

The Kindness of God
Romans 2:1-5
October 7, 2012

Turn to Romans 2. We're not talking about football or NASCAR or how to build a better mouse trap here. We're talking about the most important, persona, and eternal thing possible – how guilty sinners can come to God. Eric did a masterful job last week unfolding the truth in Romans 1:28-32 that as we reject God, God turns us over to a depraved mind to do all kinds of depraved things. We are not basically good. We are depraved in every part of our being. Paul lists 21 sins for us in that passage – wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, gossip, backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, boastful, inventing new ways of sinning, disobeying parents, foolish, breaking their promises, heartless, and refusing to show mercy to others.

Now all the Jews, the morally superior people listening in on Paul exposing all those wicked sinners are agreeing, "Amen! Yessiree, Paul. Give it to 'em. They deserve it, those dog Gentiles, dirty, filthy, rotten sinners. We're glad we're not like them!"

But what does Paul do? He wheels around, establishes eye contact with one of these fellows, and says, "Wait a minute. You are just as guilty as they are!" So let's read 2:1-5...

TO THE JEW OR TO THE MORALIST?

Scholars argue over whether Paul is using this diatribe to single out the Jew, who thought since he was a Jew somehow he would escape God's judgment, or anyone who feels morally superior. Either way, for us, this passage is for Americans sitting in nice churches on Sunday mornings who are disgusted with all the cultural filth, the immorality, same-sex marriage, abortion, corruption of people in power, the Hollywood cesspool, the evolutionists, the Bill Mahers of this world. The wrath of God is on all this mess, God's judgment is on it, they deserve it.

But Paul says, yes, you're right, but here's your problem. You too are guilty of these same sins. Maybe not all of them and maybe not outwardly, but you too face the judgment of God. This is for members of both political parties, Protestants and Catholics and Muslims, conservatives and liberals. And they may be horribly wrong and guilty. I doubt the party I represent stole our signs from our front yard. But we right wingers and conservatives, while we may be on the right side of the issues, have a far greater issue – we're sinners. We're guilty before God. And one of the hardest things to do is to convince good people they are sinners like the rest. Listen to that good man in the temple: "God, I thank you I'm not like other people." Listen to that good man running up to Jesus, "All these things have I kept from my youth."

Let's look at four realities here about people who are pretty good, live upright lives, you aren't in jail this morning, you haven't passed fake checks this week, you didn't steal our

signs, you didn't even look at pornography this week. Where do you stand in the mirror of God's Word?

First, you may think you are better than others, but you're not – vs. 1.

Therefore you are without excuse, every man of you who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

We're so like the Pharisees who brought that woman caught in adultery to Jesus. She deserves stoning. We are quick to see that speck in our brother's eye, but we somehow miss the log sticking out of our own eye.

THEY DO IT; WE THINK IT

And we think others deserve judgment, but somehow we don't, at least not as severe. But listen to this. When we see others doing wicked stuff and feel like they sure deserve justice, we condemn ourselves. Why? Because we practice the same things. They do their sins outwardly, but we sin inwardly. They murder; we hate or resent. They commit adultery; we lust. They argue and yell; we hold grudges and bitterness. They gossip and slander; so do we. They disobey their parents; so have we. They divorce their spouse; we may wish we could. They steal from their bosses; we steal from God. They abuse their children; we neglect them. The Duchess of Buckingham was offended by George Whitefield's strong preaching. She declared, "It is monstrous to be told you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl the earth!" She didn't know her own heart.

JUDAH, DAVID, PHARISEES AND US

We are self-righteousness to the gills. Remember the story of Judah in Genesis 28 when he went with his buddy to shear the sheep and visited a prostitute? Three months later he got word that his daughter-in-law Tamar had played the harlot and now was pregnant. Judah fired up. "Bring her out and burn her." Judah, you're the fornicator! Nathan told David the story about the rich man who took the one and only little lamb from a poor man to feed a guest. "Off with his head! He deserves the die!" screamed David! "David, you're the man!" And those Pharisees! Jesus was so gentle and patient with the harlots and drunks. He called them away from their sin, but at least they knew they needed Him. But boy does He rip into the self-righteous Pharisees who are all dressed up outwardly but stink of dead corpses inwardly! "You brood of vipers! You nest of snakes." Do you feel morally superior and somehow better than others?

Second, you too will not escape God's judgment – vss. 2-3.

And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. And do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment upon those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?

See the phrase "judgment of God?" It appears three times in the Bible, and all three in this passage. Vss. 2, 3, and 5. If there is one overshadowing truth throughout the Bible, it's that you and I and all humans from the beginning to the end will give account to God. We know we are accountable. This is what the atheists hate about God. Check out this banner displayed on buses in London a couple years ago.



God is the judge of all flesh.

- Psalm 75:7 But God is the Judge.
- Hebrews 12:23 God, the Judge of all.
- Hebrews 4:13 All things are naked and open to Him with whom we have to do.
- And Acts 17:31 God has fixed a day when He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed.

KATA ALETHEIA - ACCORDING TO TRUTH

So, what do we know in verse 2? God is right in judging people who sin. Not only that, but His judgment is kata aletheia, according to truth. That's an awesome thought. He knows the full truth of every matter in our lives. He judges based on His own standard of truth – not a sliding scale. He doesn't just judge outward behavior but the motives and thoughts of the heart. He looks at me and His eyes pierce directly and fully into my heart. We hide from others, but not from God. Achan thought he could melt into the crowd, but God fetched him out in Joshua 7.

In other words, God's judgment is always based on the facts of the case against His perfect standard of truth. And this is why we need Jesus. God's standard is perfectly straight, and we are all totally crooked. Only Christ's perfect righteousness passes the judgment of God. Listen, God doesn't forgive us because we're sorry or promise we'll never do it again. No, God forgives us based on the cross of Christ where all our sins were poured out on Him and judged there. God's love and truth met there in His Son for us!

WILL WE ESCAPE?

Verse 3, do you really think somehow you will escape? Paul isn't being harsh or unkind here. In fact, in chapter 9 he says, "I have unceasing grief over my Jewish friends who reject Christ." So Paul is saying, "Listen to me, please. Do you really think you'll escape giving an account to God for your life?"

This is why we need accountability in our lives. We need this restraint of final and ultimate accountability. When dad tells the kids, "Ok, when we get home everybody gets a spanking." Suddenly everyone is quiet! Now he needs to follow through! One time my younger brother was getting his deserts down there at the bottom of the stairs. I was at the top and fully enjoying the occasion. So I self-righteously announced, "Lights, camera, action!" Well, I got some of that action. But we need these temporary judgment days to prepare us for the final judgment, whether believers or unbelievers. Church

discipline is a form of temporal judgment to remind all of us, we can't sin and get by without consequences. We reap what we sow! Moses said, "Be sure your sin will find you out."

So, do you think you'll escape God's judgment? You may have heard of the ratlines from Germany through Spain and Rome to South America for WW2 Nazi criminals. It was an effort to escape judgment. Some were found and brought to human justice. Josef Mengeles, the angel of death, never was brought to court. Henry VIII had Ann Boleyn, his second wife and mother of Queen Elizabeth, beheaded for a very questionable charge of adultery. Was Mary Surratt justly hung for being an accomplice to the murder of President Lincoln? Anders Behrin got just 21 years for shooting 77 young people in Oslo, Norway. His only regret in court was that he didn't kill more! He faces a higher court, with eternal consequences if he doesn't repent!

Let's not think somehow because we're better than others we'll escape. I've got skin in this game. As a teacher I face even a stricter judgment. We won't escape. We won't somehow hide in the crowd and get overlooked. Even believers will give an account of our lives to our Lord. We will all stand before Christ, either as believers or as lost people, and the judgment will be according to truth.

Third, God's goodness in your life is to lead you to heart change – vs. 4

Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

Now this is just beautiful. Whether you are a believer or have yet to bow your heart to Christ, God has been good to you. Real good. He has blessed you. Richly. Richly means with lots and lots of good stuff. You live in God's goodness. Paul points out three areas of God's goodness to us:

His **kindness** to you. How kind is God to you, right now? Your health! I was in a workshop this week led by a pastor who lives with migraine headaches. Chronic pain. I don't even want a minor headache. How kind God is to us. The sun, rain, air, food, a spouse, family, all the joys of life, the blessings of our country, your job, at least some money in your sacks.

His **forbearance** with you. That's God's putting up with us in our foolishness and sins. Every time we grumble and whine and lie and curse and provoke God, yet He puts up with us. It doesn't mean he won't eventually judge, but for now he is temporarily holding back His wrath for a reason!

His **patience** with you. God puts up with us a long time. Maybe you're older, and still haven't bowed your knee to the cross. You still think somehow you'll make it without a personal relationship with Christ. He's patient with us.

All three here are God's goodness to even His enemies. And they are designed to do something. They are to lead unbelievers to repentance! It's like God takes your hand

and through all His goodness to you in your life He is leading you right up to the door of repentance, to that change of heart. The door for repentance is open and God leads you right up to it. God desires all men come to repentance. He takes no delight in the death of the wicked. All the good stuff in your life should move you to change your heart, your attitude about God, about your own sin, and especially about the gospel, to submit to Christ as your Lord and Savior.

But do unbelievers enter in? Do you take God's goodness for granted? Do you even connect that all the good things in your life should move you to bow before God in gratitude and believe on His Son? Or do you think that because life is so good, you don't need God? Or God must be ok with you since your doing so well? The tragedy in our sin is, we do think lightly of God's goodness and take it for granted.

Fourth, if you refuse to go through the door of repentance, you store up your own wrath for the coming day of judgment!

But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

Paul again is tenderly, lovingly warning this person. Our hearts are grieved over lost people, not hard or angry with them. If you have entered that door of repentance, of heart change – God not only led you to that open door, but God gave you the gift of repentance to enter in. But without His sovereign grace, here's your heart: stubborn and unrepentant. I'm not going to submit to God, to the cross, to the Bible, I'm not going to go through! Our speech may be sweet, our conduct professional, we may be brilliant, moral, full of charity and highly educated, even religious, but we haven't bowed our knee to Christ.

TREASURY OF WRATH

What's the effect? And there is hardly a more dreadful truth in the Bible for lost people, especially lost people who are hearing the gospel regularly. Every day you continue in your journey toward the end of your life, when you will inevitably face God, you are putting more wrath into your treasury of wrath. James Boice illustrated it like this: It's like a man who every day throws another piece of gold into his attic, until one night as he is laying in bed the weight of the gold breaks through the ceiling and crushes him.

I want you to notice – he stores up wrath for himself. God isn't storing it up, he is. So on the coming day of wrath, an appointed day, just as Acts 17:31 says, God has fixed a day when He will bring every human being before Him and they will know they are guilty. It will be a righteous judgment according to truth. "Did you do this?" "Yes." "Did you not do this?" "No." "Are you guilty?" "Yes."

You can read Revelation 20:15-20 for the actual event of that day, at the great white throne judgment, when every human being who is not safe in Christ will be judged by Christ Himself and will face an eternity of divine wrath.

SO WHAT? Go through the door of repentance. You have no excuse for your sins. But Christ paid for sins. Let's remind people that God has been so good to them to lead them to repentance!

Believers, let's meditate on God's goodness in our lives. And let His kindness and patience in our lives lead us to daily repentance and gratitude.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee!