

Paul's Letter to the Romans Lesson 2

The Roman church has a problem and Paul is directing all his attention to it. Within the church, members are committing ungodly and indecent acts that are clearly against the ordinance of God. Even when a person with a depraved mind commits an act of degradation, that person knows he is sinning against the ordinance of God because God has given him the instinct to know what displeases Him. An ordinance is like a "statute" instituted by a city or government; however, God's single ordinance is broad in scope and cannot be changed by the will of the people. Yet, the people in the Roman church have attempted to change the ordinance of God. The church people judge the ungodly people of Rome and at the same time, these godly people are guilty of committing the same acts. Although the Roman church is known for its great faith in God, rumblings within the church are stirring the batter with sin as its main ingredient. Even the ungodly know these sins are against God while the church members continue in their sins thinking that they have received immunity from the judgment of God because they received the kindness of God at the time of at their salvation.

Romans 2:4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the **kindness of God** leads you to repentance?

Kindness of God – The kindness of God stitches together all the essential elements which ultimately leads a person to repentance. With moral excellence in both character and demeanor, God bestows on mankind the riches of His goodness toward mankind. He exhibits His self-restraint with His creation and patiently waits for it to respond to His ordinance. God's goodness, self-restraint and patience make up the riches of the kindness of God. God sees everything man does, yet He waits for man to repent. Even the beloved of God must repent of their sins or face the judgment of God.

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 EVERY MAN 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.

Judgment of God – The judgment of God cuts two ways, bringing both blessings and curses. Some of the people in the Roman church are guilty of stubbornness and an unrepentant heart. Their deeds are recorded in the books of the Lord, and He will judge each person according to those deeds. Paul is quoting Proverbs 24 in this letter.

Proverbs 24:12 If you say, "See, we did not know this," does He not consider it who weighs the hearts? And does He not know it who keeps your soul? And **will He not render to man according to his work?**

In the same year that Paul is writing this letter to the Roman Church, Matthew is penning his letter to the Jews, recording the words of Jesus, making the same statement.

Matthew 16:27 For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his DEEDS.

We often forget that all the apostles are alive and in the service of the Lord at the same time. Paul is in contact with John, Peter, Matthew, Philip, Nathaniel, and all the others. Their theology in the Lord is sound and they are proclaiming the gospel in one voice. They all know the Proverb and they all know the words of Jesus.

In 67 AD Paul writes this same idea in his letter to Timothy, speaking about Alexander's actions in harming Paul's ministry work.

2 Tim. 4:14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; **the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.**

Finally, in 96 AD, John records the words of the Lord at the end of the Revelation. It is this same thought which ends the New Testament oracle of God.

Rev. 22:12 Behold, I am coming quickly, and **My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.**

The trail of thought concerning the judgment of God is plain; every man will be judged by the Lord according to his deeds, and this judgment is not to be taken lightly. God does not wipe away the history of a person's deeds. In the kindness of God, He waits to see our repentance from the deeds that are against the ordinance of God. Even for the believer who is beloved of God, goodness and evil exists within that believer's soul. How does God look at this dichotomy?

When talking about eternal life, there is a great difference in how God compares the evil versus the good. Eternal life waits with all its glory and splendor for the man who has accepted the truth of God. The wrath of God waits for the man who denies the truth of God. But before eternal life comes to each of us, how does God differentiate between the evil and good in a believer's life? The judgment of the Lord is already at work in the lives of each believer.

⁹There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, ¹⁰but glory and honor and peace to every man who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹For there is no partiality with God.

Judgment of God – There is no partiality with God when it comes to His judgment while we are living here on earth. Jesus says:

Matthew 5:44-45 But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you ⁴⁵in order that you may be sons of your

Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the evil and the good*, and *sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

We often focus on the last part of this verse rather than the beginning of Jesus' words. He causes the rain to fall on the good and the bad because He wants to see how we, as believers, react to the tribulations that come our way. If we return evil for evil, tribulation and distress will continue to follow us all the way to eternity. If evil is met with good, then glory and honor and peace will follow all the way to eternity. God is watching and recording each of our deeds. Whether a person is a chosen Jew or a called Gentile, there is no partiality with God.

¹²For 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; ¹³for not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

Judgment of God – God's judgment will come on all of mankind based on our deeds and whether or not we accept the truth of God. By the time Paul is writing this letter, the Law has been in place for the Jews for 1,500 years. God is not concerned with how many times the Jew has heard the Law read on the Sabbath; He is concerned with how many times the Jew has acted righteously according to the Law. Although the Jew has had the Law for all these years, the Gentile has been without the Law; yet, he is without excuse because God placed that knowledge within him when He created him. Even though the Gentile did not have the Law, he will be judged by God receiving the same outcome as those who are judged by the Law. Simply put, God is looking at the actions of man when it comes to acknowledging the truth of God written on his heart at his creation.

¹⁴For 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, ¹⁵in 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, ¹⁶on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

Judgment of God – Paul confirms our interpretation in verses 14-16. Even a man who has never heard the Law instinctively knows the tenet of the Law because it is written in his heart by God at his creation. But simply knowing the Law does not mean everyone obeys it instinctively. Some people will deny what they know in their hearts to be the truth and continue their evil ways. Whether they accept or deny the truth that God has written on their hearts, Jesus Christ will judge the secrets of their hearts.

¹⁷But if you bear the name "Jew," and rely upon the Law, and boast in God, ¹⁸and know *His* will, and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, ¹⁹and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth, ²¹you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one should not steal, do you steal? ²²You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit

adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? ²⁴For "THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU," just as it is written.

Name of God –Another clue to the problem in the Roman church centers on the Jewish membership. The Jews are living by a double standard. They are holding themselves up as teachers of the Law, with the embodiment of the knowledge of God and the truth of God; nevertheless, in their personal lives there are breaking every Law of God. The Gentiles see the problem in the lives of the Jews who profess to be Godly but are filled with ungodliness. The Jews are blaspheming the name of God to those who live and work around the church in Rome. Paul loosely quotes Isaiah.

Isaiah 52:5 Now therefore, what do I have here, declares the LORD, seeing that My people have been taken away without cause? Again the LORD declares, those who rule over them howl, and My name is continually blasphemed all day long.

Isaiah lived from 750 BC to 680 BC. He was a prophet to the Northern Kingdom which was in severe rebellion against God. In 722 BC the Lord used the Assyrian Empire to overthrow the Northern Kingdom. By the time Isaiah wrote the 52nd chapter, the Northern Kingdom had been in exile in Assyria for many years. If the leadership of the Northern Kingdom had turned to the truth of God, the exile would never have come. But the leaders of the Northern Kingdom did not turn from their wicked ways and God's judgment came upon them. In God's eyes the judgment upon them could have been prevented. Even in exile, the leaders of the Jews still howled in their pomp and circumstance, claiming to speak for God and denying the truth that God had brought judgment upon them. The Jewish leadership continually blasphemed God, and the Jews in the Roman church are doing the same.

²⁵For indeed circumcision is of value, if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. ²⁶If therefore the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷And will not he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter *of the Law* and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law? ²⁸For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. ²⁹But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

Name of God – The Jews in the Roman church have made an issue of their Jewishness. The sign of the covenant with Abraham was signified with the act of circumcision, but circumcision was just an outward sign of an inward heart. Many Jewish males have circumcision and still live a life of denial to the truth of God. Circumcision does not make a person a Jew. Muslims circumcise too; does that make them a Jew? Preposterous! The secrets of the heart determine a Jewish person's relationship with God and not the Law. By the time Paul is writing this letter, the relationship with Jesus Christ is the most important step in a person's life. For a Jew who knows the Law,

transgressing the Law does nothing but blaspheme the name of God in God's eyes and in the eyes of men.

Romans 3:1 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? **2** Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the **oracles of God**.

Oracles of God – God delivered His sacred writings to the Jews. From Genesis to Malachi these writings comprise the oracles of God. These writings were meant to direct the Jew in his life and work, to correct him in their evil ways and to bring him back into the favor of God. These writings comprise what is called the Old Testament. Before the circumstances surrounding the birth of Christ, it is the only written word from God available to mankind, and it was delivered to the Jews for safekeeping.

3 What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the **faithfulness of God**, will it? **4** May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man *be found* a liar, as it is written, "THAT THOU MIGHTEST BE JUSTIFIED IN THY WORDS, AND MIGHTEST PREVAIL WHEN THOU ART JUDGED."

Faithfulness of God – The faithfulness of God should never be in question. Whether a person believes in God or does not believe in God, God is still faithful. God is still true. The Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God, but He never forces them to trust in Him or the truth of the oracles. Even David struggled with the oracles of God, yet he never blamed God for his sin. Nor did David ever believe that God was not true and fair in His treatment of him. Paul loosely quotes David's words in his letter to the Romans.

Psalm 51:4 Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, And done what is evil in Thy sight, So that Thou art justified when Thou dost speak, And blameless when Thou dost judge.

To Paul and to David, God is just and blameless when He judges man. When standing before God, man is incapable of defending himself and reasoning with God for his actions. Man will always be found the liar and God will always be found the truth.

5 But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the **righteousness of God**, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.) **6** May it never be! For otherwise how will God judge the world?

Righteousness of God – Man cannot change the righteousness of God. God is not unrighteous and our unrighteousness does not make God righteous. God is who He is, and He will judge righteously according to the deeds of each man.

7 But if through my lie the **truth of God** abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner? **8** And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say), "Let us do evil that good may come"? Their condemnation is just.

Truth of God – God judges the world in truth. Neither our sin nor evil deeds will change the truth of God. When we sin, God judges and brings on us the condemnation that we deserve. We are judged as sinners because we are sinners, but God is God and He never sins, He never changes. He abounds in His glory and truth.

⁹What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; ¹⁰as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; ¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE." ¹³ "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPES IS UNDER THEIR LIPS"; ¹⁴ "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS"; ¹⁵ "THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD, ¹⁶ DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS, ¹⁷ AND THE PATH OF PEACE HAVE THEY NOT KNOWN." ¹⁸ "THERE IS NO **FEAR OF GOD** BEFORE THEIR EYES."

Fear of God - The Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God, but the oracles did not keep them from sinning. Jews are no different from Greeks when it comes to sin. Paul quotes several passages to prove his point.

Psalm 14:3 They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

Psalm 14:2 The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.

Psalm 5:9 There is nothing reliable in what they say; Their inward part is destruction *itself*; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue.

Psalm 140:3 They sharpen their tongues as a serpent; poison of a viper is under their lips. Selah.

Psalm 10:7 His mouth is full of curses and deceit and oppression; under his tongue is mischief and wickedness.

Isaiah 59:7-8 Their feet run to evil, And they hasten to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; devastation and destruction are in their highways. ⁸ They do not know the way of peace, and there is no justice in their tracks; they have made their paths crooked; whoever treads on them does not know peace.

Psalm 36:1 Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; There is no fear of God before his eyes.

Paul is addressing the Jewish believers within the Roman church. When Paul quotes from Psalms and Isaiah, the Jews of his day readily recognize their context and importance. Paul is making the point that even though God places the knowledge of Himself in all of His creation, man is still unrighteous at birth and should fear the wrath of God. As man grows callous in his sin, he denies his fear of God for a time.

¹⁹Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

Fear of God – The Jews especially should fear God because they have been given the oracles of God. Through these oracles the Law is presented to all Jews and they are without excuse. The Law clearly states in those things which the Lord considers as sin. No mistake can be made by a Jew in this arena.

²¹But now apart from the Law *the righteousness of God* has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²²even *the righteousness of God* through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the **glory of God**, ²⁴being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the **forbearance of God** He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Righteousness of God – This God-like righteousness is different from the Law, but it is not new to Paul, nor to the Old Testament. The prophets and the Law manifest the righteousness of God made plain by the continual work of God himself. But there is no distinction between the Jew and the Greek for all have failed to obtain the glory of God on their own merits. It is only by the grace of God that a person obtains the glory of God.

Glory of God – The glory of God is a gift of God's grace to mankind through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. When Christ gave Himself to die for the sins of mankind, He did this as a picture of His righteousness. Redemption is a gift which God bestows on those who give themselves to the Lord. When the Lord was crucified on the cross for the sins of mankind, God took the opportunity to show His forbearance.

Forbearance of God – In the forbearance of God, God overlooks the sins committed by mankind. At the cross Jesus satisfied all the demands of redemption with the shedding of His blood. For those who trust in the Lord, everything is provided to obtain the glory of God. Jesus justifies the unjust and provides salvation for the lost.

²⁷Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. ²⁸For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. ²⁹Or is God *the God* of Jews only? Is He not *the God* of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one. ³¹Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.

Forbearance of God – God’s forbearance is not for the Jew only. At the foot of the cross the forbearance of God is level ground for all of mankind. Jew or Gentile may worship at the feet of Jesus and call Him Lord, both through faith. As a Jew who puts his faith in the righteousness and forbearance of God, do we nullify the Law? Paul proclaims that we do not nullify the Law as Jews, rather we establish the Law. Paul hinted at this in Romans 3:21 when he says, “But now apart from the Law *the righteousness of God* has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.” In the next chapter Paul shows how Abraham is an example of the forbearance of God because of his faith in God. Apart from Christ and the help of the Holy Spirit, no one can keep God’s law.