish." (Romans 2:12) Rather "they will be judged" which denotes a stricter or more severe form of wrath. It is very true that both the reward and punishment of those who have much will be all the more intense when compared to the reward and punishment of those who have little. Christ showed this in the point of the Parable of the Unrighteous Steward.

Luke 12:47-48, "And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, shall receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more."

James taught this when he addressed the responsibility which rests with teachers:

James 3:1, "Let not many *of you* become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment."

Thus, and no doubt to the surprise of the Morally upright, the Jew; the Law is not a lucky charm guaranteeing salvation. On the contrary, possession of the written word of God brings with it great responsibility, which when neglected ultimately results in a more severe condemnation! Now just like with his treatment of the Gentile, Paul gives an explanation of this.

Romans 2:13, "For not the hearers of the Law<sup>4</sup> are just before God ["just" refers to the state of being right or innocent before God, blameless], but the doers of the Law will be justified."

Salvation ultimately hinges upon a record of perfect obedience; a record that no Jew or religious individual could ever boast.

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<sup>4</sup> This reminds us of the circumstances of Paul's day. People did not normally read the Law for themselves- they heard it read.

Matthew 5:48, "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Even though we might boast of the greatest pedigree, the most devout commitment to God, and an almost perfect record of service in God's name; if we have sinned just one time, we likewise will perish. For again, it is "...not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified." (Romans 2:13)

At the Last Day, the day of God's final Wrath, both the Jew and the Gentile will be justly condemned. God is not partial; He is fair! The Gentile does not receive a different standard of judgment than the Jew. And the Jew does not receive a different standard of judgment than the Gentile.

All men receive judgment based NOT on:

- Who they are.
- Where they live.
- What they have.

RATHER God's judgment is based on what each and every individual has done! From this we conclude that on the day of God's judgment no one will be able to say, "Unfair!"

Now, let us consider the implications of this truth specifically as it related to our eternal destiny. As God does not grade/judge on a curve, we must all stand before God without sin if we are to enjoy eternity in the New Heavens and Earth. How do we as sinners do this? We must transfer our sin to the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29b). Though God's standard for salvation is perfection, nevertheless the Lord has created a world where substitution is allowable.

Therefore, in the Old Testament sacrificial system, God taught His people that if they sinned they could...

- Take a spotless lamb.
- Lay their hands on its head.
- Confess their sin.

So transfer their guilt to the animal. When the animal was then killed: they received its life, the animal received their death. And so it was and is with Christ. Christ died in the place of the sinner. If we will rely upon His sacrifice for our sin, we will receive His life for He certainly bore our death!

2 Corinthians 5:21, "He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Now while that truth must never be far from our minds, nevertheless I want us to close our study considering God's Impartiality from the perspective of ones who are relying upon Christ for their right-standing before God. Prior to God's people entering the promised land, Moses exhorted Israel with the following:

Deuteronomy 10:17-20, "For the Lord your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality, nor take a bribe. He executes



justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing."

So in light of this glorious truth, what ought we as a believing community to do?

- Show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.
- You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name."

This passage proclaimed an amazing message at the time it was preached: God is not partial! And yet Moses went beyond this to the practical realm, as he exhorted God's people to respond properly to this truth. How ought we who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb of God to respond to the knowledge that God is an impartial judge? We must not be partial in our relationship with one another and with God.

### **Our Relationships with One Another**

To be impartial in our church relationships means that we love and serve one another unconditionally! Again, partiality implies a relationship that is conditioned by the acts, status, or externals of the other person. Now because God is impartial in His dealing with us, we too must relate impartially with the family of God. We must show the face and affections of our Lord to one another!

And yet this is where we so often fail! We allow externals to affect our relationship with the body. We relate to one another on the basis of...

- Race.
- Looks.
- Material well-being.
- Personality.
- Hygiene.
- Hobbies.
- Social class.
- Etc...

And when we do this we sin a terrible sin!

James 2:1, 9, "My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism... [For] if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors."

That which unites us is the Cross of Christ, not externals! Thus, I appeal to you:

- Repent of whatever evil you may have toward one another.
- Turn from whatever anger and bitterness you may have toward God's people.

If Christ dwells within the one you don't get along with then you must love them and willingly lay down

your life for them. Because Christ is impartial, we too must be impartial in our relationship to the body.

John 13:35, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

And yet we must also be impartial when it comes to our relationship with God. To be impartial in our relationship with God means that we "revere Him" (Deuteronomy 10:20) and so not approach Him on the basis of what He does or doesn't do for us! Recall that partiality implies a relationship conditioned by the acts, status, or externals of another. Thus, every time our reverence, love, and zeal for God is positively or negatively affected by what God does or doesn't do in our lives, we show partiality and thus we sin!

- Is God good in and of Himself?
- Or is He only good if
  - You enjoy a long and good marriage?
  - Your children outlive you?
  - You get the blessings you desire?

The faithful child of God is not based on what God does. Rather it is based on WHO He is! After the dreadful news of the loss of all Job had- family, wealth, etc. we read this:

Job 1:20-22, "Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshipped. And he said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be THE NAME of the Lord.' Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God."

The barometer of Job's walk with God was not his circumstances but God's character! After hearing of the dreadful future that lay ahead for his nation, Habakkuk said this:

Habakkuk 3:17-18, "Though the fig tree should not blossom, and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail, and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation."

Joy in our Christian walk arises not from an easy life, but a due appreciation of our gracious Lord.

2 Timothy 1:12, "For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day."

Paul withstood severe trial and difficulty as a minister of God's word. Yet he wasn't disheartened. Why? He knew the character of God and it was on this character he relied! I love how Rutherford put it:

whether God come to His children with a rod or a crown, if He come Himself with it, it is well. Welcome, welcome, Jesus, what way so ever Thou come, if we can get a sight of Thee! And sure I am, it is better to be sick, providing Christ come to the bedside and draw by the curtains, and say, 'Courage, I am Thy salvation,' then to enjoy health, being lusty and strong, and never to be visited of

God. (Rutherford, 1973, p. 52)

Truly, our relationship with God must not be partial! Rather, the joy and crown of our lives must be the Blesser and not the blessing!

### **VISIT US WHEN IN Broomfield, COLORADO**

Feel free to visit Bethel Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Bethel Presbyterian Church meets at Broomfield High School, Eagle (10<sup>th</sup> Street) and Main, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

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### **About the Preacher**

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