

Monday
November 7, 2022

SCRIPTURES:

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." Ephesians 2:8-9

"You therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things." Romans 2:1

KEY POINT:

We have no business judging other people.

READING:

Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us that Jesus did all the work for us, there should be no one boasting. We should not say: *'Hey, I'm up here. I'm better than you. Step up your game, will ya?'* None of that. Which brings us to a topic that is related to a free-grace understanding of the Bible. It's an issue Jesus attacked more often and more severely than any other sin. It's not adultery, or lying, or looking at porn. It's the sin of self-righteousness - of judging others. I agree with my brother

Chuck Swindoll, who calls this *'The deadliest sin in the world.'* Whether you're rich or poor, educated or uneducated, Christian or non-Christian, you'll find this attitude of judging others. Politicians, prostitutes, pastors... everybody is guilty of this sin. And it's somewhat insidious; because it's the one sin that we tend to make excuses for. We say: *'I'm not really judging; I'm just telling it like it is...'*

In Romans 2, the Apostle Paul is addressing self-righteous Jews who were judging the Gentiles, and he makes it clear that you and I are not the judge... that's God's job. Now the key word in this entire section is the word *'judgment.'* In Romans 2:1, Paul says: *"You therefore have no excuse, you who pass judgment."* The Greek word for judgment here (*'krino'*), doesn't just mean to evaluate or be discerning - that's the kind of judging we **can** do. If you see a passage in the New Testament that instructs us to 'judge' others, it's not this Greek term here. This word means *to sentence, to pass a verdict, to condemn.* Paul's saying: *'You, who condemn other people, have no right to sit in the judge's seat.'*

And in this verse, Paul gives us the first characteristic of the self-righteous judge. He accuses others and excuses himself. It is typical human nature to be unrealistic about ourselves. We say or think "Everyone else is guilty, but I'm innocent. It's everyone else's fault." The word for this is hypocrisy. And the worst kind of pride is religious pride, where we say: *'I've got it together and you don't!'*

We also excuse our own sin: We label it differently. We don't gossip, we just share a concern. *'I'm not critical, I'm discerning.'* *'I'm not lazy, I'm mellow.'* We rename our sin. *'I'm not negative, I'm realistic.'* *'I'm not unreliable, I'm flexible.'* We accept at face value what we see in other people. But when it comes to ourselves, we don't think it's wrong... it's just our personality. *'It's just the way I am.'* How many times have you heard that one? We also conveniently forget our own sin. It's been said: *'The person who thinks he has a clear conscience just has a poor memory.'*

QUESTION:

Have you found yourself being critical of someone else and then considered how you might be guilty (or fearful) of a similar issue?

APPLICATION:

Keeping in mind the depth and permanence of God's grace for you, ask Him to partner with you in identifying "hot button" issues for which you have difficulty extending grace to others. Then, ask Him to help you see them in light of the same grace He's extended to you.

Tuesday
November 8, 2022

SCRIPTURE:

"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 you do the same things, do you think that you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of His kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance." Romans 2:2-4

KEY POINT:

The self-righteous person measures others by the wrong standard, falsely thinks that judging others puts him in a better position, and misinterprets God's blessings in his life.

READING:

In Romans 2, we see that the self-righteous individual measures others by the wrong standard. Look at verse 2: *"We know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth."* God is the One who sets the standards, and His judgment is based on truth because He sees people's hearts. But when man judges, he compares others to himself. *'I'm the arbitrary standard. I'm better than... [fill in the blank].'* The problem is, we're blind to the truth – we don't see our own weaknesses. And here's the ultimate irony – we often tend to judge in others, what we dislike in ourselves. If we have a problem with pride, we're going to be quick to judge people who are full of pride. If we're lazy, we're going to be quick to judge people who are lazy. It's just our nature. When you see someone reacting vehemently to a particular sin, they either have a fear of it, or they're guilty of it (psychologists call this "projecting").

Now in Romans 2:3, Paul says the self-righteous person thinks that judging others puts him in a better position. *"So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet you do the same things, do you think that you will escape God's judgment?"* God says: *Do you think judging others is going to win you brownie points with Me? Do you think that's going to make it less serious for you?* The reason we like to judge others, is because it makes us feel superior, like we're not so bad. But there's faulty logic there. Let's say you and I both owe money to the same person. I'm in debt \$20,000 and you're only in debt \$10,000. So You say: *'Well, since you're in more debt than I am, I'm free from my debt.'* Does that make sense? No. The fact that someone else's sin is worse does not negate your own sin. We think that by judging others, we put ourselves in a better position to escape judgment. But God doesn't grade on a curve. Remember, when you point a finger of criticism at someone, you've got 3 fingers pointing back at yourself.

And finally, in Romans 2:4, Paul says the self-righteous person misinterprets God's blessings in his life. *"Or do you show contempt for the riches of His kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance."* The self-righteous person presumes on God's goodness and takes it for granted. He thinks: *'Everything's going great, so God must think I'm pretty special.'* He thinks he deserves God's blessings, and he believes that somehow he's earned it. He doesn't realize that every good and perfect gift is from God – it's all a gift of God's grace. And the purpose of God's kindness and blessings is to lead us toward repentance - to motivate us to change. It's like the old saying: *'You catch more flies with honey than vinegar.'* The positive approach - God's love and goodness, not God's judgment - is what leads people to want to change. When we understand how loving and gracious God is toward us, that's when we fall on our face and in humility say: *'Lord, I'm so grateful for what You've done in my life! You haven't given me what I deserve. You've given me Your blessings.'*

QUESTION:

Do you spend time on a regular basis considering why you need the grace God has extended and will continue to need Him to extend it to you?

APPLICATION:

Begin developing the habit of spending time each day reflecting on the truth of your own condition, recognizing how much grace God has extended to you in light of it, and then extending that grace to everyone else you encounter.

Wednesday
November 9, 2022

SCRIPTURE:

"I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God." I Corinthians 4:3-5

KEY POINT:

We are not qualified to judge another person's motives.

READING:

When it comes to this whole topic of judgment, you may wonder: *Is it ever right to judge others?* Well, not in a condemning way, as Paul is referring to here. There *are* times in the Bible when we're called to be discerning – to judge in an evaluative way. But that's a different term and really a different topic than what we're discussing this week. We are talking about putting others down and placing yourself in a superior position to them. I Corinthians 4:3-5 is an excellent passage on judging. Let's review it again: *"I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God."* Notice the word 'motives' here. When Paul says 'judge nothing,' he's talking about never judging another person's motives.

This is huge. You talk about playing God! In fact, there's a dangerous term being thrown around today, that you may have heard. It's called 'gaslighting.' Here's the definition of that term... Gaslighting is a form of psychological manipulation in which the abuser attempts to sow self-doubt and confusion in their victim's mind in order to gain power and control over the other person, by distorting reality and forcing them to question their own judgment and intuition. This is a sad and serious form of abuse, and I'm not dismissing that fact. But to accuse a person of that crime, you're forced to judge their motives. So biblically, that's a dangerous accusation to toss out. You're skating on thin ice!

Now people were continually questioning Paul's motives. And if you do anything significant in life, you're going to have your motives questioned. There were people in the different churches, even churches Paul had started, who questioned his motives. They accused Paul of being on an ego trip. They accused Paul of doing ministry for the money. They even accused him of being a power-hungry, empire builder. But Paul said: *I don't care if you judge me or not, because I'm not accountable to you. I'm only accountable to God.* This verse reminds us that we don't have any right to question other people's motives. Most of the time we don't even know why **we** do what we do, much less know why other people do what *they* do. Only God knows the ultimate motives of our heart. So... judge not.

QUESTION:

Have you ever considered how often you do things "naturally" without consideration of a motive, and then realized the same happens to everyone else?

APPLICATION:

Ask God to help you be alert to the times you assume a motive (either good or bad) in others' actions, and to be quick to remember that 1) only God knows the truth about them, and 2) we're commanded to extend the same grace to them that God extends to us.

Thursday
November 10, 2022

SCRIPTURE:

"This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ as my gospel declares."
Romans 2:16

"Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth." Romans 2:2

"For God does not show favoritism." Romans 2:11

KEY POINT:

God is the perfect judge.

READING:

So the message of Romans 2, and numerous other passages in the Bible, is that we are not the judge. Now if we are not the judge, does that mean there will be no perfect justice in this world? On the contrary, we can be assured that God always judges correctly.. Paul goes on in Romans 2 to say that there's only one Being in the entire Universe who has the right to judge all things. And he explains both *when* God will judge people and *how* He will do it.

In Romans 2:16, Paul explains *when* God will judge people. *"This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ as my gospel declares."* Now we need to be sure to keep this passage in context here. Who specifically is Paul addressing in this passage? Back in verse 5 Paul says it's the stubborn, *unrepentant* individual. Considering the broader context of this verse starting at Rom 1:18, I believe that means the judgment Paul is referring to *here* is the Great White Throne Judgment described in Revelation chapter 20. That's the big judgment day for all unbelievers because their names are *not* written in the book of life. There's a separate judgment day for believers, it's called the Bema Seat Judgment - and we read about it in I Corinthians, chapter 3 - but that's not in view here.

Now a second question is this: *How will God judge people?* God judges people two ways. First, back in Romans 2:2 it says: *"Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth."* One of the reasons God can judge and we can't, is because God knows everything, and we don't. He has seen every moment of every person's life - from the cradle to the grave. Second, God judges impartially. Look at verse 11: *"For God does not show favoritism."* There's no favoritism with God. Now that may sound obvious to you. You may be thinking: *'Of course God doesn't play favorites - that would malign His perfect, loving nature.'* And you're right. But plenty of people in churches today believe God does play favorites – that He loves some and He doesn't love others. And some Jews back in Paul's day really believed that God played favorites as well. There's extra-biblical Jewish literature, like the Book of Wisdom, that speaks of Jews who thought that God would overlook their sins because they didn't worship idols and because God had given *them* the Law. They believed that God could bend His character and be partial to them – after all, they were the special, chosen ones of God. Well Paul says: *No way. God does not play favorites.* The bottom line? God promises everyone a fair trial.

QUESTION:

Do you sometimes think that God plays favorites when you see some people with more earthly blessings than yourself or others?

APPLICATION:

Remembering that God is perfect in everything He is and does, ask God to help you see justice in the context of eternity and His perfect character qualities (wisdom, justice, patience, truth, love, goodness, etc).

Friday
November 11, 2022

SCRIPTURES:

"And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."
Revelation 20:12-15

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." John 3:16-17

KEY POINT:

Christians get a free pass on the Great White Throne judgment day!

READING:

God promises everyone a fair trial, but unbelievers have a different trial date than believers. Believers will be judged at what is known as The Bema Seat judgment. Unbelievers will be judged at the Great White Throne judgment. So we will *all* have to give an account of our lives before God. The difference is that believers are secure in their salvation. Our judgment only has to do with eternal rewards (or lack thereof) and our position in heaven. That's it. No condemnation. But the unbeliever's judgment has to do with their eternal destination, and it's not pretty. It's a judgment unto damnation.

A few Sundays ago (October 16, 2022), we talked about the law of sowing and reaping. And I made the simple point that every good deed we sow will have its reward, and every bad deed we sow will reap a loss of reward. But I also said there is one exception to this law of sowing and reaping – and it applies to Christians only. Even though the penalty for committing any sin against God is eternal separation from Him, Jesus paid that particular penalty for us on the cross. Therefore, all those who believe in Jesus and receive His free gift of forgiveness and eternal life will not go to hell, they will not be eternally condemned. Instead, they will live with God forever. And because of that, they get a pass from the Great White Throne judgment. Remember in school, where if you did a certain thing (completed a paper or project), you could skip the final? Well, there's good news! There's a way you can skip this final exam - a way to bypass the Great White Throne Judgment. Put your faith in Jesus and you won't even have to go through it.

Notice in Revelation 20:12-15, there was a book of life. It contains the name of every Christian, and they will be exempt from being judged and then thrown into the lake of fire. We know this because it says the dead being judged are those whose deeds are written in the first set of 'books' (plural), not those in the 'book' (singular) – that is, the book of life. So how do you get a pass on the final exam? You make sure your name is written in that book – the Book of Life. John 3:16-17 tells us how: *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."* Jesus wants to save us from the Great White Throne judgment. He didn't come into the world to condemn it, but to save it. But if you don't accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, He will one day be your judge. So I urge you to settle that issue today.

QUESTION:

Have you believed that Jesus did everything required in order for you to be eligible for entry into Heaven, and that all you have to do is believe that He did it for you?

APPLICATION:

If you haven't yet, believe that Jesus' love applies to you and that He will give you His gift of salvation just by believing that He did it for you.