

Romans 2

v 1 “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.”

The Apostle had declared both Jew and Gentile needed the gospel of God. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (1:16). This need was a desperate need “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (1:18). In our verse one, we see how serious it is to have a knowledge of righteousness, and it have no power in our lives. Here it supposes a man capable of passing a judgment upon another's acts, but doing the same himself. This would be as one holding truth in unrighteousness. This verse is to one described as “O man”, no distinguishing between Jew or Greek.

v 2 “But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.”

All of God's judgments are according to truth. It is solemn to think all judgment is committed to Him that is The Truth.

v 3 “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?”

Hidden things of darkness will be brought to light, and though a man judges others, whose sins have been made public, those judging while doing the same things, perhaps unknown to other men, will not escape God's just judgment, which is according to Truth, and He knows what is true.

v 4 “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”

The Lord is longsuffering, but this isn't an indication of indifference to evil. He is gracious. “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).

Indifference to His Holiness, or to His grace, will bring judgment.

v 5 “But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasures up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of

God.”

Though God does not speedily execute His judgment on our wrong doings, He sees them, and will not forget them in the day He does visit in judgment. It seems so serious to have wrath treasured up for oneself. What a terrible treasure to have! How wonderful to know Christ, and to have believed the Gospel. It is good for believers to remember, our not coming into God’s wrath is a result of Christ’s work, not ours. “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Rom. 5:9).

vv 6 “Who will render to every man according to his deeds:”

It is well to notice who is addressed in this portion, “O man” vs.1, “O man” vs 3, and here “every man”. There is no respect of persons with God. Wrath from heaven is revealed, no special place of privilege that one might have on earth will cause him to escape the just judgment of God. Jews had an advantage, much then in every way, but it was and is to no avail, if we remain in the place of God’s wrath. Faith in Christ, removes man from that category. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

v 7 “To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:”

Those earnestly seeking “immortality” (incorruptibility) receive “eternal life”, rather than judgment or wrath. This is just what the gospel of God gives, by faith. “But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality (incorruptibility) to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10). Notice it says “seek for”. It is not how to earn eternal life, but those who have not pleasure in sin seek for something better than the judgment they know their sins deserve. They turn from their ways and in earnest search for what they do not have. They find it in the gospel of God. Their “seeking” is a fruit of repentance. They do not despise the goodness of God, it leads them to repentance (vs. 4). This is in contrast to those of verse 5 who have hard and impenitent hearts, and despise the riches of His goodness.

v 8 “But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath.”

The souls who contend with God, disobedient, and living in unrighteousness are treasuring up (vs. 5) indignation and wrath for that day when God will render unto every man his deeds. (vs. 6) We see the result of despising

“truth” whether from the testimony of creation,(1:20) or the revelation of the gospel (1:16-17) is to treasure up wrath.

v 9 “Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;”

We notice doing, or works, of unrighteousness is what brings tribulation, anguish, indignation, and wrath. Only faith in the gospel gives us the righteousness of God. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (1:16-17). We get eternal life, (vs.7) by faith. The just shall live by faith. It is how we get life, and how we become “just”.

v 10 “But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:”

Good works manifest a work of God in our heart.“Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts” (Rom.2:15). Only God writes the law in man’s heart. To such, glory honor, and peace, is their portion. Good works, is not how we get these things. Only those who “have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” get peace, “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (10:15).

Honor also is a result of what God has done with a man. “Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?” (ch.9:21). The same is true of glory. We came short of God’s glory “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (3:23). But “He might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory” (ch.9:23). Glory for us is a result of God’s mercy, not our works. “Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works” (Rom. 4:6). “And if by grace, then [is it] no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if [it be] of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work” (Rom. 11:6).

vv 11,12 “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;”

Unlike men, without respect of persons, God has declared, “Even the righteousness of God [which is] by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all

them that believe: for there is no difference For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:22-23). “For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him” (Rom.10:12).

Romans establishes two great truths. One, we are all guilty before God, and Two: Only the gospel of God can remedy our guilty condition. And this is by faith in this Gospel, not by the work of any man. God will judge all who despise His goodness.

vv 13-16 “(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.”

This sentence, (four verses) Is not given to show we are to keep the law to live. God had said this. “In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live” (Deut.30:16). However “And the commandment, which [was ordained] to life, I found [to be] unto death” (Rom. 7:10). The very law, which would have allowed man to live, and not die, only condemned all under it, because men could not keep it. So it is stated elsewhere by Paul, “[Is] the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law” (Gal.3:21).

The expression in our sentence, “the law written in their hearts,” is an expression denoting that God has created a new heart, a living heart capable of fulfilling the righteousness of the law. This is a work of the Holy Spirit, called the law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death...That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom.8:2-4). “After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer.31:33). “Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day [that] I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD”

(Jer. 31:32). Only the gospel can communicate to man such a heart. So our sentence ends with “God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.” Judgment shall not be only according to the law, but according to Paul’s gospel. The greatest revelation of the goodness of God, which if not believed, is despised.

vv 17-20 “Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, And knowest [his] will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.”

These verses show us how great our sin is, when we are brought into an outward place of privilege, and yet not really have life from God—Eternal life. We Gentiles have now been brought into such a place of privilege. Taking these privileges, we boast in them, and exalt ourselves by them. It is sad, but we do this, with many of the favors that God in grace gives us. Such is the form of godliness, while denying its power. “For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, [take heed] lest he also spare not thee” (Rom.11:13-21). In verse 17 the Apostle had taken up the Jew. However now in principle, we as Gentiles grafted into the “olive tree” that was not described as being a “wild olive tree”, are also in a special place of privilege. The Lord spoke of those who sat themselves down in Moses’ seat saying of them, “For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay [them] on men's shoulders; but they [themselves] will not move them with one of their fingers.” (Mt. 23:4)

v 21 “Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?”

Jew or Gentile, alike, as men we are ever prone to teach truth without putting it into personal practice. James warns us “My brethren, be not many masters,(teachers) knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.” (James 3:1) We can be quite sure that when we find

ourselves teaching others, and not doing in our own lives what we teach others to do, we will reap sad consequences from this practice.

vv 22,23 “Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?” It is important to learn early in our Christian life, that the Word of God has been given to us for our own spiritual growth. We do not simply learn truth for the purpose of teaching others, although we may do this too. The Lord taught us concerning the Word, “But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Mt.4:4)

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that [by my voice] I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an [unknown] tongue.” (1 Cor.14:19) “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” (2 Tim.2:2)

Teaching is important, but it must be accompanied with a life that corresponds to the teaching, else a despising will be the result. “our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.” (Titus 2:13-14)

v 24 “For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.”

Continuing having the Jew before him, in order to show that he too,(the Jew) was guilty before God, he brings before them, the consequence of having truth from God, and not living by it. Of course we know man could neither live by the law, nor get life from it. This proof of their sin as having the law, continues until chapter 3:20. I say, consequence here it is as to others. Gentiles seeing the Jews not practicing what they sought to put others under caused the Name of God to be blasphemed.

False teachers in Christendom can cause the same results in others. “and many shall follow their (false teachers) dissolute ways, through whom the way of the truth shall be blasphemed” (2 Peter 2:2 JND) But sad to say, even we who are believers can be guilty of the same, if our conduct is contrary to

Christian teachings. “Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and [his] doctrine be not blasphemed.” (1 Tim. 6:1) “..teach the young women [To be] discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.” (Tit.2:5)

v 25 “For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.”

Christian baptism, like Jewish circumcision, confers, or brings us into a place of privilege here on earth, before God. It can be profitable to be in a sphere on earth where light from God is known through His Word if we continue in those teachings, “Give heed to thyself and to the teaching; continue in them; for, doing this, thou shalt save both thyself and those that hear thee.”(1 Tim.4:16) “For the time shall be when they will not bear sound teaching; but according to their own lusts will heap up to themselves teachers, having an itching ear; and they will turn away their ear from the truth, and will have turned aside to fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4) Not giving heed to sound teaching brings sad consequences into the lives of others, and into our own lives as well.

v 26 “Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?” The “righteousness of the law”, is not God’s righteousness, but rather man’s, were he able to keep it. God’s is received by faith. “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:” (Php. 3:9) However the point is here made of the vanity of boasting of having the law, when there was no accompanying righteousness in the life. The outward advantage of having the law, and circumcision were of no avail. Reality was what was important to God.

vv 27-29 “And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither [is that] circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he [is] a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision [is that] of the heart, in the spirit, [and] not in the letter; whose praise [is] not of men, but of God. (27-28-29)

Gentiles by nature, had neither circumcision, or the law, while the Jew had both. But if Gentiles by nature demonstrated the moral requirements of the

law, (the intended purpose of God in giving the Jew these things.) they were practically a Jew inwardly. But without the intended effects of the law and circumcision in the life of a Jew, their place of favor was lost. Gentiles as described in this verse, displayed the work of God, and consequently received their praise from God.

The most prominent men amongst the Jews sought the praise of men, but this displayed a lack of any true work of God in their life. In this way, reality judges outward appearance and advantage. "Therefore when thou doest [thine] alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward" (Mt. 6:2)

It is well to remember this portion of Romans is not teaching us how to get the righteousness of God, but to rather prove, that regardless of the outward advantage we might have from God, if there is not the reality of faith in Him, all find themselves guilty before God. And consequently in need of the gospel, and the righteousness of God, which the gospel, not the law, offers to us by faith. (Romans 3:21)