

## ROMANS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Romans chapter 2 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

As you remember from our last study, Paul, acting like a prosecuting attorney, condemns the unrighteous heathen because creation itself testifies that there is a God and yet they have rejected Him, and they will be judged for their actions.

We saw this in Romans 1:18-32.

As we move into Romans chapter 2 this evening we will continue to see Paul bring charges against sinful man, as he is showing us that “**... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**” Romans 3:23.

He is showing us that “**... There is none righteous, no, not one. . . There is none who does good, no, not one.**” Romans 3:10b, 12c.

Why is this such an important topic for Paul to spend so much time on? Because man needs to understand that he is a sinner and that sin has separated him from God. And Paul is going to show us that there is none who are righteous, all have sinned and thus, all are in need of a Savior, they need Jesus!

Now this may seem to be a very dark section – all this condemnation and the judgment of God. But please understand that Paul spoke of the Good News in Romans 1:16-17 before he got to this, as he said, “**For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’**”

Thus, this bad news is for those who have rejected the Good News, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They have refused to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior and they are guilty before God and they will see the wrath of God upon their lives as God judges them for their sins!

Or they can repent of their sins and come to Jesus and ask Him to not only forgive their sins, but to be Lord and Savior of their lives!

And Paul lays this out so beautifully, if I can say it that way. Again, in Romans 1:18-32 he shows how the unrighteous heathen, the pagan, the worst of society is guilty before God. And the reason being is that creation itself testifies that there is a God!

Now we come to the place that most people find themselves in today. The good people, the moral people. Let's face it, they did not murder any one, they did not do this or do that. They are good! So the question that Paul is answering here is, ***"What about the good people, what happens to them?"***

The reality is, like I have said, there are none who are good, not one. I guess I did not say that, God did.

In Proverbs 20:6 we are told, **"Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, But who can find a faithful man?"**

Yes, we can proclaim our goodness all we want but when we place our goodness before a holy and righteous God, they are like filthy rags before Him!

With that as our background, let's begin reading in Romans chapter 2 beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and we look at Paul making his points against the self-righteous moralist who is condemned by his conscience.

**ROMANS 2****VERSE 1**

As I have pointed out, this section here in Romans 2:1-16 deals with the self-righteous moralist who is condemned by his conscience. And Paul is speaking to mankind here when he says, “**O man.**” He is speaking of men and women who are very moral in their own eyes, and they are making judgments against others and ignoring what they are doing. And make no mistake about it, Paul starts out with a powerful condemnation against those that feel this way. And he is speaking to mankind, as I have said.

And please understand that the Greek word, KRINO, translated for us as “**judge**” speaks of judging to condemnation.

Yes, these self-righteous moralists had no problem condemning others for the things that they were doing or not doing, they deserved to go to Hell, in their minds.

But, as much as these people deserved Hell, so too do these self-righteous moralists, they were not innocent at all!

Why is that? Because, as you look at, examine others and judge them it just shows you have a set of standards of what is right and what is wrong, and in that you are also guilty before God.

Again, why is that? Because, as much as you hold others to those standards, you yourself do things that are just as bad, but you don't hold yourself accountable. Thus, you will be judged for your actions!

Make no mistake about it, as we sit in judgment of others we are judging ourselves because the standard that God has set is perfection, and thus, it condemns everyone, not just the obvious sinner, if I can put it that way!

One writer put it like this, “Since you know the justice of God, as evidenced by the fact that you are judging others, you are without an excuse, because in the very act of judging you have condemned yourself.” (Murray)

And please understand that when Paul says, “**for you who judge practice the same things**” he is not saying that we are doing the exact same sin here. Wuest put it like this, “Not, you do the identical actions, but your conduct is the same, i.e., you sin against light. The sin of the Jews was the same, but their sins were not.”

And make no mistake about it, like the Pharisees of Jesus’ day, there are many like that today. J. Vernon McGee put it like this, “If someone does not measure up to the standard of your little group, you condemn him. I know some churches where members can get by with lying, with being gossipers, and with being dishonest, but they couldn’t get by with smoking a cigarette!”

Also, those that feel this way don’t understand the height of God’s righteousness, His standard which is perfection, like I have said!

In fact, Jesus made this outrageous statement in Matthew 5:20, “**For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.**”

In other words, you can’t reach up into heaven, you can only get there as God reaches down and pulls you up. You will only get there through Jesus!

VERSES 2-3

Because God's judgment is delayed, many have come to faulty conclusions. Some say that God approves of their sin, for He has done nothing against what they are doing, which is a poor picture of God.

Others say that God doesn't care about sin, what we are doing, which again is wrong.

And still some say God can't do anything about their sin, He won't intervene, which again is wrong.

And what we see here, and in many portions of Scripture, that Paul clearly is telling us that if you feel that way, you are wrong. God's judgment will come!

You see, God is patient, He is longsuffering as Peter tells us, **“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”** II Peter 3:9-13.

So yes, some deny the judgment of God and others see God as some vindictive God who loves to punish people, He is ready to squash them, wipe them out as soon as they cross the line. I don't know what Bible they are reading, but it surely isn't the one I am reading.

In Ezekiel chapter 18 listen to the heart of God in regard to judgment, as He tells us, **“The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. . . . Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?”** says the Lord GOD, **‘and not that he should turn from his ways and live?’** . . . **‘Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,’** says the Lord GOD. **‘Therefore turn and live!’**” Ezekiel 18:20, 23, 31-32.

That is the heart of God, He does not want to punish anyone and yet, if you refuse to repent and receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior, He will judge you because He is a righteous Judge.

But His desire is to save you, although He will never force you, you have a free will to choose Jesus or reject Him. But Paul wants you to understand that if you reject Him, His wrath *will* come upon you, not might!

In fact, the judgment of God is a major theme in the New Testament. The word ***“judge, judges, judgment”*** is used over 200 times!

And you need to keep in mind that it is not just the outward actions, it is a matter of the heart.

You may have not murdered anyone, and that is good, but if you have anger in your heart, if you have hated someone, then, in the eyes of God, you have committed murder in your heart and you are guilty before God!

And it is not just murder. What about sexual immorality. You may have never had sex outside of marriage or committed adultery, but if you have lusted after someone in your heart, you are guilty before God!

“Hey, wait a minute. No one can live up to that standard!” Exactly and the reality is, only One has and that was Jesus!

So if you think you are so good, understand you are still guilty before God because it is not the standard of righteousness that you have set, but the standard of righteousness that He has set – ***PERFECTION!***

Therefore, because He is Almighty God. Since He is the Creator of the heavens and earth. He will judge the people of this world in righteousness. Let me show you what I mean.

In Psalm 9:8 we are told, “**He shall judge the world in righteousness, And He shall administer judgment for the peoples in uprightness.**”

Also, in Palm 96:13 we are told, “**For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with His truth.**”

The Righteous Judge is coming and the only way to escape His judgment is by receiving Him into your life and as you do, the righteousness of Christ will be imputed into your life by faith!

Before we move on, let me share these words from Donald Grey Barnhouse as he paraphrases these words of Paul in a powerful way. He wrote,

“You dummy – do you really figure that you have doped out an angle that will let you go up against God and get away with it? You don’t have a ghost of a chance. There is no escape. Do you understand? No escape – ever. And this means you – the respectable person, sitting in judgment upon another fellow creature, and remaining unrepentant yourself.”

That reminds me of Fred Sanford, “You dummy!” But Donald nails it and I think we clearly understand what he is saying even though some may not agree with it or like it. It is what Paul is saying and it is what the Lord is saying!

#### VERSES 4-5

When people reject Jesus, they are despising “**the riches of the goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering**” of God. And that goodness that God bestows upon people is to lead them to repentance!

You see, God pours His blessings on the just and the unjust for His desire is to draw people to Him.

And this word, “**repentance,**” METANOIA in the Greek, speaks of turning from something, changing your mind.

In other words, instead of moving away from God, you turn towards God, you love what He loves and hate what He hates!

It is as Paul said in I Thessalonians 1:9-10, “**For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.**”



I like the way that Spurgeon put it in regard to God drawing us to Him like sheep to a shepherd instead of driving us like cattle. He wrote, “Notice, dear friends, that the Lord does not drive you to repentance. Cain was driven away, as a fugitive and a vagabond, when he killed his righteous brother Abel; Judas went and hanged himself, being driven by an anguish of remorse because of what he had done in betraying his Lord; but the sweetest and best repentance is that which comes, not by driving, but by drawing: ‘The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.’”

But why do people reject the Lord’s goodness that leads to repentance? Because it is **“in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart.”**

Paul uses the Greek word SKLEROETA for **“hardness”** and it is a word from which we get our English word “sclerosis.”

We know that arteriosclerosis is a hardening of the arteries which will send a man to the grave if it is bad enough. But here Paul is speaking of a hardening of the heart towards the things of God which will send a man to Hell!

Thus, as you continue to harden your heart to God there is a day of reckoning that is coming when God will pour out His wrath upon you.

The thing is this, what are you treasuring up for yourself?

Jesus gave us some insight on what we are and what we are not to treasure in Matthew 6:19-21, where we read, **“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”**

Again, what are you treasuring up for yourself, things that are eternal or things that are temporary?

And I like the way that Spurgeon sums this up for us. He puts this in a perspective that is hard to argue against, even though some may. He wrote, “It seems to me that every morning when a man wakes up still impenitent, and finds himself out of hell, the sunlight seems to say, ‘I shine on thee yet another day, as that in this day thou mayest repent.’ When your bed receives you at night I think it seems to say, ‘I will give you another night’s rest, that you may live to turn from your sins and trust in Jesus.’ Every mouthful of bread that comes to the table says, ‘I have to support your body that still you may have space for repentance.’ Every time you open the Bible the pages say, ‘We speak with you that you may repent.’ Every time you hear a sermon, if it be such a sermon as God would have us preach, it pleads with you to turn unto the Lord and live.” (Spurgeon)

Exactly!

And as Paul speaks of what the unsaved are treasuring up for themselves, he says that they are “**treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.**”

Keep in mind that in the first coming of Jesus we saw the love of God bestowed upon sinful man as Jesus came to save us from our sins.

But, at the second coming of Jesus we will see the righteous judgment of God revealed against sinful man because they have hardened their hearts to God and now will receive His wrath!

VERSES 6-10

God will render what each of us is due, that goes for the believer and unbeliever.

Now please understand that Paul is not speaking of salvation here because all have missed the mark of perfection.

Paul is speaking of rewards for those who have received Jesus as their Lord and Savior and judgment for those who have rejected Him, and both the rewards and the degree of punishment will be based on their deeds, what they had done in this life.

If salvation was of works, then the over 150 passages in the New Testament that speak of our salvation being based solely on our faith or believing in Jesus would be out of place!

The most famous passage that speaks of our salvation being not of works but of faith is given to us in Ephesians 2:8-10 where Paul tells us, **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”**

Also, in Titus 3:4-7 we are told, **“But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”**

I think that is very clear, very straightforward!

And when Paul says that the Lord **“will render to each one according to his deeds”** that is an awesome and fearful thought, and it condemns the moralist as well as the obvious sinner.

Now let me say this and hear me out. This may be hard for some to swallow or believe. There is only one sin that will keep you out of heaven!

I know, what about murder, adultery, homosexuality and-so-on?

Listen carefully to what Jesus tells us as He sends to us the Holy Spirit, **“And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me.”**

You see, the only sin that will send a person to Hell is the rejection of Jesus as Lord and Savior. Why is that? Because you have rejected the only one who can forgive you of your sins and thus you will die in your sins because of that!

Thus, when we come to the final judgment, The Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation chapter 20, we are told, **“The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”** Revelation 20:10-15.

You see, they are judged according to their works for the degree of punishment because they have rejected Jesus.

We, believers, on the other hand, will come before the Judgment Seat of Christ or the Bema Seat and receive our rewards for what we have done in this life!

Here is another issue we need to deal with. Paul says that judgment will come to the Jew first and then to the Gentile, why?

Because the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God, the Words of God, they were to be the vessel by which God would reveal Himself to the Gentiles, and with all that knowledge comes responsibility, they are accountable for what they know and what they do with it and so are we.

Today, we as Christians have been entrusted with so many things from God, we are to bring the Good News not only to the Gentiles, but also to the Jews and with that comes responsibility, we are accountable to God for what we know and what we do with it.

### VERSES 11-13

Paul says that “**there is no partiality with God.**” Now, the word translated, “**partiality**” comes from two ancient Greek words put together – *to receive* and *face*. In other words, it means to judge things on the basis of externals or preconceived notions.

Let me give you an example. Some ancient rabbis taught that God showed partiality towards the Jews. They said, “God will judge the Gentiles with one measure and the Jews with another.”

And even today, in our court of law, there are times when judges show favoritism to those on trial. Jurors can also do this as well because of the position the person on trial has in the world, the money they have, they may be celebrities or whatever, and this is unrighteous, it is unfair. But it does go on because the wickedness of man and how easy man can be influenced!

That is not how God makes His judgments. You see, with God, He does not show partiality to anyone. He is a righteous Judge and He will judge accordingly.

Make no mistake about it, God is not a respecter of persons and to understand where He is coming from, just read John 3:16, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”**

He loves us supremely, so much so that He paid in full the penalty for our sins when we were in rebellion against Him. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world because He loves the world!

Now, in Romans 2:12-13 it seems that God is judging some by the Law and others not by the Law. What is he speaking of, what does he mean?

Paul is comparing the religious person who thinks he is saved because he has kept the Law, but he falls far short, or as James says, **“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.”** James 2:10.

And then he looks at the moral person who thinks he is good, he is saved because he doesn't have the Law to correct him of his sin but his own conscious condemns him as he falls short of the glory of God!

God has placed in the heart of man what is right and what is wrong. And we can harden our hearts to what God is showing us, what He has placed in our hearts. And Paul will deal with that more as we read on.

But just understand that God has placed in our hearts what is right and what is wrong. Paul points that out when he tells us in I Timothy 4:1-2, **“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron.”**

And the reality is this, and it is very simple. Morris said, “People will be condemned, not because they have the law or do not have the law, but because they have sinned.” *EXACTLY!*

It is as Paul said in Galatians, **“knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. . . . I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”** Galatians 2:16, 21.

So you can live by the Law of God and you will die by the Law of God because one sin will keep you out of heaven.

You can ignore the Law, but it does not change the fact that you are a sinner separated from God! Again, the self-righteous moralist is condemned by his conscience!

#### VERSES 14-16

As I have said, by their own actions they show there is right and wrong, good and evil even though they don't have the Law. They do follow a standard, even though that standard might pale in comparison and does pale in comparison to God's standard of perfection!

You see, if they truly searched they would see that their own conscience is condemning them before God, and many have that and struggle with it because they don't know what to do, they don't want to surrender to God, they just want those feelings to go away!

And as good as some people think they are, how would they, or for that matter, any of us like to sit down in a crowded movie theater with family and friends with us, and there up on the screen God shows the things that are in our hearts?

None of us would like that and yet; some feel they are good enough to get into heaven! Sorry, God searches the heart and the façade you have placed outwardly is stripped away as God looks at and exposes those things that are in your heart!

For the Christian, it is as Paul said in Hebrews 4:12-13, **“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”** God’s Word cuts the hardness of our hearts away!

We have seen in this portion of Romans Paul condemn the self-righteous moralist as he is condemned by his conscious, knowing that he is a sinner, he is not perfect.

And so, we see two kinds of lives here; the redeemed life that reflects holy living, not perfect but the desire is to serve the Lord and live their life to please Him

And the unredeemed life that lives for itself, to satisfy the flesh, living an unholy lifestyle and yet thinks they are good, thinks they are saved!

Genuine salvation is based upon a relationship with Jesus Christ and that is then manifested in the things we do, the fruit that is born in our lives!

Make no mistake about it, man will not escape the judgment of God by claiming ignorance of His Word or the Law. You see, violating God’s internal revelation is enough to condemn us all.



VERSES 17-20

Here we see another group of people that Paul is showing have not attained the righteousness of God. We see here that Paul moves on and speaks to the super-religious person in Romans 2:17-29 as Paul, acting as a prosecuting attorney, condemns these people by the commandments of God. That they can't keep them. And we will see that as we move on.

Make no mistake about it, the Jews were prideful in that God gave to them His Law and yet they had the Law and didn't keep it! Read through the Old Testament, even when they were living in sin they would not believe that God would judge them because they were His people, the children of Abraham.

Listen to what we are told in Micah 3:11-12, **“Who build up Zion with bloodshed And Jerusalem with iniquity: Her heads judge for a bribe, Her priests teach for pay, And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD, and say, ‘Is not the LORD among us? No harm can come upon us.’ Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, And the mountain of the temple Like the bare hills of the forest.”**

Do you see how prideful they were of their Jewish heritage and even when they were living in sin they thought they could get away with it, they had a special dispensation, but they didn't!

And Paul exposes that pride here.

First, they prided themselves that they were Jews and God's chosen people. They boasted about it!

They knew the will of God because of what God had shown them in the Scriptures.

They knew and prided themselves on guiding those who were spiritually blind, that they were a light to these people who were in spiritual darkness.

And they felt qualified to correct the foolish, the untaught because they Law gave them an outline of knowledge and truth.

And yet, the Law was not there to save them but to drive them to the Savior, Jesus Christ. But their pride got in the way and they thought that the Law could save them, their righteousness was good enough! But it is not. Never was and never will be!

Listen to how Jesus saw their hypocrisy, their prideful ways in Luke 18:9-14, **“Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ‘Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, “God, I thank You that I am not like other men - extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.” And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.’”**

You see, it is not a matter of your physical birth that will save you, but are you born again and that is reflected in your actions!

Some today wear their church as a badge of honor, that it is their church that will get them into heaven, but again, it is not true, only Jesus can!

And Paul is going to show them their hypocrisy, that they tell people to live a certain way and they themselves live contrary to what they are teaching others!

VERSES 21-24

This is not that difficult if you think about it. In fact, it comes down to this principle “You have the law, do you keep it? You can see how others break the law, do you see how you break it also?”

You see, they were not only to teach these things, but they were also to put them into practice in their own life!

In fact, James tells us, “**My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.**” James 3:1.

Why is that? Because you have been given so much and thus God requires much from you!

Now, as these Jewish religious leaders boasted in the Law, as they were instructed in the Law, as they guided others in the Law, as they taught those that didn’t know the Law as they did, they themselves were breaking the Law they held in such high esteem. And as they did, and others saw it, they brought dishonor to God! Paul put it like this, “**. . . ‘The name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles because of you.’ . . .**” Romans 2:24.

Remember what David said in Psalm 51:4 as he sinned with Bathsheba. Listen to what he declared, “**Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight . . .**”

And here Paul drives home his point by quoting out of Isaiah 52:5 stating that as the Gentiles see these things they use it to justify their blasphemy against God.

The Jews were to be a light to the Gentiles regarding the true and living God and now they dishonor God as they walked in darkness and were prideful that God was not going to do anything about it!

Now we can point our finger at the Jews and wonder how they can do those things, but we are not different.

You see, for us as Christians, we are even more accountable before God because we have the Holy Spirit in us to direct us, but as we continue to sin we quench the work of the Holy Spirit and we dishonor God, allowing the unsaved to mock God because of our actions.

Folks, like it or not, we are His representatives here on this earth and how people read us, how they perceive us, they tend to apply to the God we serve, be it good or bad!

#### VERSES 25-26

Keep in mind that the Jews came to believe, because they were descendants of Abraham and carried the sign of the covenant, that is circumcision, it didn't matter what they did. Some would argue that this is not true, but just listen to their own religious leaders and what they said.

Rabbi Menachem said this in his commentary on the Book of Moses, "Our Rabbis have said that no circumcised man will see hell."

Another put it this way, "Circumcision saves from hell."

And the midrash Tillim says, "God swore to Abraham that no one who was circumcised should be sent to hell."

And another Rabbinic saying said, "Circumcision is equivalent to all the commandments of the Law."

But think about that. You could be a lying, murdering, coveting, cheating Jew and because you were circumcised you would not go to Hell but to heaven?

That is absolutely ridiculous! In Deuteronomy 10:16 we are told, **“Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.”** You see, it is a matter of the heart and not the flesh, not an outward ritual!

And Paul elaborates on the salvation of Abraham in Romans 4:1-5, 9-12 where he says, **“What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness. . . . Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.”**

You see, Abraham was saved by faith and not by works, like circumcision, for then he could have boasted! The illustration fits perfectly because the Jews boasted about their heritage, being children of Abraham, circumcised, and yet, Paul says that is totally empty for if you don't keep the Law, you will die by the Law!

Now how does this apply to us as Christians? It is simple. We see this in many churches, with baptism, confirmation, the keeping of this and the keeping of that.

Do you really think that infant or even adult baptism saves a person? Of course it won't, only Jesus saves.

Baptism is an outward sign of what has taken place in your heart just as circumcision was to the Jew. It won't save you but if you are saved, you are letting the world know that as you are dipped into the water you are dead to sin and as you come out you are a new creation in Christ. Baptism is just a sign to show what has already taken place in your heart! (See Colossians 2:9-11).

Let me illustrate it like this. We are told, "**Circumcision** and baptism do about the same thing that a label on a can does. If the outer label doesn't match with what is on the inside, something is wrong! If there are carrots inside the can, you can put a label that says "Peas" but it doesn't change what is inside the can. Being born again changes what is inside the can, and then you can put the appropriate label on the outside." (David Guzik)

Theologian Charles Hodge put it this way, "Whenever true religion declines, the disposition to lay undo stress on external rites is stressed. The Jews when they lost their spirituality supposed that circumcision had the power to save them."

And how many today are relying on rituals to save them instead of Jesus!

VERSES 27-29

I like the way that Donald Grey Barnhouse updated these verses for us. It does fit perfectly. He wrote, “For he is not a Christian who is one outwardly, nor is that ‘church membership’ which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Christian who is one inwardly; and ‘church membership’ is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

You see, God wants our hearts and as we give them to Him we then, out of a love relationship, not the Law, love to please Him.

Many think that if we obey the Law God will love us more. That is not true!

God loved us when we were sinners and His love for us does not wax and wane. It is constant.

I have shared with you before of the women who left a church that was very heavy into legalism. And she was miserable, she could never live up to those standards.

And she came to Calvary Chapel of Elk Grove and my pastor tried to minister to her the grace of God, as well as many of the people there at Calvary.

And it was hard to let go of the Law, that legalism had her bound. And she finally went back to that legalistic church and a short time later, she committed suicide!

That is the reality if we are honest with ourselves, that the Law condemns us, it does not save us.

But the grace of God comes to us through Jesus Christ and we are saved, not because of what we have done, but because of what Jesus has done!

Now some will argue that if you truly believe that then you can do whatever you want. You can sin and sin and sin and it is all under grace! I have heard people say that before!

That is just plain foolishness! Paul put it like this in Romans 6:1-4, **“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”**

You see, we live for the Lord because we love Him!

Think about a marriage relationship. I can honestly tell you that my wife does not have a bunch of laws or commandments in our house telling me what I can and can't do!

Don't be shocked by that. I love my wife and all I do for her is out of love and not some law or commandments.

The same is true with our Lord. We obey Him because we love Him!

Some may feel that this is not fair, that salvation is only found in Jesus. They may say something like this, “What about the Pygmy in Africa who has never heard of Christ?”

Let me say this, God is a righteous Judge and I have no doubt that if that Pygmy seeks after the God who created the heavens and the earth, God will bring to him what he needs to be saved.

Jeremiah 29:13-14a says, **“And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the LORD. . . .”** There truly is a bigger issue than the Pygmy in Africa who doesn't know God, and that is you who have heard of Him and still reject Him. You will be judged because of that!



And you can't say, "I went to church, isn't that good enough?" "I helped those in need, isn't that good enough?" "I tithed every week, isn't that good enough?" And you can put in there all kinds of works and it will never be good enough!

You see, sin has separated us from God and once we have been stained with sin, and we have all been born in sin, that cannot be washed away by our own efforts.

It is only by the shed blood of Christ that our sins can be washed away!

As I close this evening we have seen Paul come against the self-righteous moralist who is condemned by his conscience.

He came against the super-religious person who is condemned by the commandments of God, he has broken them.

Thus, the judgment of God will come upon them if they do not repent and receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Let me leave you this evening with a summary of Romans chapter 2 by William Newell as he gives to us the Seven Great Principles of God's Judgment. They go like this:

***God's judgment is according to truth (Romans 2:2)***

***God's judgment is according to accumulated guilt (Romans 2:5)***

***God's judgment is according to works (Romans 2:6)***

***God's judgment is without partiality (Romans 2:11)***

***God's judgment is according to performance, not knowledge (Romans 2:13)***

***God's judgment reaches the secrets of the heart (Romans 2:16)***

***God's judgment is according to reality, not religious profession (Romans 2:17-29)***

It is as Jesus said, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”** John 3:16-21.

The choice is yours, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and enter into eternity with Him or reject Him and enter into eternity apart from Him in the Lake of Fire!

There are no excuses, you have heard the truth and now it is up to you what you do with the truth!

But never forget the love that God has for you, He died for you so that you can live with Him!