

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:

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Romans 2:5-11 “Are You Ready for the Judgment?”

Intro. In v.5 of my text Paul gives a solemn warning. If you have hardened your heart and have failed to respond to God’s goodness by repenting of your sins, you are just storing up even more wrath from God on Judgment Day. In this life God restrains His wrath against sin. God’s mercy is great, and God does not desire that any should perish. But God says in the last of v.5 that the day is coming when the righteousness judgment of God will be revealed. Even so, Hebrews 9:27 says, “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” Paul said in Acts 17:31 that God “has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” Human history moves inexorably and unavoidably toward a day of reckoning.

This is a subject that we all should be interested in, for we *all* will stand before Jesus Christ in judgment. In v.6 of our text Paul points out that God’s judgment will be universal, “Who will render to every man according to his deeds.” No one can escape the judgment of God (v.3b).

Furthermore, notice there two widely different outcomes. On the one hand you can have eternal life, as Paul says in v.7. The older you get, the more you realize that you are mortal, and life is short. But God promises you can have eternal life! Furthermore, in the last of v.7 we see that you can have glory, honor, and immortality. What glory we shall have as we enter the glories of heaven. What an honor it will be to be among the saints of God, and hear the heavenly Father say, “Well done, good and faithful servant... Enter into the joy of your Lord” (Mt. 25:21). What an honor it will be to rule and reign with Him forever (Rev. 3:21). We shall also have immortality, or literally, “incorruption,” that which is not subject to death & decay. This would point to the hope of the resurrection. Finally, v.10 says that another possible outcome of judgment will be peace. Even now we can have peace with God since our sins are forgiven. We can also have the peace of God even when the storms of life rage. But the day is coming when we can have eternal peace in heaven. I don’t know about you, but that’s what I want!

On the other hand, many shall face an opposite outcome when they face the Judgment of God. Paul says in the last of v.8 that certain people will face “indignation and wrath.” Here Paul uses the 2 most common words for the wrath of God. The root of the first Greek word translated “indignation” means “to breathe violently.” In reference to God, it usually refers to a settled and usually restrained animosity toward evil. The 2nd refers to the outburst of anger and punishment that will eventually come. The coordination of the two terms serves to emphasize the reality and the intensity of the divine displeasure poured out upon the ungodly in the day of righteous judgment. Again and again both the Old Testament and the New Testament teach that God’s wrath will eventually be poured out upon the ungodly. God’s present tolerance will end in a final outpouring of God’s wrath. This will result in tribulation and anguish, as stated in v.9. The first word literally refers to pressure, being squeezed, and it also denotes the pain that comes with such pressure. The second word refers to the inner distress and anguish of heart, mind, and conscience. Think of the worst migraine headache you have ever experienced. Multiply it several times and you will begin to get the picture of the kind of pressure and anguish that Paul is describing here. This certainly implies an ongoing condition. This is not the language of annihilation. This fits well into the biblical teaching of anguish of eternal hell.

So we see two very different outcomes of the Judgment of God. Surely you would choose eternal life over eternal shame and anguish. So what do you need to do to be ready to face the Judgment of God? How can you obtain eternal life instead of eternal anguish? Let's look into our text for some answers.

First of all:

I. DON'T THINK THAT THE JUDGE WILL SHOW YOU ANY FAVORITISM

It is clear from the context that the Jew expected to bypass the judgment of God just because he was a son of Abraham, a member of the chosen people. Instead, they expected *Gentiles* to face the judgment of God. So Paul says in vv.9-10 that the two possible outcomes of Judgment will apply to "the Jew first and also ... the Greek." Instead of being exempt from the judgment of God, the Jew will be called to give an account to God first. That is because they were first in line to receive God's Word, and many other spiritual blessings. Jesus said in Luke 12:48, "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required." If the Jew does not follow the path of salvation, they will experience tribulation and anguish just as surely as the Gentile sinner.

There is another reason why the Jew is not exempt. In v.11 Paul says, "For there is no partiality with God."¹ Literally, He does not accept someone based on their face. The issue is not whether a person is Jew or Gentile, poor or rich, male or female, educated or uneducated, black or white. God doesn't show favoritism toward anyone based on outward or physical criteria.

Samuel learned the difference between human partiality, and God's impartiality. In 1 Sam. 16 we read the story of Samuel being sent to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as King. He did not know in advance which son was chosen by God. As the firstborn was introduced to Samuel, he thought for sure *he* was the Lord's anointed. He was big, strong, good looking. He had all the qualifications that people favor. But God said in v.7, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." Then 6 more sons passed before Samuel, and each time he thought that the Lord's anointed was before him. But God chose none of them. And the youngest son, who was not even considered, turned out to be the one God had chosen to be king. God chose the least, because David had the biggest heart for God. He was the one who sought after God, and loved God.

Since God shows no favoritism based on outward considerations, you should not expect to be exempt from God's judgment just because you were born into a Christian family. Your daddy may be a preacher, deacon, or Sunday School teacher, but that will get you no special treatment at the Judgment of God. Your mother may be one of the most godly women on earth, but that alone will not secure any special treatment when it is *your* time to stand before a holy God. Just because you belong to Swift Creek Baptist Church will not grant you any special treatment as well. All external factors will be meaningless on Judgment Day. Your wealth will mean absolutely nothing. Your social status will mean absolutely nothing. Your good looks, or lack thereof, will mean absolutely nothing. Your intelligence & educational level will mean absolutely nothing. God will bypass all that and look at your heart and the fruit of your life.

God's impartiality also means that salvation is offered to all. God offers Heaven equally to the thief on the cross and to the Pharisee. God offers salvation to the high and to the low. Suppose that God made salvation contingent on your understanding of theology. Then the intelligent would be saved and the ignorant would be lost. Suppose salvation was dependent on

¹ Likewise, in Acts 10:34 Peter said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons."

material wealth. Then that would exclude the poor. Suppose that God had made salvation contingent on the development of moral character. Then those who were born with a good heritage and who were educated under spiritual discipline would have an immense advantage over those who were born in a family of weak moral fiber. That would not be just. But anyone can follow the path of salvation that I will give you in this message. With God's way of salvation the sage and the simpleton will be on the same ground, the governor and the gunman will have an equal opportunity, the holy and the harlot can both enter in. The noble and the nobody, the sophisticate and the savage, whoever you may be, you all can be saved regardless of your position in life!

So God's impartiality on Judgment Day offers hope to many, but it is a warning to the privileged.

II. REPENT & TURN FROM A LIFE OF SIN

Paul gives an underlying principle of God's judgment in v.6. There we see that God "will render to each one according to his deeds." You will face an impartial Judge who has a comprehensive record of your deeds, and if your sins are still on your record, you will face divine retribution. This is not a new concept; it is affirmed throughout Scripture. Jer. 17:10 says, "I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings." Jesus said in Matthew 16:27, "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward [pay back] each according to his works." God is a God of justice and righteousness. He insists that every sin be paid for.

Right now my focus is upon the unrepentant sinner. God will judge and condemn him by his works. Rev. 20:12 describes what will happen on Judgment Day. John says, "And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened.... And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books." Every time you sin against God it is recorded in the books of heaven. You will have no defense when you face the charges of a lifetime of sin. As a result, such people will face God's indignation and wrath (v.8). They will be cast out to endure tribulation and anguish (v.9).

We all have sinned many times. But there is hope. Peter said in Acts 3:19, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out...." Yes! Your sins can be blotted out if you repent. If you repent of sin & trust in Christ as your Savior, your sins can be blotted out as they are transferred to the account of Christ, who paid for your sins by dying on the cross.

Since sin is what condemns us, God demands that we repent of our sins as a condition of forgiveness. Repentance is mentioned in v.4 as the very thing that God seeks. Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change in how we live. Now let's look at v.8 and see the kind of life that we must repent of.

A. Repent of a Self-seeking Life - An unrighteous person is wrapped up in what pleases him. The word translated "self-seeking" (*eritheia*) in v.8 refers to someone who desires to put himself forward; one who has selfish ambition; and one who will resort to any means to get ahead, including resorting to strife, trickery, bribery, or whatever. It seems most people who run for public office are motivated by selfish ambition, and they will smear their opponents, lie, and do just about anything to get elected. Looking out for yourself leads to a contentious attitude toward the Lord & others.

Do you have a self-seeking attitude? Do you feel that you have to get your way; you have to be on top? Are you frequently involved in conflict and strife as you try to manipulate people

to accommodate your self-serving interests? If so, you are on your way to a terrible outcome on Judgment Day. You need to repent of that self-centered life *now*.

B. Repent of Your Disobedience to the Truth - This phrase in v.8 literally means “to refuse to be persuaded by the Truth.” The Truth here is the Truth of God, as it is manifested in nature, conscience, and especially in the Word of God. Truth is an objective reality, & must be obeyed. It includes the commands of God’s Word. God’s shows you the right way to live, the paths of righteousness. But how often have you refused to follow God’s way, and instead have followed your own way? The truth of God also includes the truth of the Gospel, that you are a sinner, and you must repent of your sin & trust in God’s Son Jesus to be your Savior? Are there any here who have refused to be persuaded by the truth that I have been preaching? Have you been persuaded to believe in Christ as your Savior? Up to this point you may have said, “No, I don’t need to believe in Christ. I am OK just as I am.” That is the way most Jews felt in the time of Christ. They wanted Christ to confirm their belief, and so they asked Him one day, “What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said unto them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.” (John 6:28-29). Until you repent & believe on the Son of God, you are not obeying the truth.

Folks, it is past time for some of you to stop living in disobedience to the truth. It is time to repent, and obey God, and the truth of the gospel.

C. Repent of Being Persuaded by Unrighteousness – That is the literal meaning of v.8. This happens all the time. People come up to the typical unbeliever, and tempt them to do something wrong. They are easily persuaded by unrighteousness.

D. Repent of Doing Evil – Paul says in v.9 that “tribulation and anguish [will be] on every soul of man who does evil.” This is literally “who keeps on accomplishing [*katergazomai*] evil.” The present tense describes someone who keeps on doing wrong.

III. OBTAIN THE KIND OF LIFE THAT DOES GOOD

We all understand that unrepentant sinners will be judged by their works. But evangelical believers have trouble applying v.6 to Christians. Yet Scripture does teach that we will be rewarded for our good works at the Judgment Seat of Christ. And even though the Bible clearly teaches that we are not saved by our works (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5), nevertheless, our works will demonstrate that we are saved. Remember, God’s judgment will be a public event. While God can see the heart, man cannot. When God judges us based on our works, all can see that such a judgment is just and fair. Our works will either justify our condemnation, or our works will demonstrate that salvation has indeed taken place.

Here Paul is arguing against the person who feels they are saved just because they are a Jew, or just because they belong to some religion. But the proof is in the pudding. Your life and works reveal whether or not there is true repentance & faith in your heart.

Now we need to get the horse before the cart. Jesus said in Matthew 12:33, “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.” If you hope to obtain eternal life, then you need to have the kind of life described in v.7. And the only way to produce the fruit of good works is to allow God to change you from the inside out.

We used to have a peach tree at our other house. It would blossom every spring, and then little peaches would appear. The fruit would grow and we would hope to harvest some sweet,

juicy peaches by August. But every year, the fruit would go bad from disease. The problem was not so much the fruit, but with the tree. The tree was bad, so its fruit was bad. But if the tree had been good, it's fruit would have been good.

Even so, if v.8 describes you, you still need to repent of your sin, believe in Jesus, and you will be born again. God will create new life within, and then you will have the ability to have the kind of life described in vv.7 & 10.

Now let's look at the kind of life that will gain God's approval and obtain eternal life. See if this describes you:

A. A True Christian Has Eternal Priorities –What are you seeking after? What do you want above most anything else? Well in Mt. 6:32 Jesus said the Gentiles seek after such things as food & clothing. But He said in v.33, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” In Philippians 2:21 Paul said, “For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.” In contrast, Colossians 3:1 says, “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.” Hebrews 11:6 says that God “is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” In v.7 of our text we see that those who will obtain eternal life “seek for glory, honor, and immortality.” In John 5:44 Jesus said, “How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?” We also seek honor that comes from God. As Christians our desire should be to please God and to hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Furthermore, the true Christian seeks “immortality.” Hebrews 13:14 says, “For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.”

Does this describe you? Do you seek things that have eternal value? If so, then you have no reason to fear the judgment of God. But if you pursue what is sinful, and only has temporal value, how can you say that you are a Christian?

B. A True Christian Works What Is Good – Paul says in v.10, “but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good....” True believers are characterized by good works, and by a good character.

What good works did you do this past week? Did you help someone in need? Did you do an act of love and kindness? Did you speak or act on behalf of the weak?

Finally:

C. A True Christian Is Persistent in Doing Good - In v.7 Paul speaks of eternal life being given “to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality.” Notice it is by patient continuance [*hupomone*] that they do good. We should keep on doing good. A few good works here and there will not do. Those whose faith is only a profession rather than a possession will quit doing good works except occasionally. However, the general pattern of a true believer's life is to do good works with patient endurance.

This was certainly true of Noah, who built that ark for 120 years, in spite of the jeers of others. This was true of Abraham and many other saints of God. Then Jesus gave the parable of the soils. Some seed fell upon the hard soil. Some fell on rocky soil with shallow dirt. Some fell in the soil that had thorn seeds that grew & choked the good plants, & they never became fruitful. But some fell in the good soil, and in Luke's account (8:15) we see that such soil represents “those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.” The true believer does not quit doing good. We keep at it. We keep doing the good work of offering worship, praise, & prayers to God. We do good works for others.

When you stand before God some day, will He see a life that has been persistent in doing good works?

Conclusion: I hope you have been able to see the characteristics of the life that is approved by God, the kind of life that will obtain eternal life, glory, honor, and peace. Do you see yourself in v.7 or v.8? 2 Peter 1:10 says, “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure....” The difference between eternal life and eternal condemnation is too great. Make sure you are truly saved.

Don’t make the mistake of thinking that you are saved by virtue of your Christian heritage or affiliations. Don’t make the mistake of thinking that you are saved because you merely act like a Christian at times, by mixing in some religious deeds and good works from time to time. There is one way of salvation: by repentance of sin, and by faith in Jesus Christ. The only way to obtain the kind of life described in vv.7 & 10 is to trust in Jesus as your Savior.

Suppose a band of thieves kidnapped my son. There is only one thing I want from them: I want my son back. If one of them should ask me to forget all about it, and says he will pay for our new church building, I would repudiate the offer and ask for my son. Should they offer to pay for broadcasting my sermons on every available station, I repudiate their offer; I want my son.

Likewise, you can live a lifetime of religious works; you can give over \$100,000 to the Lord’s work in a lifetime. Yet at the judgment, the issue that is first and foremost in the mind of God is this: What have you done with God’s Son? If you have considered His shed blood as a worthless thing, and instead have put your trust in what *you* have done, or in the advantages you were born with, do you think that God is going to accept anything else you have to offer? [Adapted from Barnhouse, p.51].

Judgment Day is coming. Are you ready for the Judgment? Are you sure that God will affirm that you are among the ones who will enter into heaven? If not, I invite you to repent of your sin, and trust in Christ as your Savior today. Don’t delay.

Sources: Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Expositions of Bible Doctrines Taking the Epistle to the Romans as a Point of Departure*, vol. 1, “God’s Wrath” (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952); F.F. Bruce, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963); Bruce Corley & Curtis Vaughan, *Romans: A Study Guide Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976); Stephen Felker, [Devotional & Explanatory Notes on the Entire Bible](#) (Col. Hgts, VA: Published by Author), 2008; John MacArthur, Jr., *Without Excuse: Principles of God’s Judgment: Study Notes on Romans 2:1-16* (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace Communications, 1990); Leon McBeth, *Exegetical & Practical Commentary on Romans* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1937); John Murray, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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