

ROMANS CH.2

MAJOR THEME: THE GOSPEL: THE RIGHTEOUSNES OF GOD REVEALED IN CONDEMNATION

Hymn: #436 I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say #419 There Is a Wideness in God's Mercy

(Modified Outline of John A. Witmer- Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Dallas Theological Seminary; The Bible Knowledge Commentary; SP Publications; 1983; p.438)

- 1) Introduction and Theme (1:1-17)
 - A) Apostolic Greeting (1:1-7)
 - B) Apostolic Travel Plans (1:8-15)
 - C) Apostolic Attitude (1:16-17)
- 2) Righteousness of God Revealed in Condemnation (1:18-3:20)
 - A) Against Pagan Humanity (1:18-32)
 - i) Reasons (1:18-23)
 - (1) For Suppressing God's Truth v. 18
 - (2) For Ignoring God's Revelation v. 19-20
 - (3) For Perverting God's Glory v.21-23
 - ii) Results (1:24-32)
 - (1) Abandoned to Fornication v.24-25
 - (2) Abandoned to Sexual Perversion v. 26-27
 - (3) Abandoned to a Depraved Lifestyle v.28-32

- B) According to Divine Standards (2:1-16)** "In this world of corruption there is real danger that the earnest Christian may over react in his resistance to evil and become a victim of the religious occupational disease of cynicism. The constant need to counter to popular trends may easily develop in him a sour habit of fault finding and turn him into a critic of other men's matters, without charity and without love. What makes this cynical spirit particularly dangerous is that the cynic is usually right. His analyses are accurate, his judgement sound. Yet for all that...he is wrong; frightfully, pathetically wrong." (A.W. Tozer- *The Root of the Righteous*)

This section is addressed to the finger pointing moralist regardless of his status as Gentile or Jew, Greek or Barbarian, Wise or Foolish. Whenever you point the self-righteous finger at someone else, three other condemning fingers are pointing back at you.

i) Truthfulness (2:1-4)

- (1) V.2 God's righteousness revealed in condemnation is not arbitrary, but is according to TRUTH- meaning absolute and infinite truth which is one of God's personal attributes
 - (a) Jesus said "I am the way the truth and the life..." John 14:6
 - (b) Truth - ἀλήθειαν is also translated as "reality". Gods standard of judgment is always based in fact; reality. Not the "fickleness of the gods".
 - (c) When God judges, we can be absolutely 100% sure it is right. Are you or I more loving or right than God? Thus, you and I are imminently disqualified to pass final judgement on others or to question God in his.
- (2) V.1 You may think "I'm not a God hater, full of greed or a murderer", but the TRUTH is you do the same kinds of things; things worthy of God's judgement. The point is there is no room for the self-righteous judgment of the grosser sins of others.
 - (a) This does NOT mean that we don't "make a right judgement" (John 7:24) or that we don't judge sin in the assembly of believers when we see it (1 Cor. 5:12).
 - (b) Rather we recognize ourselves and others as sinners and both in need of grace.
- (3) V. 4 Whilst God will judge sin, He is not quick to "pull the trigger" of judgement.
 - (a) True in the OT. While Moses was hidden in the cleft of the rock, God revealed his Name to Moses by passing in front of him proclaiming ""The LORD , the LORD , the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love

ROMANS CH.2

and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished..." Ex. 34:6-7

- (b) True in the NT. God is kind, tolerant and patient...all attributes that lead one to repentance.
 - (i) 2 Pet. 3:9 "He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."
 - (ii) 1 Tim. 2:4 "...God our Saviour, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth..."
 - (iii) But alas, so many hearts are stubborn and unrepentant.

ii) Impartiality (2:5-11)

- (1) V.6 "God "will give to each person according to what he has done" regardless of their Jewish or Gentile state.
 - (a) This does not mean that eternal life is a reward for good living. (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9)
 - (b) Rather a person's habitual conduct, whether good or evil, reveals the condition of his heart. A person's doing good SHOWS a regenerate heart. Conversely, a person who continually does evil and rejects the truth SHOWS an unregenerate heart and will be an object of wrath.
- (2) V.8 Don't be deceived or think God is going to "wink" and say "Oh, all right then, come on in" if a person is self-seeking; rejects the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ and follows evil. There will literally "be hell to pay" for such thinking and living.
- (3) V.11 Clearly states "... God does not show favouritism".
 - (a) James 2:9 says "...if you show favouritism (to yourself or someone else) you sin".

iii) Jesus Christ (2:12-16)

- (1) The condemnation and judgement warranted against sinful humanity is not only based in truth and impartial, it is also deep.
 - (a) V. 16 God will judge the secrets of men's hearts; the hidden things and the motives.
 - (i) 1 Sam 16:7 "The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."
 - (ii) Jesus Christ himself is the Agent of this judgment
 - 1. John 5:22 "... the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son".
- (2) Men are also judged in accordance with the dispensation in which they live.
 - (a) V. 12-13 Sinning Gentiles, who were not given the Law of Moses, will not be judged by the Law. They will be judged however. For the Jews who have the Law, they will be judged by it. It's not just those who hear it who will be declared righteous, but those who obey it.
 - (i) Again, "obeying the Law" is the same as "good works"; salvation is not given as a reward for obeying the law (which no one can do anyway), rather "obeying the law" SHOWS the state of the heart.
 - (ii) James 1:22-25 says the same thing: "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks

ROMANS CH.2

like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does."

- (3) V.14-15 Are actually a parenthetical idea meant to knock the proud Jew off his high horse and show that they are not superior just because they have the Law.
 - (a) The "Gentiles dogs" as the Jews saw them, actually have the Law's requirements written upon their consciences.
 - (b) These verses do NOT teach that Gentiles are "saved" by simply obeying their conscience apart from faith in Jesus Christ.
 - (i) At this point in Paul's argument he has yet to disclose HOW a person can be saved. All he is still doing is driving home the fact that all stand condemned and God is perfectly just in passing this judgement according to the divine standards of truth, impartiality and Jesus Christ.
 - (ii) Conscience is important, but it is fallible and can Biblically be either:
 - 1. Good
 - 2. Clear
 - 3. Guilty
 - 4. Corrupted
 - 5. Weak
 - 6. Seared
 - (iii) V.15 It is the fickleness of conscience that makes their "...thoughts now accusing, now even defending them." In other words, one minute your conscious will accuse you and the next minute it will let you off the hook...FOR THE EXACT SAME THOUGHT.
- (4) V. 16 Paul says "his Gospel declares" God's righteous judgement of and man's condemnation.
 - (a) Paul is not saying that his gospel is the standard of God's judgement. Rather he is saying that DECLARING the righteous judgment of God is an essential element IN the Gospel that he preached.
 - (b) This is the biblical mandate for starting at Romans 3:23 (For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God) when evangelizing using "Romans Road". The Gospel presentation can only be effective when it has enlightened someone to see their need for salvation and that can only be seen when they know they stand condemned before God's righteousness.

C) **Against Unfaithful Jews (2:17-3:8)** Paul now turns his attention specifically to the Jews to show how the Righteousness of God is being revealed in condemnation against their unfaithfulness.

i) Condemnation because of their hypocrisy (2: 17-24)

- (1) The Jews saw themselves as superior to the "Gentile Dogs" because of their religious morality. But in fact they were hypocrites in 8 ways:
 - (a) They relied on The Law, but didn't keep it.
 - (b) They bragged about their relationship to God, but didn't cherish it.
 - (c) They knew His will, but didn't do it.
 - (d) They tested and approved of what was superior, but didn't apply it.
 - (e) They were instructed by The law, but ignored it.
 - (f) They were convinced they were guides to the blind, but were blind themselves.

ROMANS CH.2

- (g) They had the embodiment of Knowledge and truth, but didn't live in it.
- (h) They taught others, but didn't teach themselves.
- (2) V. 24 Their hypocrisy caused the Gentiles to blaspheme God, in effect saying: "Why should we honor God when you yourselves don't even honor Him?" (Is. 52:5; Ez.36:22)
- (3) Oh, how much does this find applications among Christians today?

ii) Condemnation because of their trust in "rites" rather than God (2:25-29)

- (1) God gave Abraham a sign of the covenant promises which he had made with Abraham. That sign was circumcision. The Jews had placed their trust in the external sign rather than on the heart of obedience to which circumcision was a sign.
 - (a) V. 25 Paul said that if you are a Jewish lawbreaker then lit. "...your circumcision has become a foreskin". You are no different than a Gentile lawbreaker. The rite counts for nothing.
 - (b) How many Christians today put their trust in Baptism, the Eucharist, Church attendance, tithing or even carrying the right translation of the Bible?
 - (i) V. 29 Lit. "...circumcision (or any sacrament for that matter) is of the heart IN SPIRIT NOT LETTER".
 - 1. It is fundamentally the removal of the flesh by and in the Spirit.
 - (c) A wedding ring means nothing if a marriage is defiled by unfaithfulness.

iii) Condemnation because of their unbelief (3:1-8)

- (1) V. 1-3 Advantage always brings responsibility and the Jews had both, 'much in every way', thus their unbelief was even more worthy of God's condemnation.
- (2) Though some (many) Jews chose to be unfaithful to God, His faithfulness remains solid to Israel. This will be seen more clearly in Ch. 9-11.
- (3) V. 4 means God will keep on being true even though every man becomes a liar.
- (4) V.5-8 Uncircumcised hearts of flesh squirm and argue when confronted with truthful, impartial, Jesus Christ illuminated condemnation. Rather than be broken and repent, hypocrisy and religion love to argue in its unbelief and fantasy world, but in doing so only highlights how deserving their condemnation is.
- (5) Apostle Paul anticipated such clever but unsound and foolish reasoning. His response was simply that those who raise thoughts like this deserve the condemnation he has been proclaiming.

Let us apply this chapter to our own lives and spend a few minutes in silent prayer and confess any and all self-righteous judgement; any and all ways we have not made "a right judgement", but rather been partial to sin in our midst; any and all ways we have been hypocrites and caused others to blaspheme God because our own neglect.

Next time, Paul, like a seasoned prosecuting attorney will make his final closing arguments and wrap up this first section of Romans, the Righteousness of God Revealed in Condemnation. He will then make that glorious turn and bring us to see the Righteousness of God Revealed in Justification. Hope you'll be there!