

Romans 2:1-16 “Games People Play”

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I. Intro

In chapter 1:18 Paul declared that the “*wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*”. The moralist and the self-righteous would be quick to agree indicting the “*obvious sinner*”. In the 2nd chapter Paul writes about the self-righteous moralist in verses 1-16 and the self-righteous Jews in verses 17-29. The moralist, a group of culture, refinement and education were most likely followers of philosophies like the Stoics who lead moral and outwardly righteous lives. But philosophy cannot preserve its followers from indulging in the flesh, culture cannot cleanse a heart, nor can education alter our nature.

II. Vs. 1-4 Mirror, mirror on the wall

Vs. 1 If there is any here among us that have never passed judgment upon others than you may skip this section as it doesn't apply to you. But if you are like me than you'd better pay attention because this section is for us. To start with Paul makes two very important points:

1. “*Therefore, you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself*”: Paul indicates that ***those that judge do so because they know right from wrong, otherwise they would not presume to judge***. These people are clearly aware that wrong actions merit judgment, upon those who do them, what they are ignorant of is what Paul's 2nd point is all about.
2. “*For you who judge practice the same things*”: Paul, says *these same people who are standing over others are as guilty as the very ones they have judged*. In John 8:3-9 the

religious leaders threw a naked lady caught in the act of adultery right in the middle of His bible study and said, “*Master, Moses said she should be killed, what do you say?*” I’m certain they thought they had Jesus, because if He said, “*Let her go!*” then he would be going against the Bible and if He said, “*Kill her!*” than He would no longer be the friend of sinners. But Jesus just bent down and started writing in the dirt like He never heard them. Then after a while He said, “*Let he who is without sin throw the first stone!*” And each one of those fellows dropped the rock that was in their hand and walked away. What did Jesus write in the dirt that day that caused those self-righteous men to drop their stones and walk off? Well, the answer lies in the word “*wrote*” as it means “*to write against*”. I think Jesus wrote the name of every guy who had a rock in his hand and beside each name a place or a time in which they had a fantasy and entertained doing the same thing they had caught the gal doing. Jesus had said in Matt. 5:22 that if you lusted in your heart you committed adultery and every one of those men had at some time committed adultery in their hearts. ***In my own life I see three reasons why that I am guilty of doing the same things I judge others for.***

- A. **Blind Spots:** I think all humans have “*blind spots*” to our own faults and attitudes. We simply don’t see that we do the same things that we judge others for. We are even surprised when someone sees our faults and protest saying, “*Don’t you think I know myself?*” The answer is NO! Proverbs 21:2 says that “***Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts.***” The truth is our sin always becomes visible on other people!
- B. **Selective Memory Loss:** We all seem to suffer from this; we always seem to remember every wrong done by others towards us and every good we have done towards others. In fact, if married when we have a disagreement with our spouse we possess an amazing clarity of their wrongs and our rights, but we never seem to be able to recall the opposite.

C. **Name Games**: The final way we don't see this in our lives is that we have developed a clever way of renaming things with regards to our actions and attitudes: *Others have pride, I just have good self-esteem. Others have a bad temper, I'm just passionate. Others nag, I'm just encouraging. Others are gossiping, I'm just sharing my opinion. Others are critical, I'm correcting. Others are negative, I'm just being realistic.*

Vs. 2-4 Next Paul develops the 2nd part of his argument by asking two questions:

1. Vs. 2-3 “*Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So, when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment?*” **How ridiculous it is to hope that the God who sees all both inside and outside somehow will judge others for the same things we are guilty of and yet let us slide.** When we begin to ask, “*Why, doesn't God just judge people?*” In saying this Paul is asking each of us to examine our own hearts and start being critical of our own attitudes and actions instead of others. It has been pointed out that there are **four ways a person can escape justice**:

- a. *If no one knows about their offences*
- b. *If they can escape beyond the bounds of jurisdiction*
- c. *If there has been a failure in the legal process after arrest*
- d. *If they escape from prison and hide from the law*

But none of those situations will work when a person is trying to escape the judgment of God. **The darkest sin is not righteousness violated it is, mercy despised.**

2. Vs. 4 “*Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?*” Paul's second question is since you know that those who judge aren't going to escape the same judgment, why are you not

taking the opportunity God is giving you to repent? There was a woman who quickly grabbed a few cookies from a vendor at the airport before she got on her plane. She sat next to a man with an empty seat between them. After the plane was in the air she reached into the empty seat and grabbed a cookie then noticed that the man next to her did the same thing. Shocked she gave him a look to show her disapproval then grabbed another cookie and so did the man but instead of eating the whole cookie he broke it in half and gave her the other half. Throughout the rest of the flight, she was so angry she couldn't speak. After the plane landed and the man got off she was about to complain to the stewardess when she opened her purse only to realize that her bag of cookies was still inside. That's the way we are when we are self-righteous about another's sin: **We are partaking of the same cookie while complaining about others eating ours.**

The moralist, like the obvious sinner, had set aside **three things about God's kindness:**

- A. God's "**Goodness**": He had not judged them for their past sin, though they deserve it.
- B. His "**Forbearance**": His kindness with regard to their present sin. That very moment they had fallen short of His glory, yet He held back His judgment.
- C. His "**Longsuffering**": His kindness to them in regard to their future sin as He knows that we will sin tomorrow and the next day, yet He holds back His judgment.

People mistake God's patience towards their sin as forgetfulness! They think, "*If God was really concerned about my sinful actions then He would strike me dead!*" God's patience isn't **approval** or **indifference**; **He's giving us time to have a change of heart about Him and our sin.**

III. Vs. 5-11 Depositing in the right account

Vs. 5 Paul points out that such judgment upon the obvious sinner should have brought the moralist to humble repentance instead of an attitude of superiority. It's amazing how we expect

that in our case God should exercise some favoritism. We just assume that God will overlook areas of sin without us ever having to agree with Him and call them what they are, SIN! Jesus encourages us in Matthew 6:20 to “*lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.*” ***The truth is people are constantly making deposits to their account the only question is what bank have you deposited your treasures in?*** Did you notice that **God doesn't drive us to repentance He draws us to repentance?**

Vs. 6-11 We are either saved by faith in Christ alone or we will be judged by our works and surprisingly most people choose to be judged by their works. That is the case of the moralist as he believes that God judges on the curve and their self-righteousness they are always looking in the rearview mirror at folks whose outward sin is more obvious. But God doesn't judge by man's standard He judges on His Son's standard which is perfection.

The word “*Partiality*” in verse 11 comes from two ancient Greek words put together – “*to receive and face*” thus the word means to judge things on the basis of externals or pre-conceived notions. ***God's judgment is not withheld because someone has heard the truth; it is withheld if they act on the truth.*** Far too often people think they are saved because they heard the truth and know the truth but hearing and knowing offer no security apart from responding.

IV. Vs. 12-16 I can still see you

Vs. 12-16 In the gospel God found a way to condemn our sin and to destroy it without destroying us. When we want to correct sinful people, we punish them by imprisoning them, sometimes to protect society, we take their lives. But God doesn't do that, He changes people from self-centeredness to selflessness. Only in Christ are we more than just paying our debt to society, we are new creations, and we have the privilege to continually pay our debt of love to all of society not just our victims. In this last section Paul takes up the person that is religious, who

understands truth; his problem is that he just doesn't live by it himself while demanding that others do. **God is going to ask each person what they think is right and wrong and then He is going to ask them if they lived by their own standard all the time.** In conclusion we see **six principals of God's judgment:**

1. Vs. 2 **It's according to truth:** God sees beyond the facts to the motives
2. Vs. 5 **It's according to accumulated guilt:** God does not act quickly but gives ample time for the person to treasure up his judgment.
3. Vs. 6 **It's according to works:** According to Rev. 20:11-15 God will open the books upon every single person and will judge based upon what He has recorded.
4. Vs. 11 **It's without respect of persons:** God sees people through His eyes of Holiness according to truth not according to human popularity. He alone is impartial!
5. Vs. 13 **It's according to performance, not knowledge:** Hearing God's word has no advantage if it is not followed by obedience. *There is no lie so destructive in satan's entire arsenal then the false peace that comes upon a person who thinks knowing God's truth is the same as obeying God's truth!*
6. Vs. 16 **It's reaches into the secrets of the heart:** God's judgment comprehends the very secrets of a person's heart.

Hearing the Word of God does not ensure us being "doers" of the Word of God. James 1:22 in the NIV says, "*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*"

God has so designed His word that it is not merely informational it is transformational. **So, as you read the Bible, as you listen to the teaching of the word don't just write down things you didn't know right down things you want God to change about you!**