

June 6, 2021

Elder Statement of Encouragement

Before I preach this morning, I want to say something on behalf of the elders that is intended to be an encouragement to the whole church family. This past year has presented a lot of challenges we could never have planned on. When the pandemic hit over a year ago, we were hoping that it would be short lived. As you know, it was not. And for Christians one of the most difficult effects of the disease was the fact that we could no longer meet.

In order to mitigate the impact of the lock-downs we made the decision to not meet and to offer live-streaming as a temporary measure for continuing to minister the word and enjoy some level of corporate worship. We all knew that this arrangement was not in keeping with the biblical command to gather as a church. The obvious truth is that it is impossible to gather without gathering. Moreover, we became concerned that once people got used to watching worship service on-line at home, they may never come back.

Over the last couple weeks as we considered how to encourage people to return to the gathered church, we considered the possibility of discontinuing the live-stream. Upon further reflection, however, we decided that to do so would put an unnecessary burden on some. With that in mind, I stand before you today to encourage every able-bodied member of Calvary Bible Church to return to the fellowship of Christ and his church. We have missed you and we long for your return.

For some this may be a fearful prospect. To be sure, there may still be a small amount of risk relative to Covid-19. But historically, the church of Jesus Christ around the world has often had to take risks in order to obey the Lord by gathering with His people. So, whether you are a member of Calvary Bible Church here in Fort Worth, or some other faithful fellowship, please consider this gentle exhortation. It's time to come home. We hope to see you soon.

SERMON:

What to Know About Judgment Day

Romans 2:11-16

“To whom much has been given much will be required.”

LTS: Deut. 10:11-17

If you have a bible, please open it to Romans 2. Follow along with me now as I read verses 11-16.

Read vv. 11-16

For God shows no partiality. ¹² 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. ¹³ For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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 ¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

Introduction:

Paul's teaching in this passage is about the future day of judgment and there is one thing we all should understand about the final judgment. To whom much is given, much will be required.

In the book of Romans, the apostle Paul has been teaching us about the intricacies of our salvation. In one sense, the Gospel is very simple: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." But behind the simplicity of this beautiful statement of saving faith, is a vast complexity of spiritual riches and theological treasure.

Paul begins presenting these treasures in chapter 1 when he declares (16-17),

I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes... For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, the just shall live by faith.

From there Paul begins showing us why salvation is necessary; namely, because every human being is a sinner by birth and by choice and, apart from God's intervention, all will ultimately experience the full fury of the just and holy wrath of God.

The way Paul approaches this topic is by revealing that the Gentiles are under God's wrath of abandonment for suppressing the truth about God in unrighteousness. Though they knew God by virtue of their nature as image-bearers, they denied God and made for themselves idols – false god's that allow them to give full vent to their perverted impulses and enslaving desires.

Beginning in chapter 2, then, Paul starts addressing the Jews who viewed themselves sufficiently righteous for salvation by virtue of their perceived status as sons of Abraham and recipients of the law of God given by Moses. But Paul wasn't buying that. He knew that the Jews were just as liable to stand before the great white throne of final judgment as any Gentile ever was

Having established the fact that all people deserve God's judgment because of sin, Paul sets out to explain the basis of God's righteous judgment. We might put it in the form of a question: "Upon what basis will God judge people in the final judgment?"

In our text last week (2:6-11) Paul explained that God will judge every person according to their works. In chapter 4, He will show us that Salvation is by faith alone. But here, Paul isn't talking about salvation. He is explaining what we need saving from; namely, the righteous and inescapable scrutiny of God. He knows every deed, every thought and every intention of the heart of every man, woman, and child. As the author of Hebrews says it (Heb. 9:27) "It is appointed for a man to die once and after that comes judgment.

You see, beloved, everyone had an appointment with God. On that day, God will determine your eternal destiny.

"Upon what basis will God judge people in the final judgment?" Judgement, Paul says, will be based upon one's works, NOT his/her

- religious heritage or
- national identity as the Jews were predisposed to think.
- Whether one is a Jew or a Gentile, the standard by which he will be judged is just and fair. Everyone will be judged by their works.

Now, before we dive into the meat of the passage before us, it may be helpful to see how Paul's argument flows. The question is: What should we understand about Judgment Day. I refer to this as Judgement Day because Paul says (16) "on that day... God judges." Paul is not talking about the temporal judgment which he alluded to in chapter one where God gives people over to their lusts as a specific act of judgment. Rather, he is speaking about something even greater and more terrible; namely, The Day of Final and irreversible judgment.

Now, Paul doesn't explain what that day will be like, but the apostle John does. Rev. 20:11-14. In the book of Revelation (the final book of the Bible) John writes,

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades

gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.

This is the judgment Paul is speaking of. It is the judgment of the last day – the Day of the Lord. Judgment Day.

Now there are two important truths Paul wants us to understand about that Day.

1. First, he wants us to know something about the Judge.
2. Second, we should know something about the accused

Paul is offering us here a brief lesson in theology (the study of God).
And a brief lesson in Anthropology (the study of man).

First of all:

I What we should Know About the Judge:

1. Whenever we study a text of Scripture, we should ask ourselves several question. But the first question we should ask is “What does it teach me about God.” In many passages it is a bit challenging to determine what it reveals or implies about God, but in our text for this morning, all we have to do is look at the first verse. Verse 11) declares “*God shows no partiality.*”

2. What does Paul want us to know about God – the Judge? He wants us to know that God is just and judges without partiality. He makes this perfectly clear. You don’t need to know ancient Greek to see it in the text. Verse 11 simply says, “There is no partiality with God.” Or (ESV) “For God shows NO partiality.” He is not a respecter of persons when it comes to divine judgment. God has no favorites who will receive special treatment. God will judge Gentiles according to their works and He will judge Jews according to their works.

3. On that day, no one is judged according to their profession of faith.

- That’s easy to fake.
- It’s easy to self-deceive.
- It’s easy to hang all your hope for eternal life upon your own perceived “rightness” with God.
- You won’t be judged on how often you attended worship services,
- or your GPA at a Christian college,
- or years spent on the mission field,
- or how many bible verses you have memorized,

- or dollars donated.
- No! Everyone who stands before the judgement seat of God on the last Day will be judged by their works.

4. Why? Because of who God is. He is perfectly just and fair with every man. He is no respecter of persons. He doesn't judge more harshly those he doesn't like or less severely those he loves, as humans tend to do. No! In the judgment, He judges without partiality.

5. This is an important qualification to make because it is so difficult for humans to NOT show partiality. For example, some of my kids have competed in national speech and debate tournaments. And at the end of the day the winners are determined by how the judges score each round. However, before someone can gain approval to judge a round, he/she has to answer some questions.

- Are you related to either of the contestants?
- Are either of them part of your debate club or your church?
- Why do they ask such questions? Because it is so difficult to NOT give preference to people you know.

6. If you are fond of one person, you will likely score them higher. If you don't like them for some reason, you'll tend to score them lower – and that's not fair. It is unjust. Its hard for humans to render a truly accurate judgment. But that's NOT true about God. He is No Respector of Persons. His judgment is impartial and based only on the evidence and facts of the case.

7. The word for “Partiality” here means “To receive face.” It's the picture of a criminal standing before a judge contorting his face and weeping while declaring his innocents. He may protest that a guilty verdict will harm his family and leave them destitute. Or that the reason he did the crime was because he himself had been mistreated!

8. But a righteous judge is unmoved by the face of the accused. He will not be swayed by irrelevant appearances. Remember, man looks at the outward appearance, but God knows the heart.

9. In ancient times the goddess of justice, in the Greek system, had a bandage over her eyes so that she could not see the person who came before her for judgment. She carried a set of scales so that justice could be given with absolute balance and equity, and she carried a sword that had no scabbard with which she struck all of the guilty alike.¹

¹ Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Expositions of Bible Doctrines: Taking the Epistle to the Romans as a Point of Departure* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1973), 60

10. Humans have always longed for be impartial justice in the world. Even in the ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead there is a pictograph of a scene in which a deceased person's heart is weighed against the feather of truth.²

11. How does this play out in Paul's argument? He says (12),

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.

12. Now I want you to take notice of Paul's change of phrase in this verse. He says, "Those who sin without the law will Perish without the law. But the those who sin under the law will be Judged by the law. Why do you think he intentionally change the term?"

13. I think Martyn Lloyd-Jones is right when he suggests that this is a hint to us that the degree of punishment for those who have the law will be greater. And this is consistent with biblical teaching. The Bible demonstrates that there is not only punishment for sin but degrees of punishment for sin.

14. For example, we read in Matt.11:20,

[Jesus] began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent.²¹ "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.²² "Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.²³ "And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day.²⁴ "Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you."

15. In Luke 12:47–48 Jesus says,

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

² Wikipedia, Lady Justice. Last viewed on 6/04/2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lady_Justice

16. “To whom much has been given, much will be required.”
17. Now once again, its critical understand here that Paul is NOT speaking about how a person is saved. Rather, he is speaking about how a person is judged and condemned because of sin. And what Paul is saying – specifically to the Jews – the moralists - is that the way they tend to think about future judgment is mistaken.
18. They thought that in the judgment they would get special treatment. They thought God would overlook their sins because they lived under God’s law which made them feel moral and righteous. But they were mistaken
19. The fact that God is impartial judge means that both groups (Jews and Gentiles) will face judgment because of sin. But in that judgment “the person who has NOT had the benefit of knowing God’s law will be judged according to his limited knowledge of God. And the person who has access to God’s law will be judged according to his greater knowledge about the Lord.”³
20. More specifically, God will judge the Gentiles who did not have the law as people who didn’t have God’s law. And he will treat the Jews - those who do have God’s law - as those who had more light and greater knowledge because they possessed the Scriptures. That is, greater light warrants a stricter judgment.
22. The implication of this passage is obvious, is it not? The reason the gospel is necessary is because Judgment Day is coming. And on that day, every person will be judged with absolute justice and fairness.
23. This is what we need to know about the Judge.
24. Second, Paul tells us...

II. What we should know about the Accused:

1. First, Paul speaks of Jewish people who will stand before the judgement. The Jews heard the word of God every day of their lives!
 - A. They sang God’s law.
 - B. They prayed God’s law.
 - C. They governed their society based on God’s law.

³ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans. The New International Commentary on the New testament*, (Grand Rapids, Mich. : W.B. Eerdmans, 1996),137 call one

- D. They were people whose lives were built under the hearing of God's law.
2. To such people, Paul (who was also Jewish) declares (13)

For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the Law who will be justified.”

2. Now, don't get hung up on Paul's statement that “the doers of the law will be justified.” As we saw last week, Paul's thesis is that Justification is by faith alone and NOT by the works of the law. However, the one who truly is justified will bear the fruit of his justification. This is what Paul means when he speaks of believers being judged according to their works (see last week's sermon).
3. What are these men and women like...
- A. They love God
 - B. They love the word of God and delight to read it often.
 - C. They love the law of God.
 - D. They love other people in practical ways.
 - E. They love the church.
 - F. Their works vindicate or prove the validity of their faith.
4. A good example of the kind of righteous person is found in Luke 1:5-6 where we are told that Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth who are described as follows: “they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all of the commandments and statutes of the Lord.” In God's eyes, these were truly righteous people. Their faith was the ground of their salvation and their righteous deeds were the fruit. (the Bible is full of such people).
5. All Paul is saying here is that true saving faith is accompanied by righteous living. People who have been born again to a living hope are also taught by the Spirit of God “to deny ungodliness and unrighteousness and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.
6. Remember, Paul is still talking about Judgment. What matters in the judgment is NOT our possession of the law or a lack of possession of the law, but sin. Paul is speaking of men who have sinned with the law and those who have sinned without the law.
7. So, first, Paul speaks of the Jews. Second, he speaks of the Gentiles. He says (14-15),

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. ¹⁵ 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 on the Day when, according to my Gospel God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

8. Again, we need to persist in remembering that Paul is speaking about judgment – the judgment of the lost – often the religious lost. The Jews will receive a stricter judgment because they had the light and privileges of the law. They had the External word. The Gentiles, however, did not have the External Word, but they do have the Internal Word of Conscience.

9. That is, they know the difference between right and wrong by virtue of the fact that they were created in the image of God.

- A. The word science in Latin simply means “Knowledge.”
- B. The word Conscience means “with knowledge.” Conscience is the God-given ability to Know right from wrong even without sitting under the teaching of the law.
- C. Notice (14) they do by nature what the law requires. And remember, in chapter one Paul already alluded to this when he said,
- D. (15) “They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts.
- E. We already saw this in chapter 1 where Paul says (1:21) they knew God. That is, by nature people know there is a God, and we are accountable to Him.
- F. Again (1:26) Paul accuses them of sinning Contra Natorum – “against nature.”

8. Their conscience bears witness to what is right and what is wrong even though they did not have the External (written) word of God. Therefore, even they are without excuse.

Application:

1. Friends, if we are going to truly understand and appreciate the gospel the first thing we need to do is embrace the truth of this passage. Metaphorically speaking, we are all in the Niagara River heading inextricably and unprotected toward the great falls. To go over the falls is to surely die.
2. Without exception, all people –
 - A. Jews and Gentiles
 - B. Male and Female
 - C. Churched and the unchurched
 - D. Slave and free
 - E. Educated and uneducated
 - F. Powerful and weak
 - G. Rich and poor
3. All are hopelessly being carried in the current. No one was pushed. No one was forced to jump into the river of judgment. We were warned about the danger, but every one of us jumped in anyway. This is the nature of the sinful heart. We always want what God forbids. But soon – much sooner than you think – there will be a day of reckoning. A day of evaluation. A Day of judgment.
4. This is why we all need salvation. You will NOT receive this great salvation by works. You must receive it with the empty and helpless hand of faith.

Nevertheless, when a person genuinely receives salvation in Jesus Christ, his life will change. He will begin to bear the fruit of joyful obedience to the word of God. Jesus said, "You will know them by their fruit."

5. Do you claim to be a Christian? If so, what is the fruit of it.

- Do you love Jesus?
- Do you read his word for the joy of knowing God?
- Do you talk about your savior?
- Do you love His people – his Church.

6. None of these things can save a man, but their obvious presence in your life are the God-ordained proof and vindication of your profession. To whom much is given, much will be required.

7. I suspect that most who are hearing my voice right now have been the beneficiaries of much spiritual privilege. But your spiritual privileges cannot save you. They may even blind you to your need. Today, will you get alone with God and be brutally honest about your relationship with Him. Eternity is at stake. Right now, counts forever! Plead with him, "God be merciful to me the sinner." Take my life and do with me whatever you will. I fix all my hope upon you. From this day forward I am yours.

8. If you truly want him, he will truly receive you, and rescue you from the judgment you rightly deserve.

To whom much is given, much will be required.