

Romans (Strengthened by the Gospel) (Week 3/18) God's Impartial Judgement

Small Group Discussion Questions

Connect *What is one rhythm in your life that helps you to be daily reminded of and rejoice in the gospel?*

Warm-Up

1. Have you come across people saying, "At least I'm not like them?" Are there certain sins people condemn strongly in others - but excuse, minimise, or justify in themselves?
2. How would you connect Romans 1:28-32 to the word "therefore" in Romans 2:1?

Read Romans 1:1-11

3. What is the accusation made against the person who judges others? Why are they "without excuse"?
4. What does Paul mean by "does the very same things"- is this about identical sin or something deeper?
5. What false assumption do the self-righteous people make about God's judgement?
6. God's judgement is "based on truth" (v.2); how does God judge differently from humans?
7. What is the purpose of God's kindness, forbearance, and patience? How is this often misunderstood?
8. What does it mean to be "storing up wrath" (v.5)? Are there areas in your life where sins might become comfortable because God hasn't judged them yet?
9. Verse 6-11 says that God judges "according to works." How do we understand this alongside salvation by grace through faith?
10. What hope does it give us knowing that "God does not show favouritism" (v.11)? But at the same time, why would this be especially confronting to self-justifying people?
11. Where might you be relying on being a "good person" rather than honestly facing your sin before God? How would this honesty bring you closer to Christ?

Read Romans 1:12-16

12. What is Paul saying about those who have the law and those who do not have the law? How does this show that God's judgement is impartial?
13. Why is merely hearing, knowing, or possessing God's word not enough?
14. What role do conscience and inner thoughts play? How do they show that people have some awareness of right and wrong?
15. God will judge people's secrets through Jesus Christ. What kinds of "secrets" does this include?
16. How does the gospel comfort us at this point — that the Judge is also the Saviour who bore judgement for those who trust in him?

Apply *Reflect on how you would feel if your inner thoughts, motives, and secrets were fully revealed (v.16). How would the promise, "everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame" (10:11) speak to you?*

Pray *Lord Jesus, thank you that you are both our Judge and our Saviour. Thank you that you expose our hearts not to crush us, but to lead us to repentance. Help us trust in your grace and live humbly before you. Amen.*

GOING DEEPER

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Small Group Discussion Questions

On Your Front Line this Week

How would people on your frontlines know that you belong to Jesus?






For Families

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: stbartskids.org

Listen, Watch, and Read

- *Listen (sermon):* "The Failure of Religion" by Tim Keller:
<https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/the-failure-of-religion>
- *Listen (sermon):* "Romans 2:1-5 - Without Excuse" by Sinclair Ferguson:
<https://cloud.sermonaudio.com/media/audio/high/32121021279.mp3>
- *Listen (sermon):* "Romans 2:6-11 - Judgement According to Works" by Sinclair Ferguson:
<https://cloud.sermonaudio.com/media/audio/high/32121022240.mp3>
- *Listen (sermon):* "Romans 2:12-16 - Reality Check" by Sinclair Ferguson:
<https://cloud.sermonaudio.com/media/audio/high/32121023122.mp3>
- *Read (devotional):* "The Law on the Conscience" by Ligonier
<https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/the-law-on-the-conscience>

Series Resources

- *Read:* "'Strengthened by the Gospel" by Brian Rosner. 
- *Read:* "The Story of God Bible Commentary: Romans" by Michael Bird.
- *Read:* "Into the Heart of Romans" by N. T. Wright. 
- *Read:* "Epistle of Paul to the Romans" by F. F. Bruce. 
- *Read:* "The Message of Romans" by John Stott. 
- *Read:* "The Epistle to the Romans" by Leon Morris. 
- *Watch:* "Romans" by the Bible Project:
<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-romans/>

 Available to borrow from the St Bart's Library (Toowoomba): stbarts.com.au/library

ROMANS (STRENGTHENED BY THE GOSPEL)

*Week 03/18 “God’s Impartial Judgement”
by Justin Lai (10/05/2026)*

하나님의 공의로운 심판 | Nhialic eë dulus yiic |
上帝公正的审判 | கடவுளின் பாரபட்சமற்ற நியாயத்தீர்ப்பு

Bible Passage: Romans 2:1-16

*Father, thank you for your kindness, patience, and mercy.
As we come to your word, please expose our hearts, humble our pride,
and lead us to true repentance and faith in Jesus.
Amen.*

We know that justice matters.

Almost everyone longs for justice in some part of life or in some part of the world. When evil is done, when people are hurt, something within us cries out: “That’s not right.”

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- However, we can have a strange relationship with judgement:
 - We want it when others do wrong, but we hate it when our own hearts are exposed. And yet, we are often busy judging others.
 - A little gossip; that angry-face emoji; a quiet comparison with a friend..., a private thought that says, “at least I am not like them!”
 - We need judgement if we want justice, but our approach is pretty messed up!
 - That’s where Romans 2 begins.
 - Up to this point in Romans, Paul has been talking about the world in rebellion against God. And it would be very easy for the audience to nod along and say, “yeah, that’s exactly what is wrong with the world, with our culture, with *those* people
 - - the problem is *‘them.’*
 - Paul asks, “Are you sure you’re not like them?!”
 - “Be careful. You may think you’re sitting in the judge’s seat, but actually, before God, you also stand among the accused...”
 - ..for our *judgment is imperfect, only God’s judgment is perfect and impartial.*”

- When it comes to judgement, these verses in Romans 2 show us three things:
 - **(1) Our Judgement is Imperfect**
- we judge hypocritically, so we have no excuse before God.
 - **(2) God's Judgement is Perfect**
- he judges according to truth, and without favouritism.
 - **(3) Jesus is the Judge**
- God will judge our secrets through Christ Jesus.

OUR JUDGEMENT IS IMPERFECT | VERSES 1-5

우리의 불완전한 판단 | Luṅdaä ää cii l.Löcök | 我们不完美的审判 | நமது நியாயத்தீர்ப்பு குறைவுள்ளது

First, Paul shows us that *our judgement is imperfect*.

[Our judgement is imperfect: because our judgement is hypocritical]

We read in verse 1: *“You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.”*

- As Paul shifts the spotlight from “them” to “you,” he describes a *self-righteous problem*.
- The problem is not that they make moral judgments - discerning between right and wrong, between what should and should not be done.
- We are meant to be discerning. That’s not the issue. The issue is that while they judge others, they do *“the same things”*. Their hypocrisy makes the matter worse.
 - So Paul says, *“You, therefore, have no excuse”* under God’s judgment.
- We do not know the precise nature of all those *“things,”* although the previous chapter offers some clues. But the point is clear: *their judgement is hypocritical*.
- If we’re honest, we often find ourselves in the same place.
 - We may quietly look at the wrongs of others with a *sense of superiority and distance*, thinking to ourselves, *“At least I’m not like that!”*
 - And Paul says this makes us guilty.

- Now, Paul does not necessarily mean we commit the exact same *outward sins* listed in Romans 1. But many of those same “*heart-sins*” – pride, arrogance, gossip, slander, lack of love – can be just as common among moral and religious people as in anyone else.
 - And that’s painfully true:
 - We judge other people’s pride, while secretly wanting recognition ourselves;
 - We judge other people’s gossip, while calling our own gossip “concern”;
 - We judge other people’s anger, while excusing our own bitterness or resentment.
- By judging another, we place ourselves under the same scope as our own accusation. The “*very act of judging another*” becomes a condemnation of ourselves.

(Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, 141)
- That’s why our judgement is imperfect. It is often hypocritical and exposes our *own guilt*.

[Our judgement is imperfect: Our judgement is self-protective]

So why do we keep doing it? One reason is that hypocritical judgment can give us the illusion of escape. Paul asks in verse 3: “*...do you think you will escape the judgment of God?*” (v.3b)

- “*To escape God’s judgement*” means to assume that God’s verdict applies to others, but *somehow not to us*.
 - It is a bit like hiding behind a screen on social media. We point out other people’s faults and feel safe because the spotlight is on them, as if God doesn’t see the one behind the screen.
- Judging others can strangely become a false hiding place. We *compare* ourselves with people whose sins appear worse, louder, or more obvious, and for a moment, we feel safer.
 - A religious person may look at a non-religious person and think, “At least I have better values.”
 - A long-time Christian may look at a new believer and think, “At least I know more.”
 - A respectable person may look at someone with obvious struggles and think, “At least my life is more together.”
 - Do you see the problem?
- But friends, God’s judgment is *not based on comparison*. You will not escape God’s judgement just because you seem like a better person or a better Christian. His judgement is “*based on truth*” (v.2). He judges according to what is true – true about our actions, our motives, and our hearts.
- And that exposes how imperfect our judgement really is.
 - We do “the same things”;
 - We compare ourselves with others - hoping for a false way of escape.
 - But Paul goes even deeper. When we judge others hypocritically, we are also taking God’s kindness for granted.

[Our judgement is imperfect: because our judgement mistaken God's kindness]

Verses 4 says that God is rich in "*kindness, forbearance and patience,*" but his "*kindness is intended to lead you to repentance.*" (v.4)

- In other words, we mistake God's kindness for permission.
- In God's kindness, final judgment does not come immediately.
 - God is patient. He gives us time and space to repent.
 - But Paul warns us: *God's patience must not be mistaken for God's approval.*
 - His delayed judgment is not permission to keep sinning.
 - It is an invitation to turn back to him.
 - So even when we gossip, roll our eyes, send that slandering text, or hold bitterness towards a difficult person, God is still patient. But it was meant to lead us to repentance!
- If we keep refusing to repent, our hearts *do not stay neutral.*
 - They grow harder.
 - Instead of receiving God's kindness rightly, Paul says, "*we are storing up wrath*" for the day when God's "*righteous judgement will be revealed.*" (v.5).
 - This is sobering.
 - When we judge others while refusing to repent ourselves, our judgment shows that we know right from wrong.
 - But our *unrepentance* shows that God's kindness has not yet softened our own hearts.
- So before we move on, we need to ask:
 - "What am I doing with God's kindness?"
 - "Am I letting it humble me and lead me to repentance?"
 - "Or am I using it as an excuse to keep judging others?"
- Let's take this seriously: God's *righteous judgement will be revealed.*

GOD'S JUDGEMENT IS PERFECT | VERSES 6-15

하나님의 완전한 심판 | Lunj dë Nhialic ää lö cök | 上帝的审判是完美的 | கடவுளின் நியாயத்தீர்ப்பு நிறைவானது

Our judgement is not perfect, but the good news is that *God's judgement is perfect.*

[*God's judgement is perfect: because God judges according to what a life reveals (6-10)*]

Verse 6, "*God will repay each person according to what they have done.*" (v.6)

- In other words, God does not judge by appearance.
- God judges on the basis of *objective reality*.
- Human judgement is often shallow and inconsistent.
- **But God see truly.**
 - He sees what we do.
 - He sees the fruit of our life.
 - And even he sees what's behind outward actions - the heart, motives, desires.
- That's why verses 7-10 describe *the fruits* of two fundamentally different paths.
 - *On life is turned toward God: "persistence in doing good, seek glory, honour and immortality"* - the eternal life that only God can give. (v.7)
 - *The other life is turned in on itself: "self-seeking, rejecting the truth, and following evil."* (v.8)
- Now, we need to be clear: *Paul is not teaching salvation by works here.*
 - The point is not that works earn salvation.
 - The point is that our works *reveal the true direction* of a life.
 - So should that make us nervous?
 - No. Not if our *confidence is in Christ*.
 - The believer does not stand before God trusting in a good record, but in a good Saviour.
 - However, Paul's words *should make us sober*. Because on the last day, our lives will provide what John Stott calls "public and verifiable evidence" of whether our faith was real. (Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 84)
 - Like in a courtroom, the final verdict will be publicly announced and shown to be just.
 - And the *evidence* presented will be what our lives have revealed.
 - So the question is, *what does your life reveal?*
 - *What have you truly sought - God or self?*

[*God's judgement is perfect: because God shows no partiality (11)*]

- God's judgement is perfect because he *shows no favouritism*.
- "*For God does not show favouritism*" (v.11).
- God's judgement cuts through every label, every privilege we may hide behind:
 - "I'm religious"; "I grew up in church"; "I know the answers in Small Group..."; "I'm a good person"; "I'm better than most people"...
 - Friends, Christian culture cannot save us. A respectable image cannot save us.
 - God does not judge by status, comparison, or appearance.
 - *He judges according to truth.*
- **For God shows no favourites.**

[God's judgement is perfect: because God's judgement is impartial (12-16)]

- Paul then explains further what this impartial judgement looks like:
- Verse 12-13: *“All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.”* (v.12-13).
- In Paul's context, he speaks of two groups:
- The Jews who had God's written law, and the Gentiles who did not have God's written law. And the point is: *both are accountable before God.*
 - Those who have the written law will be judged by that law.
 - Those without the written law will not be judged as if they had it. But they are still accountable.
 - Why? Because they are not without moral awareness.
- Paul says that Gentiles show that “the work of the law” is *“written on their hearts. Their conscience bears witness, and their thoughts sometimes accuse them and at other times even defend them.”* (vv. 14-15) It's like a mini courtroom inside the human heart.
 - People may not know the Scripture, but they still instinctively know:
 - truth matters,
 - justice matters,
 - love is better than selfishness,
 - evil is wrong.
 - And that moral awareness is *enough* to leave us *accountable*.

- So when people ask, “What about those people who never come across the Bible? How can God hold them accountable?”
- This passage gives us part of the answer.
 - *God will not judge unfairly.*
 - He will judge according to truth
 - He will judge according to what people know
 - And he will judge according to what their lives reveal.
- The problem is not that people are judged for what they did not know. The problem is that *all of us* sin against what we do know.
 - So ***nobody stands outside God's judgment.***

JESUS IS THE JUDGE | VERSES 16

심판자이신 예수 | Yëcu yë në këë duluk | 耶穌是审判者 | இயேசுவே நியாயாதிபதி

And finally, Paul tell us that the ultimate judgement will come through *Jesus Christ*.

[Jesus the Judge]

- Paul presses it home in verse 16, “*this will take place on the day when God judges people’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.*” (v.16).
 - People’s “secrets” mean everything hidden will be exposed.
 - Every thought, desire, motive, and hidden action will have nowhere to hide.
 - The thoughts no one hears.
 - The resentment toward our spouse.
 - The jealousy toward our friends.
 - The pride behind our kindness.
 - The lust behind our screens.
 - The silent resistance toward God.
 - There will be no shadow deep enough, no religious image strong enough to protect us from the searching judgement of God.
 - As we pray in the Book of Common Prayer:
 - “*To whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden.*”
- And this judgement will come through Jesus Christ!

- That means Jesus is not only the gentle teacher and the compassionate healer. He is also the appointed Judge before whom every human heart will one day stand!

[Jesus the Saviour as well]

- Yet, verse 16 has a surprising ending: “*as my gospel declares*” (v.16b)
- This is important. This means that this deeply uncomfortable passage *does not contradict* the Gospel. It is *part of the Gospel!*
- Romans 2 strips away every false hope and dismantles every human defence.
 - Before the perfect judgement of God, there is:
 - No excuse
 - No special privilege
 - No favouritism
 - No hiddenness
- But here is the astonishing good news: **the Judge is also the Saviour!**
 - Jesus knows our hypocrisy, yet he came.
 - He knows our pride, yet he came.
 - He knows our lust, resentment, jealousy, and hidden resistance to God – he knows *all our secrets*, and still he went to the cross for us.
 - At the cross, Jesus did not excuse sin. He bore it.
 - He did not lower God’s justice. He satisfied it.
 - He did not ignore God’s wrath. He absorbed it in the place of all who trust in him.
 - *Jesus has paid the price of God’s judgement for us.*

- So the answer to Romans 2 is not: “try harder to become less judgeable.”
- The answer is: ***Come to Christ.***
- When come to him, we receive enormous freedom.
 - We are free to stop looking down on others.
 - We are free to stop relying on our background, knowledge, or church culture for special treatment.
 - We are free to stop pretending that we have everything under control.
 - We are free to repent honestly, because *in Christ there is no condemnation* (cf. 8:1).

So the coming judgment should not make us run away from God.

And it should not make us try to earn salvation.

It should lead us to repentance.

It should lead us to Jesus - to trust in Jesus, and rejoice in his good news of salvation!

Lord Jesus, thank you that you are both our righteous Judge and our gracious Saviour. Keep us from judging others while excusing ourselves, and help us live as repentant people who trust your mercy and bear good fruit. Amen.
