



Romans 2:1-16: Handout

The Prosecution of Mankind

Context: The attributes of God are made known to all humanity. Yet, people choose to exchange the pursuit of knowing God for self-seeking interests and wild living.

* **Judgment of the Self-Righteous (Romans 2:1-4)**

Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. ² And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. ³ But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? ¹

- In chapter one, we see the unrestrained evil actions of humanity (1:29-32). But what about those people who seem moral and critical of the wild living they witness in society? Paul explains that “moralizers” are also without excuse because they do not “acknowledge God” (Rom. 1:28) in their actions either.
- The self-righteous person often resorts to “**justification by comparison**”. For example, you know your neighbor frequents a local strip club and by comparison your periodic consumption of internet pornography is excusable! Paul makes it clear that such excuses will not spare one from the judgment of God.
- Some may try to **excuse sin by appealing to the kindness or tolerance of God**. This is a fundamental misunderstanding of the holiness of God and the wrath sin requires.

“[God’s kindness] is intended to give us space in which to repent, not to give us an excuse for sinning.”

– John Stott²

* **Storing Up Wrath (Romans 2:5-11)**

⁵ 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, ⁶ who will render to each person according to his deeds: ⁷ to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; ⁸ but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. ⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹ For there is no partiality with God.

- “The day of wrath” is the future event when God renders a verdict for the deeds of each person. In addressing those who count themselves as *good people* Paul says they are actually hoarding wrath for themselves on this day because they refuse to turn away (unrepentant heart) from their rebellion.
- The wages for righteous action: glory, honor, immortality, eternal life (v. 8); glory, honor and peace (v.10)
- The wages for evil action: wrath, indignation, tribulation and distress
- There is no favoritism in God’s righteous judgment! You will receive just wages for deeds done whether Jew or Gentile.

Once God has spoken; Twice I have heard this: That power belongs to God; And lovingkindness is Yours, O Lord, For You recompense a man according to his work.

~ Psalm 62:11-12

¹ All Scripture quotations taken from New American Standard Bible (NASB), Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by [The Lockman Foundation](#)

² Stott, John R.W. [The Message of Romans](#). The Bible Speaks Today. IVP ©1994.

* The Witness of law (Romans 2:12-16)

¹² For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; ¹³ for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. ¹⁴ For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, ¹⁶ on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

- Paul now builds on the idea of impartiality of the Judge. In the “day of wrath” you will be judged by what you know. The Jew that has the privilege and responsibility of special revelation (Old Testament). The non-Jew is still held to a moral standard though they lack the fullness of the revealed ordinance of God (The Law).
- Paul does not leave judgment on the level of outward deeds but shows that one’s intentions (*thoughts, secrets*) will testify against you in the day of wrath and revelation of God’s righteous judgment (vv. 15-16).
- In this section we see the purpose for mission work among unreached people. All humanity will be called to account for their deeds and intentions. We will never be good enough to outweigh the evil we commit. Therefore, the special revelation of God alone gives us the option of acknowledging the full truth about God and ourselves. Hope for humanity can only come from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: God does not grant special privileges to anyone. All humans will be judged and declared guilty even people who appear good in this life. Only those found in Christ Jesus (Savior & Judge) will be saved from God’s righteous wrath.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. –Romans 1:16

Discussion Questions:

- Which excuse below do you tend to use to overlook your sin? What is wrong with such excuses?
 - A. “I am better than other people in this category”
 - B. “A loving God will just let it go”
- How can your intentions be bad even when you are doing what appears to be a good thing?
- How does the “day of wrath” (v. 5) fit into the message of the gospel?
- What is Jesus inviting you to apply from this lesson?