

## Romans – Justified through faith

### Week 5 – Romans 2:1-16 (Critical Moralisers)

In the previous chapter Paul's lambasted the depraved gentile society and he now turns his attention to the critical moralizers, (Jews *and* gentiles), those who pass moral judgements on others. They have certain knowledge of God as creator & judge but then contradict their knowledge by their behaviour. This group are hypocritical. (v1)

The underlying theme of the section is the judgement of God upon self-appointed judges.

#### God's judgement is inescapable (v1-4)

The hypocritical indulge in self-righteous indignation at faults in others that they think far less serious when found in themselves.

Thomas Hobbes (17<sup>th</sup> Century philosopher) said these people "are forced to keep themselves in their own favour by observing the imperfections of other men."

We gain vicarious pleasure from condemning in others the very things we excuse in ourselves. Sigmund Freud called this moral gymnastics "projection". This device enables us to retain both our sins and our self-respect.

Therefore we open ourselves to God's judgement without excuse or escape, as we can hardly plead ignorance given our condemnation of others.

#### God's judgement is righteous (v5-11)

Presuming on God's kindness, as if it were to encourage licence not penitence, is a sign of stubbornness. This obstinacy will bring God's wrath more surely upon ourselves not help escape it.

Verse 6 is probably a quote from Psalm 62:12 but this concept is in Proverbs, Jeremiah, Hosea, Revelation and even Jesus says it in Matt 16:27.

Paul is not contradicting salvation by faith in v6-11; justification is by faith but judgement is according to works. (see James 2:14-18) Judgement day is the public announcement of the continuous processes of sifting & judging of the evidence of our faith which is our deeds/works.

"The presence or absence of saving faith in our hearts will be disclosed by the presence or absence of good works of love in our lives." – John R. W. Stott

Verses 7 to 10 contains two parallel sentences that concern the following three things

- i. Our goal (what we seek)
- ii. Our works (what we do)
- iii. Our end (where we're going)

This is similar to Jesus' teaching during the 'sermon on the mount' in Matt 6:31-33. We must choose to seek either material welfare or God's kingdom.

Stubbornness: sklerotes from sklerós = dry, hard, tough, harsh.

Sklerotes is a resistant or stubborn attitude with regard to any change in behaviour, this attitude denoting unreceptibility. In the present use Paul is describing the hard, impenitent hearts of his unsaved "religious" leaders.

Stubbornness is an unreasonable and perverse unyielding attitude, one which is determined not to change (we all have firsthand experience with this attitude from time to time!) and refusing to comply with or agree to.

Sklerotes is the root of our English medical term sclerosis as used in arteriosclerosis which describes the condition of "hardening" of the arteries.

Seeking... glory (the manifestation of God himself), honour (God's approval) and immortality (the unfading joy of His presence) is done by 'persisting in doing good'. By contrast the word for self-seeking (v8) is used by Aristotle to mean "a self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means" which we may call selfish ambition. Those who are infatuated with themselves inevitably reject truth and follow evil and therefore experience God's wrath.

#### God's judgement is impartial (v12-16)

God does not show favouritism – the wrath and judgement *and* the glory, honour and peace are for Jews and gentiles alike.

Although the Jews overtly have the law, and it's even read on the Sabbath, Paul asserts in v15 that gentiles do have the law written into their hearts as they have a conscience.

The greater our moral knowledge the greater our accountability. "Thus conscience is our ally. In all evangelism, I find it a constant encouragement to say to myself, 'The other person's conscience is on my side'." – John R. W. Stott

Three truths about judgement in v16...

- i. It will include all the hidden areas of our lives
- ii. It takes place through Jesus Christ
- iii. It's part of the gospel

The good news shines through when it's seen against the dark background of judgement. The gospel is rescue from the coming wrath not just a way to make our lives 'a little better' or 'give it all some meaning'.

Perseverance: hupomone  
from hupo = under + meno  
= abide

Hupomone describes steadfastness and endurance when circumstances are difficult. "God...gives perseverance" and thus hupomone is not simply you by yourself "gritting your teeth" nor is it a passive acceptance of the circumstances. To the contrary, hupomone is manifest strong (Spirit enabled) fortitude in the face of opposition or difficulty.

Hupomone is that spirit which bears things not simply with resignation, but with blazing hope (absolute assurance of future good not "I hope so").

Susannah Wesley defined "sin" to her young son, John Wesley declaring...

"If you would judge of the lawfulness or the unlawfulness of pleasure, then take this simple rule: Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, and takes off the relish of spiritual things—that to you is sin."

Q1. How do we avoid being judgemental?

---

Q2. What is the difference between conscience and 'the flesh'?

---

**"To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, he will give eternal life." - Romans 2:7**