

The Courtroom Of The Soul

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Bible Text: Romans 2:1-16

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We are turning today, if you have your Bibles, to Romans chapter two.

Turning to the second chapter of Romans we want to begin reading at the first verse.

Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.¹

Let's ask the Lord's blessing on his Word.

¹ Romans 2:1-16.

Our Father, we are praying now that you will help us as we come to these pages. We know that as creatures we are born with blinded minds. We are those who have so many problems when it comes to understanding spiritual truth. But we thank you that by thy grace that the Spirit of God is come. He is here in the world. He is here in this meeting today to convince of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. He is here to take the things of Christ and show them to us and lead and guide us into all truth.

We thank you, Father, that these are not mere words, that these are glorious realities. We can sit and listen to the Word of God and we can have eternal truth penetrate our minds and hearts because of thy goodness to us. So to that end we pray that you will move in mighty power today, that the Spirit of God might take these words that so often fall on our ears without being heard aright and transform them into that mighty glorious Word that will cause us to be conformed to the image of thy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in his precious name. Amen.

Several weeks ago in preaching through the book of Proverbs I used an example which had to do with judging. For some reason I can't get rid of that thought, perhaps because I didn't make it clear, possibly because the Lord wants me to expand on it. But for whatever reason the Lord has led me today to the second chapter of Romans for a message entitled, "The Courtroom of the Soul."

As far back as the 18th chapter of Genesis Abraham was there engaged in a very unusual pass time. He was having an argument with God. He had received word from the Lord that he was going to rain fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrha. He had a nephew down there by the name of Lot. He was very much concerned about him. And I am sure you remember the argument about whether God would save the city because there were 50 righteous men or 40 or right on down the line.

During the course of that conversation Abraham asked a question, a rhetorical question that I believe sheds a great deal of light on this message today. He said, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"²

There are many things that we can learn from that statement. For example, we learn that he was speaking to the Lord Jesus Christ. Way back there in Abraham's day he was talking to the Lord. And we know that because in John chapter five and verse 22 we read, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son."³

All judgment has been placed within the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ as the representative of the trinity to judge the human race. But not only that we learn that in the official sense, in the final sense, God the Son is the Judge of all the earth. He has all the final authority, all the power when it comes to passing judgments not only upon this world's people, but upon the world itself. In other words, judgment is the official function of God himself.

² Genesis 18:25.

³ John 5:22.

If you have done any reading in the Old Testament, in fact, if you have just read the names of the books you know in some measure that Israel appointed judges. There is an Old Testament book by that name. These men had the function of taking the law of God, of applying it to the nation of Israel, of sitting in judgment in particular situations upon problems that would arise among people there in the nation of Israel.

Even today in a court of law we have a similar situation. Our judicial system came primarily from the Word of God. And because of that we have a man who is called a judge presiding over the proceedings. And the idea of a judge sitting there in charge of the situation in an earthly courtroom is because of this idea of the judge of all the earth.

In the camp of Israel, in the courts today, a judge is God's representative here in the world to apply the law of God to earthly situations. At least that is the way it is supposed to be. He is the judge of all the earth. And any earthly judge, if he is going to properly perform his function is going to take the Word of God, the law of God, he is going to apply it to the case at hand.

I am sure you realize that in a great measure we have departed from that. But at the same time the principle is there. And it is there because people in this country used to believe that the basis for all law was the Word of God.

I am going to confuse you a little bit in order to make you think about this. In the Sermon on the Mount much the same idea that we have here in Romans chapter two in these opening verses. The Bible says, "Judge not, that ye be not judged."⁴ In other words, don't take God's place and become a judge.

Then we have some apparent contradictions in the Bible. You are very familiar with those passages there in 1 Corinthians chapters five and six. We read some statements there about judging. For example, Paul is talking to the people in the Church at Corinth and he said, "I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?"⁵ He was talking about judging between brethren.

And then he said, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?"⁶

"Judge not, that ye be not judged."⁷ And yet here is this situation that is talking specifically about judging and almost ridiculing the people in the Church at Corinth because nobody was judging.

⁴ Matthew 7:1.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 6:5.

⁶ 1 Corinthians 6:2.

⁷ Matthew 7:1.

Well, what about John chapter seven and verse 24? The Lord Jesus said, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”⁸

The explanation is not in the Greek. It is all the same word. It is talking about a judge taking the place of God who is the judge of all the earth in every one of those situations, a very serious position to take. Now how could it be that we could find such scathing rebukes against judging and at the same time find these commands to judge?

I am pointing these things out to you not only for personal application, the kind we are going to be talking about in a few minutes, but for the sake of information because I have told you very often that, “Judge not, that ye be not judged,”⁹ is the devil’s favorite verse. You will find that it is quoted more times by more lost people than any other verse in the Bible. That is one of the very few that most of them now, “Judge not, that ye be not judged.”¹⁰

So, for example, when you say that Mormonism is a false religion, they say, “You are judging.” Or if you say that a preacher who denies the deity of Christ is lost, they say, “You are judging and the Bible says, ‘Judge not, that ye be not judged.’”¹¹

And the you run into some of those other people, the ones who know a little bit more about the Bible and they begin to put a few of these other passages on you. They call them contradictions. In one passage it says to judge, in many passages it says to judge, and in many others it says not to judge, the very same word. So it is imperative that you have this subject clear in your mind not only from the standpoint of using it in your own life, but from the standpoint of the problems that you will run into from other people.

All right. Think carefully with me and let’s put it all together.

In 1 Corinthians chapter two and verse 15 we read, “He that is spiritual judgeth all things.”¹² Now that is the only exception in all those judgments that I was talking about. That is a different Greek word, but let’s—just not to confuse the issue—let’s just pretend that it is not a different Greek Word. Let’s say we are thinking about the same idea all the way through, this idea of judging. And it says, “He that is spiritual judgeth all things.”¹³

I am sure you know the difference between things and people. And it is very true that he that is spiritual judgeth all things. But it is not true that he that is spiritual judgeth all people.

⁸ John 7:24.

⁹ Matthew 7:1.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² 1 Corinthians 2:15.

¹³ Ibid.

Take Roman Catholicism, for example. We have the authority of the Word of God to judge the thing called Roman Catholicism. It is a system, a visible system here in this world, a system of false religions. It is built on other things, false doctrines. We find this to be the case not only in the case of Roman Catholicism, but a great many other religions. We have every right to judge the thing called Roman Catholicism, but we have not right to judge people in the sense that because of this we say, "All Roman Catholics are lost."

Martin Luther was a Roman Catholic. He is a hero today, but he was a Roman Catholic the greater part of his life. And this is true of the vast majority of the reformers, many of them who never even came out of the Church of Rome. They weren't obedient to the Word of God, but neither were they lost.

Now we could go a little further and we could think about it like this. Suppose we have a Presbyterian or a Baptist or a Methodist preacher and he denies the deity of Christ. All right, I could look at that man upon the authority of the Word of God and I could say, "You are lost. You do not have eternal life."

And then you might say to me, as some of them have said to me in conversations, "You are judging me. The Bible says, 'Judge not that ye be not judged.'¹⁴"

But here is the answer to that. If I said to that man, "I have reached this decision, there is no hope for you, you are going to hell," then I am judging. I am claiming for myself God's judgmental authority to decide the final destiny of that man's soul. That is judging in the evil sense. But on the other hand, I can judge that man's doctrine, not the person, but the thing. I can't make an ultimate, a final judgment on that man's person. Only God can do that. But I can make a judgment on his doctrines any day of the week according to the Word of God. And then I can apply that doctrine to him in the light of the Word of God and I can say, "You are lost." It is just that simple.

So the thing is this. Only the judge can sentence him, the judge of all the earth, but I can sit in judgment on his present belief upon the authority of the Word of God.

Let me say that again because if you don't realize the importance of this it sounds like I am trying to split frog hairs, but that is not the way it is at all. There is a very important distinction there between judging people and judging things. Forbidden judgment is judging people. Commanded judgment here in the Word of God is judging thing. We are to judge false religions. We are to judge false doctrines. We are to judge sinful acts. We are to judge false beliefs and we have this command to do it.

Now here is the crux of the matter. If in our mind we look at people, a person, for example, and we view that individual as hopeless, that is sinful judgment. That is taking the place of God. That is condemning them to the lake of fire on the basis of our view of that individual. But if we have in our minds a different view from that, if we can look at

¹⁴ Matthew 7:1.

a person, if we can discern their situation and view them as presently lost and in need of salvation, that is proper judgment. And we do it based on their doctrine.

Anybody who has not in hell at this moment may get saved today for all we know. That is the limitation on our knowledge of what another person's situation is. And it matters not who they are or where they come from or what they stand for. For all we know there is always that potential as long as they are alive for them to be saved. And that is why we cannot pronounce judgment on a person. We can only judge their position. And we can only do that in the light of what the Bible says about them.

I am sure you realize that to a certain extent this is important because here we are walking around the world supposedly ambassadors for Christ. We are supposed to be here seeking lost people for the Lord Jesus and if you go out seeking sheep, for example, and come back home with a cow, you have made a mess. If you go out and come back with a pig you are still in trouble. When you go seeking sheep you have to know what a sheep is and what he looks like, maybe what he smells like so that you can identify him.

And so there is, of necessity, this need for discernment and that is what the Bible command: "He that is spiritual [discerneth] all things,"¹⁵ this understand of what a person's spiritual condition is, not for the purpose of consigning them in our minds to the lake of fire, but for the purpose of understanding their spiritual condition.

So every spiritual believer, according to the Bible, is commanded to judge things, doctrine, religious systems, philosophies. We are supposed to judge books. We are supposed to judge churches. "He that is spiritual judgeth all things."¹⁶

All right, now, you can put that thought on file in your mind because it is the most complicated, by far the most complicated area of judging. And all we need to understand about that, really, is the need to be very careful not to overstep the bounds of propriety as we find them here in the Word of God, not to take upon ourselves the place of judge when it comes to condemnation of a person's soul.

We all know that that is not usually the problem. There are very few people who run into any real trouble along those lines. So there is a different idea that we want to think about. If you will notice Romans chapter two and verse one.

"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things."¹⁷

I will say, again, that we have a responsibility to exercise discernment concerning things. But one of the most tragic results of the fall of man is the desire to judge other people. Back in the Garden of Eden God revealed himself to Adam. He was the great I Am, the

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 2:15.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Romans 2:1.

final authority, the judge of all the earth. Adam understood that to a very great degree. But I am sure you remember how Adam followed in the path of Satan. And it is like that because fallen creatures are all alike. They all tend in the same general direction whether it be Satan, a cherub or man or whatever the situation might be. There is tendency that is all in the same direction. Satan wanted God's position. Satan wanted to be the final authority and that very same evil desire is in the heart of every person sitting here today. It is in the heart of every person in the world, the desire to be the final authority.

We want to be the God of other people. That is why children have trouble obeying their parents because they want to be in charge. That is why wives have problems being in subjection to their husbands. That is why we have trouble in the Christian life being subject one to another. In each and every one of us is the desire to be the final authority.

Now, quite, obviously, we look around us and we see that that is impossible. And when the human mind runs into an impossibility immediately we start trying to make some kind of compensation for that. The first thing we do is take on a bunch of false humility and we say, "Well, I don't want to be in charge of anything." That is known as lying or maybe deception if you prefer that. But the truth of the matter is, we have just come into this apparent impossibility. We come to see that at a very early age even lost people come to see it, that you can't step into another person's life and be the final authority. That is out of the question.

We are pretty much confined to this little realm that we live in known as our own body, our own mind, our own soul. So the next best thing, if we can't reach out there and control other people, or maybe I should say the next worse thing is to become the judge.

We can't take away the throne of God and sit upon the throne of the universe, but we can take away his authority as the judge.

Very interesting when you stop to think about it. Now matter how powerful a person might be, no matter where they are, who they are, they might be the king of the world and we can bring them into the courtroom of our mind and we can sit in judgment on them without their permission, without any hindrances in the judgment that we pass we can bring anybody we know, anybody we have ever heard of, no matter what their power, no matter what their influence, we can bring them right in here to our mind and we can be the judge. In fact that is a favorite pass time. It because the natural thing for us to do when we meet people, when we deal with them every day of our life. It becomes the natural thing to do to bring people into our mind to hold court there to sit in judgment on them because of what we are by nature.

We can put any person on trial on any subject in the courtroom of our soul any time we please and nobody will ever know it has happened except us. But, you see what we fail to realize is just how satanic that practice is. It is just the same as saying with the devil himself, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God... I will be like the most High."¹⁸

¹⁸ Isaiah 14:13-14.

In fact, God goes so far as to say here in the first verse, “Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest.”¹⁹ He says there is no excuse for judging other people.

And before we look at the reason we want to digress for a moment to think about something else.

We talked about the fact that God the Son is the judge of all the earth. But what about the judges in Israel? I mean, why should they be allowed to judge? What were they doing sitting in judgment on people?

Now don't miss this because this is important. They were God's appointed representatives to do the judging. That is why they were doing it.

What about judges in the court of law? They are the powers that be that are ordained of God to judge people, the ones we read about in the 13th chapter of Romans. They have this authority here in the Bible in sitting in judgment on people.

But what about the passage that I mentioned to you there in 1 Corinthians chapters six and five? “I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?”²⁰ “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?”²¹

What does that all mean? How can that possibly fit into the picture that we are talking about here this morning?

All right, it goes like this. Number one, at times there was a need to judge people in the camp of Israel. Secondly, at times there is a need to judge people in a court of law. And, in the third place, at times there is a need to judge people in the church. In the fourth place, in the millennium there is going to be a need to judge people, to judge situations in the world. We have these needs that exist. But the point is this. In every single case of judging people, every one of them, it is authorized by God on earth, there are certain specific representatives who are appointed by God to do it and nobody else.

It is like that, I say, because there is a definite need to judge people at times. It has to be done, just like the general authority of every believer to judge things is not enough. You can't just judge things in the camp of Israel, in the court of law in the church in the [?]. There must be judgments of [?].

But never in all the Word of God is that responsibility given to any but a select few specifically authorized people to do it. And to illustrate that, let's think about a court of law for example. People must be judged there. There is just no way to get around it. And yet some fellow can't just walk in off the street and climb up on the judge's bench and

¹⁹ Romans 2:1.

²⁰ 1 Corinthians 6:5.

²¹ 1 Corinthians 6:2.

start judging people. Everybody knows that wouldn't be the thing to do. All sorts of people would be condemned unjustly. They would be treated unfairly. A judge has to be somebody who knows the law, somebody who is fair and impartial. We know that to be true in a court of law.

You would never think of running up to Raleigh and sitting down in the seat of the Supreme Court judge and say, "Well, here I am. Today is the day when I am going to pass judgment on a few people."

You would never think of going to Washington, DC to the Supreme Court building, to sit down in the chair of the judge. But guess what? I meet folks quite often who are willing to crawl up on the throne of God in heaven without any authority to take the place of God himself and be the judge over other people in our own minds, now.

The passage in 1 Corinthians six teaches that in order to prevent Christians from going to court there is sometimes a need to judge people in the Church. We are not to go to law before unbelievers. Some problems that can't be worked out, there is a need to judge. We have to judge people sometimes because everybody claims an opposite view of the issues. And it says there that even the least esteemed in the Church can do it with the mind of Christ. Do you remember that? But one of the things that is very clear in that passage, a very definite prerequisite, "Set them to judge...in the church."²²

Some volunteer doesn't come running up and sit in judgment in a situation like that. You won't find it in the Bible. Nobody takes it upon themselves to come up with this decision about what the true situation is in that particular problem there in the church. Judging other people is never allowable to Christians at large in the Word of God. You won't find it. It is only those who have been set in a position of authority that are to judge other people in the church. You find Peter judging people. You find Paul judging people. But you only find that because they were God's representatives. They were men with the authority to do it.

All right, that being the case, what is the reason? Well, it is just like in a court of law all sorts of people are judged unfairly. They are condemned unjustly if some unauthorized judge takes it on himself to decide the case. You just can't have justice under those circumstances. You see, the truth is very simple. Only God has a right to judge people. Only God has a right to do it. He is the judge of all the earth. And to take his place, to steal his position is to bring his wrath upon us if we do it without his permission.

Anybody can judge things if they are saved. They are walking with the Lord. There are only a select few authorized by this book to judge people. And they bear the frightening responsibility that goes along with it.

And before us in this passage we find an explanation of why judging other people is so wrong. "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for

²² 1 Corinthians 6:4.

wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.”²³

Now God says any time that you bring a man or a woman into the courtroom of your own soul and judge them, condemn them, you are condemning yourself. That is why it is so important not to do it. And this is true because any sin that you can find in another person is something that you do yourself. There might be a slight variation on it, but it is the same sin.

“Thou that judgest doest the same things.”²⁴ That is what he said.

Now, let’s take an illustration of that. One thing that is very common is criticism. I have had people come to me over the years and they say, “People in the church are talking about me. And I told so and so about it and so and so about it and so and so about it and so and so about it and they agreed with me.”

That is known as the pot calling the kettle black. Here they have gone out and they have talked to people about the people who were talking about them so they turn out to be the criticizer as well as the criticized.

“Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.”²⁵

Somebody takes another Christian into the courtroom of their soul and they decide that person is a Pharisee. But, you see, only a Pharisee would conclude that somebody else is a Pharisee. You have to think about that for a while. You have to study the Bible a little bit. But that is the truth. Only a Pharisee would conclude that somebody else was a Pharisee.

“Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.”²⁶

Verse three. “And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?”²⁷

You know, this is something that is terribly difficult to get into our minds. The judge of all the earth has already taken you into this court. It doesn’t matter who you are. He has found you to have a heart that is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. He has found that we are all as an unclean thing and all our righteousnesses are as filthy

²³ Romans 2:1.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Romans 2:3.

rages. Now, the color of your dirt may be different from somebody else's. The violent filthy spots might be in a different position on your garments, but we are all as an unclean thing the Bible says. The Judge of the earth has already decided. And he says all our righteousnesses, the things that we think are so wonderful, they are as filthy rags.

Some folks have trouble with lust, for example. There are other people that have trouble with pride because they don't lust. Six of one and half a dozen of the other, you see. And it comes down to this. Any sinner that would judge another sinner's sin is a hypocrite. You just can't get around that. We are all in this thing together.

There are some people so carnal they should be beaten with a stick. There are some people so pseudo spiritual they should be beaten with a stick. But the people in real trouble are the ones who come to this point in time where they climb up on the throne of God and they claim the authority to decide whose sins are the worst. God doesn't like that. And he warns against it over and over and over again here in the Bible.

Verse four.

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds:²⁸

Now there are two important points that stand out there to me, at least. One is this. The goodness of God had better lead us to repentance. I mean, if we are not experiencing the chastising hand of God upon our life for what we are and what we say and what we do, that is a rather shocking situation. The goodness of God should lead us to repentance. The fact that he allows us to be what we are and get away with us, at least from all appearances from the practical standpoint.

The second thing is this that we see there. The only alternative is to have a hard and impenitent heart. It is so hard hearted that we can't be sorry for what we are and what we say and what we do. And what that produces is very interesting. It says we, by this method, treasure up unto ourselves wrath against the day of wrath.

You remember the Lord Jesus said, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."²⁹ He was talking about sending on ahead some of the good things that we do, some of the blessings that we are to other people, sending on some of our faithfulness to him so that we will have treasure when we get to glory, have a few crowns.

But, you see, this passage is talking about laying up treasure in heaven at the judgment seat.

²⁸ Romans 2:4-6.

²⁹ Matthew 6:20.

“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”³⁰ Laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven of a very unpleasant sort because of our hardness, because of our impenitent heart.

Our time is too far gone to really get into the rest of this. There’s a lot of things here to think about. But I have been saying that the Bible never allows us to judge people. That is not quite true. There is one person that we can judge. We know him pretty well, ourselves.

Verse 11.

For there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.³¹

Now Paul is saying here that we are in a situation where everybody has the same problem. We all face a God who sits upon the throne of heaven with whom there is no respect of persons. And as we look back down the pages of history or if we look at the practical side of life today, we see that there are some people who have sinned without law. They don’t have the slightest idea what the Bible says. They don’t care. They sin without the law.

There are other people who have the Bible. They have studied it. They have thought about it. And, of course, they still do things that are wrong.

You have a great variation when it comes to this matter of sinners in the world. But one point that he makes here is very important and it is this. It is not the hearers of the law that are just before God. It is the doers of the law. He is not teaching salvation by works. He is teaching not being stupid enough to think that we can put something over on God.

It is not enough to come to church and sit around and hear the Bible preached. It is not enough to read *The Daily Bread* or some Christian book and go out and forget what manner of men and women we are. And it is so easy, you see, to think that because we are in a Christian context that that does something for us somehow. There is this strange impartation of spirituality to us because of the people that we hang around with or the things that we read or the messages we hear. But it is not like that at all.

³⁰ Romans 2:5.

³¹ Romans 2:11-16.

The truth is very simple. We can very easily—as he talks about here—become a law unto ourselves. It is so easy to do that. We get into this condition where we begin to understand something about the Bible and we see that we have been called unto liberty. There is nobody who can tell us what to do. There is no human being who can come into our life and exercise their authority over us without our consent. And even there in the citadel of the mind, the place where nobody else can go we can sit in judgment on anybody no matter who they are or what they claim to be. We can be as gods.

And because that is not at all an unpopular sin we don't pay too much attention to it and our heart gets harder, we become more and more impenitent. We become more and more self exalting because we appreciate those judgments that we make, judgments based on our great ability to handle this function of God.

But the message here is that there is coming a day, “When God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.”³²

God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained. Now that is when the truth is going to come out. And it is going to be on the basis of our willingness to be obedient to the Word of God.

Now God says, “Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest.”³³ He says this is not something optional. It is not for you to decide. It is not some decision that you have to make for yourself as a Christian. He says, “Do not do it. Don't judge people unless you happen, specifically, to be the representative of God in that regard.”

And that brings us back down to that very interesting place, the courtroom of the soul. And we look around in there and there is nobody to judge. The Lord has taken them all away from us.

One of favorite pass times is gone. Our hobby is missing. What is there left to do? Well, the Bible makes an excellent suggestion. It says if we would judge ourselves we would not be judged. We can go ahead and hold court any time we get good and ready. In the courtroom of our soul we can bring the evidence. And that is what everybody does.

And the result we see there in verse 15, “Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness,” notice this, “and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.”³⁴

And that is the way it goes in the courtroom. In the courtroom of the soul we have these thoughts as we weigh the evidence. And by the means of those very thoughts we are

³² Romans 2:16.

³³ Romans 2:1.

³⁴ Romans 2:15.

either accusing ourselves, sitting in judgment, finding ourselves guilty or we are excusing ourselves, we are trying to explain why we are what we are and why we say what we say and do what we do. The most obvious point where we see this is the point of salvation because every man, every woman in some sense is the judge at least while they are here in this world.

In the courtroom of our own soul we have to bring the evidence and we are going to have these thoughts which will either accuse us or excuse us in the light of the evidence. And when we bring in the evidence we find that it is not at all pleasant. The judge of all the earth has heard about us. He knew about us before we were ever born. And he says that every mouth will be stopped and all the world will become guilty before God.³⁵ He says “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”³⁶

He finds us guilty. And that is the testimony of an expert witness if there ever was one, the judge of all the earth, the one who has not yet brought us into his courtroom, but he is there to testify to what we are by nature. But we have to believe that personally. We have to find ourselves guilty in order to be saved. We must see for ourselves in some measure at least what God is going to see in that day when he judges the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to the gospel. He sees that every soul is a lost soul because every soul is a guilty sinner. And the only hope is for us to find ourselves guilty, to see that we are condemned, that we are under the wrath of God and we must have a Savior. We must have one who is to be the propitiation for our sins, the sacrifice, the innocent substitute to take our place.

And, of course, when we start looking around we don't have to look very far. He is standing right there upon the pages of the Word of God.

These things were not done in a corner. The Lord Jesus was lifted up between heaven and earth for all the world to see.

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.³⁷

And when we come to see that we realize that no matter how guilty we are, no matter what sins we have committed, we can walk out of the courtroom innocent. Now, I didn't say pardoned. I said innocent. And that is something that can never happen in an earthly court of law. A court of law here in this world can acquit us, but it cannot find us to be completely innocent because there has never been an innocent human being except the Lord Jesus himself. But if we are standing before God clothed in the garments of salvation, if we are covered with a robe of righteousness, if the precious blood of Christ has cleansed us from every sin that we ever have committed or ever will commit we stand

³⁵ See Romans 3:19.

³⁶ Galatians 3:10.

³⁷ John 3:14-15.

in the sight of God innocent. We stand there just as though we have never sinned. And that is how it will be when we go to stand before him in the final day.

But what a tragic thing it is, what a terrible thing to see people walking around day by day in this world never realizing the great peril of their soul, thinking that somehow you can just make it through the world, make it through the church, make it through human existence and somehow make it into heaven.

It is not like that at all. It only happens when we bring these thoughts and ideas into the courtroom of the soul, when we begin to think about the evidence against us and when we decide by an act of our own will that the Lord Jesus Christ alone is our only hope for salvation.

Let's bow together as we close in prayer.

Heavenly Father, we know that as we have studied the Word of God today that we have seen before some issue that should cause every one of us to tremble. We can never account the times that we, as individuals have been guilty, the times when we have excused ourselves, our thoughts, times when we have... our hardness and impenitent heart refused to believe the way we sit in judgment upon other people.

Father, how we thank you today that we don't have to face you on the basis of that. We don't have to come to you and explain some day why we sought to take your place and rob your authority and become the judge in your position. We don't have to explain that if we are willing by faith to look to the cross of Calvary to see the glorious provision of that precious blood that was shed for us, how we do pray that you will take the Word of God today and use it in our hearts, that those who are lost might see their need for salvation, that we, as thy people might understand the great responsibility that we face to keep our minds and our hearts free from this satanic judgmental condition we find so prevalent in the world around us today. We pray these things in our Savior's precious name. Amen.