

The Moral Man Without Excuse

Romans 2:1-16

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I'm going to read our text, Romans 2:1-16 as we go along. But I want to get started with just verse 1. "Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things."

I heard the story of a father who was worried about the fact that his family was watching too much TV. The kids were watching too many cartoons and not getting their homework done, and his wife was watching too much TV and not getting the housework done. So he sat his family down and said to them, "Okay, this is what we're gonna do. As soon as the NFL season is over, I'm going to pull the plug on the TV."

Isn't it funny how bad our sins look on other people? We're really good in identifying sins in other people, but we don't see our own sins.

In Romans 1, Paul painted a picture of the deplorable condition of the heathen people. At the same time Paul was doing that—talking about the heathen world and their descent into idolatry and immorality—he knew there was a class of self-righteous, moralist men, who would say "Amen!" to his verdict of the guilty condition of the heathen, yet they were doing the very same things.

Paul was anticipating opposition from a moralist, who would say, "Yes, Paul, you're right. These wicked, vile, sinful people should be condemned!" We saw the list of their sins at the end of chapter 1. "But I'm a good person; I don't do those evil, wicked things! I live a good life. I treat others with respect."

So Paul called them into God's courtroom to show that even a moral person is guilty before the bar of God. No matter what standard you judge them by, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory..." and the standards "...of God" (Romans 3:23). The Bible says, "There is none righteous, no not one" (Romans 3:10).

To get to heaven on your own righteousness, you would have to be perfect. No one is perfect; only Jesus Christ. So we need His righteousness given to us to be able to stand right before a holy, righteous God.

We are in the section of text called "Condemnation," and we are dealing with the moral man. But I want you to understand that morality is not the same as righteousness. You might have your own standards, but even the moral man—we will find out—does not keep his own standards. Even the moral man knows what sin is before a holy God.

Is the moral man a Gentile or a Jew? Verse 1 says, "O man, whoever you are." So I don't think it is specifically referring to either Gentiles or Jews; it is a general reference to all of mankind.

There are a lot of moral people in the world today. They try to live a good life, and somehow they think they won't be judged by God. So Paul wants us to see that the whole world needs the good news of salvation. But we have to hear the bad news first; that we are guilty sinners before the holy, righteous God. So moral people think they are good, that they should get into heaven because of their good works, but Paul will show them we are all guilty before the judgment bar of God.

In these 16 verses of our text, there are some key words. They are "judge" or "judges." They appear about nine times. It's interesting that in verse 1, man is on the throne judging, and in verse 16, it is God who is on the throne judging. The rightful judge is actually God.

There are four reasons in our text that the moral person is under condemnation. There are a few more in the text, but I've combined them with another one. There are four reasons a moral person is condemned according to the judgment of God.

Number one, the moral person is condemned according to their own judgments or by their own standards. In order to judge whether a person is good or bad, there has to be a standard by which they are judged. So the moral man has his own standard, and we'll see that even by that standard, the moral man is found guilty.

Verse 1 says, "Therefore you are inexcusable, O man." Paul is taking us back to chapter 1, verse 32, where Paul was talking about wicked people who do those sins, yet they give hearty approval to those who also do them. In chapter 1, verse 20, they also were without excuse, because they rejected the revelation of God in nature and in their own conscience. Now they are without excuse, because they know the judgments of God, but still sin. "Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things."

Paul is not saying here that it is wrong for us to make a moral judgment. That would be insane to think you couldn't make a moral judgment. That is what is going on in our culture today. They say, "You have no right to say that what I believe is right or wrong. You have no right to judge me!" Then I say, "Well, you're judging me for judging you!" You see the insanity there?!

Jesus is not saying we shouldn't have the ability to say that something is wrong. Is it wrong to murder? Yes, because of "You shall not murder." Is it wrong to lie? Yes, because of "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." Is it wrong to commit adultery? Yes, because of "You shall not commit adultery." Is it wrong to covet? Yes, because of "You shall not covet" (Exodus 20:13,14-17).

All of the Decalogue is very clear. These are not God's suggestions; these are God's Commandments. God has revealed His will, what is right and wrong, in His Word. So God is not saying that we can't make a distinction or judgment of whether something is right and wrong.

What does Jesus mean in Matthew 7:1 where He said, "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged"? The word "judge" here means having "a

critical, fault-finding attitude” toward others. You become judge, jury and executioner of others. You pass judgment on someone instead of realizing that judgment belongs to God. “What he did was wrong, God’s Word makes it very clear, but I’m not to judge whether he’s going to heaven or to hell.” So we can make a moral distinction of what is right and what is wrong, but we shouldn’t be fault-finding and judgmental.

This is what’s called “hypocrisy.” The word “hypocrite” means “to speak from under.” It’s an interesting word. On the Greek stage, the actors wore masks to play different parts. So they were called “hypocrites.” They would speak from under their masks. So a hypocrite is hiding behind a mask; they’re really not who they pretend to be.

Why was their judgment wrong? Because it was hypocritical. Verse 1 says, “You who judge practice the same things.” They were just as bad as those they judge.

David committed several violations of the Decalogue. He coveted another man’s wife, Bathsheba. He committed adultery with her. He murdered her husband. And then he lied to cover up his sin. So David broke all these Commandments.

Then Nathan the prophet told David about an injustice that had happened in his kingdom. Nathan said there was a wealthy man who had many sheep. A guest arrived, and instead of taking one of his many lambs to serve his guest for dinner, he stole a poor man’s only lamb that was like his pet, killed it and fed it to his guest.

When David heard what Nathan had said, David was angry. He said, “The man who has done this shall surely die!” I can just picture Nathan pointing his long, bony, prophet finger at David and saying, “You are the man!” No doubt David dropped to his knees and said, “I have sinned against the Lord.” Nathan told David God had forgiven David, but “the sword shall never depart from your house” (2 Samuel 12:5-7,10,13).

God can forgive our sins, but the scars remain. God can forgive our sins, but the consequences remain. God’s not going to reverse those consequences. So it’s very important that we walk in obedience to God.

David was quick to point at others. Whenever you’re pointing at someone, there are three fingers pointing back at you. Don’t forget that.

How can a moral man, in a sense, do the same or be just as bad? He has sins that many times are called “sins of good standing” or “acceptable sins.” We all shudder at the idea of murder, adultery and different, sexually immoral sins. But what about, “You shall not covet”? The last Commandment includes “your neighbor’s house...your neighbor’s wife...your neighbor’s donkey...anything that is your neighbor’s” (Exodus 20:17). That includes their car—their Porsche, their Ferrari—their money. “You shall not covet.”

So David was covetous, and that inner sin is so prevalent in our culture today. Sometimes they don’t realize and don’t understand the nature and extent of their sin. When Jesus gave the

sermon on the mount, He said, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27-28). And He said, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder....’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” (Matthew 5:21). God looks at the heart as well as one’s actions.

Many times they are self-righteous and blind to their own faults and are judgmental of others. In the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector, in Luke 18, they both went to the Temple to pray. The Pharisee prayed, “God, I thank You that I am not like other men...or even as this tax collector.” He gave a list of what he didn’t do and a list of what he did do; he bragged about his righteousness before God. But the tax collector wouldn’t even look up to heaven, he beat on his breast and said, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”

It’s so easy to boast about how good you are, how righteous you are. But God looks for “a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise” (Psalm 51:17). Jesus said, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted....Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:4,6). So we come with brokenness before God. Instead of putting on an outward show or façade of our goodness, we must reach out by faith with an empty hand and accept the forgiveness that only Jesus Christ can give.

The problem in verse 1 is that the moral man will be judged according to his own judgment; he doesn’t keep his own standards. Basically it means he is a hypocrite; he doesn’t do what he commands but thinks other people should do.

Number two, the moral person is condemned by God according to the truth. God’s judgment will be true, verses 2-5. “But we know...” or “we are certain” “...that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.” How do we know that? Because God is omniscient; He knows everything.

Now in verse 3, he is anticipating someone who would object. “And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?” Absolutely not! Man thinks that God will judge others but not him. You know it’s wrong, you do the same thing, yet you think God will somehow let you slip. No; God’s judgment will be “according to truth.”

The second argument is in verse 4: “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

In this argument, Paul anticipates the moral man giving another argument, saying that he is

going to escape the judgment of God. But Paul says that he won't escape God's judgment; that it will be "according to truth," because God knows everything.

God knows what you're thinking when you think. I don't know what I'm thinking when I think. A lot of times I don't know what I'm saying when I'm speaking. Have you ever said, "I don't know what I'm talking about." Sometimes our mouths just move. Being a preacher that happens to me a lot; my mouth moves and my brain goes somewhere else.

You do what they do, you know God is truth, so how can you think you will escape the righteousness of God?! Their number one desire is that God won't judge them. They think they can get along without being judged. That isn't going to happen. Psalm 96:13 says, "He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth." So we can be sure that God's judgment will be according to truth.

Why would men go on sinning knowing that God will judge "according to truth"? They think wrong, verse 3. The key word is "think." "And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?" Paul is saying that they won't escape. But that's what they think.

You might be thinking, Well, God is going to look deep down in my heart, and He'll know that I'm a good person. But the Bible says, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). "Well, I'm a good person." By whose standards? Yours? Or God's? His standards are what matters.

So man thinks he'll get by and that God won't judge him. Maybe you'll say, "It's not my fault! It was the way my parents raised me! It was my environment! God won't judge me."

The key word in verse 4 is "despise." "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?" Paul talks about some of the attributes of God, one of which is being good. By the way, the word "God" is tied in with the word "good." Paul mentions the "forbearance" of God, which is God's patience. God is patient with us. And he mentions God's "longsuffering." God suffers long before He brings His judgment upon us. The problem is they do know these things, but they ignore them.

God is good. If you're not a Christian, you don't love God and you don't love Jesus Christ, God still lets you breathe. That's a good God. Maybe you had Cheerios for breakfast. That's a good God. Maybe God's given you a family. That's a good God. Maybe you have strength to work on a job. That's a good God. Those are all blessings, the goodness of God. All these things are meant to bring you to a place of repentance. "God, I'm sorry for my sins. Forgive me. Jesus, come into my heart and give me Your righteousness. I believe in You." So these attributes of God are meant to bring you to repentance.

When the prodigal son was in the pigpen and he came to himself, he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise

and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants' (Luke 15:17-19). The son knew his father was good and that he could go back to him and find bread to be fed.

If you are not a Christian and you don't believe, you will be judged. God has been blessing your life, God is patient, longsuffering, forbearing, so you need to realize it is time to repent and turn to God before it's too late.

The next key word is "treasuring," in verse 5. "But in accordance with your hardness..." we get our word "sclerosis" from it. So there is a hardening of the heart "...and your impenitent heart..." you are unrepentant, so "...you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

"Treasuring up" is used for putting money in the bank until you have a lot of money saved up. And that's what you're doing when you sin against God; you are actually storing up wrath or judgment against yourself. It's interesting that the moral man thinks by doing good deeds, he is storing up credits that will get him into heaven. But actually by his bad deeds, he is storing up wrath that will bring the judgment of God. And one day God will judge them on the day when He will judge all mankind.

Number three, the moral man is guilty before God according to his words, verses 6-10. If they are simply judged by their works, they will still fall short and be condemned. "...God, who 'will render to each one according to his deeds...'" God the Father will judge you based on your deeds. "...eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

I want you to notice some important truths in this section. We see that God's judgment will be universal: "who will render to each one according to his deeds." Judgment will be to every person. No one will escape. And it will be "according to his deeds."

Don't misinterpret this text as teaching that we are going to get saved by good works. That is not what Paul is teaching here. If he were, it would be a direct contradiction to the clear teaching of Romans, other passages and the rest of the New Testament. "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" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Then verse 10 says, "For we are His workmanship..." the word is "poiema" "...created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

Paul is saying here that the way you live is evidence of whether or not you are saved. If you are saved and doing good works, because the Spirit is working in you and through you, it is an

indication that you have eternal life. But if you're not saved and trusting in your good deeds, you're going to be judged. You have "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish."

It's like the book of James in the New Testament. Some people think that James and Paul contradict each other. They say that Paul teaches we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and James teaches we are justified by works. James teaches that salvation is through faith as well, but that is before men who see the way we live. James is talking about justification before people, before man. Paul is talking about justification before God, who can see our heart.

You have to be saved in order to bring forth fruit that is righteous by the Holy Spirit working inside you. That doesn't merit, earn or deserve heaven for you; that's the fruit of salvation. Good works do not save you, but true, saving faith does produce fruit. That is very important.

When you look at a fruit tree, how do you know what kind of fruit tree it is? By looking at the fruit it produces. If the tree produces oranges, it is an orange tree. If it has lemons, it is a lemon tree. "You will know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:15).

Our works cannot save us, but they are an indication of our salvation. They are the fruit as a result of our salvation.

In Ephesians 2:10, Paul said, "We are His workmanship." But don't misunderstand what Paul is saying here. He's not talking about salvation; he's talking about guilty sinners, who are under the condemnation of God, are all condemned by anyone's standards.

Number four, God judges moral men not only according to their works, where all men fall short—"There is none righteous, no, not one"—but He does that without respect of persons, verses 11-16. "For there is no partiality with God." In other words, God doesn't play favorites. "For as many as have sinned without law..." they had no knowledge of the Scriptures or the Bible "...will also perish without law." They are still guilty. Remember that they suppress the knowledge of God in creation, and they don't live up to their conscience. "...and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law."

The principle is that your knowledge brings responsibility. You will be judged by what you know. If you come to Revival and listen to the Bible preached on Sunday morning and you read the Scriptures, you know. Do you respond in obedience? You are held responsible for what you know. The more you know, the more God will require of you. So Paul's basically saying you will be judged without respect of persons. God does not show favoritism to certain groups.

Verse 13, "... (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified)." Again, don't confuse this with the idea that we are justified by works, when we are not. We are justified by faith, but our works are evidence of our salvation.

Verse 14, "... (for when Gentiles, who do not have the law..." but they have creation and a conscience "...by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts)." Man, innately made in the

image of God, has a sense of what is right and wrong and has a conscience.

Verse 15, “...(their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them)...” They have a little meter in their hearts saying what is wrong and what is right. So in the conscience, that God has placed in everyone, is an indicator of what is right and what is wrong.

Notice verse 16, in closing, “...in the day when God will judge...” There is coming a day when God will judge. All the wicked dead will be resurrected and will appear before the great, white throne judgment. That will be at the end of the millennium (Revelation 20). They will stand before Christ, and the books will be opened. Their names will not be found written in the Book of Life, so they will be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death or gehenna or eternal hell.

So make sure you have trusted and received Jesus Christ as your Savior, so you won't be standing before God at that great, white throne judgment.

Verse 16 says, “God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.” He will open our hearts and look at the motives and intents of our hearts. “My Gospel” means the one that Paul preached; the Gospel that centers on Jesus dying on the Cross for our sins. So there will come a day when God will judge. God's judgment will include the hidden areas of our life. God sees. God knows.

This judgment will take place through or by Jesus Christ. Jesus is the One who will sit on the great, white throne to judge the wicked dead.

And God's judgment is part of the Gospel. The Gospel declares that Jesus died for our sins, and we must realize we are sinners and need a Savior. The righteous judgment of God is an essential ingredient of the Gospel. It is a reason for trusting Jesus' finished work on the Cross.

In this whole section, Paul wants us to see our need for the Gospel. You think you're good and don't need the Gospel? You're deceived. “Well, my Dad was a preacher! I grew up in church! I went to Sunday school! I was baptized and confirmed!” So you plead something.

If God were to ask you why you should be allowed in heaven, what would be your answer? “Well, not only did I go to church, but I went to Revival Christian Fellowship! And I endured those long, boring sermons! So You had better let me in, after all I went through to get here!” So you think God will say, “Okay, yeah; anyone who endures those long sermons—come on in!” It's not going to happen.

You may say, “I'm a good person!” Or, “I was baptized!” Or, “I've been confirmed!” Or, “I've done my penance!” But we sing in a hymn: “Nothing in my hands I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling.” You come naked, poor, wretched and blind. In order to be saved, you have to see yourself as a sinner before God—naked and undone. God's goodness is meant to bring you to repentance.

God is waiting for you to get right with Him. Don't wait any longer. Settle your account out of court. Trust in Jesus Christ today.

We all know 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." There is a God who loves you; He gave His Son, Jesus Christ, who died on the Cross. It doesn't say, "whoever behaves"; it says, "whoever believes." That's faith.

We don't very often read verses 17-18 of John 3. John 3:16 we are very familiar with. But what about John 3:17-18? "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world..." Jesus didn't come to condemn us "...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."

Have you believed in Jesus Christ? Have you trusted Jesus Christ? If so, then you have passed from death to life, you have passed from condemnation to salvation.