

Romans 2

By: Charles Stanley

From: On the Epistle to the Romans

Conscience leaves man without excuse. There is in man a sense of responsibility, and, through the fall, a knowledge of good and evil. The fact that one man judges another is a proof of this: “For wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.” How true this is, whether of Jew, Gentile, or professing Christian! And man cannot deceive God. “But we are sure the judgment of God is according to truth, against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?” What a solemn question!

We may judge and punish others for wicked acts in this world, but if we ourselves have to be brought, with all our sins, into judgment—and judgment is sure to come, and be according to truth — how are we to escape? The punishment of evil amongst all nations proves that we admit that evil ought to be punished.

The righteous government of God demands, then, that after death there shall be the judgment. Do look at this question. Reader, do you think you shall escape the judgment of God? “Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” How many are doing this? Indeed, the way in which repentance is preached tends to lead men to despise and ignore the wondrous grace of God altogether.

Many preach repentance as works for salvation, as preceding faith in the riches of the goodness of God. Now it is as we know and believe the goodness of God in sending His beloved Son to die for our sins, that this leads us to, produces in us, repentance—indeed, we can only know the depths of our sin and guilt by knowing the depths into which He had to descend to save us. Thus the goodness of God leads to an entire change of mind; the full judgment of ourselves,

in deep abhorrence of our sins, and full confession of them to God; and, at the same time, an entire change of mind about God. Thus, the difference between truth and error is this: it is not our repentance that leads to, or causes, the goodness of God to us, but it is the goodness of God that leads to, and causes, repentance in us.

Oh, beware lest you should so despise the grace of God, and, “after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” Mark, it must be either the goodness of God *now*, and repentance *here*, or the righteous judgment of God in that coming day of wrath hereafter.

Some have had difficulty in understanding Romans 2:6-29; others have perverted these statements, as though they taught salvation by works. This would be in direct contradiction of the whole teaching of the epistle. What, then, do we learn here?

First, the righteousness of God, in His reward to the Jew under law, or the Gentile not under law. This is distinctly and fully stated. Then, secondly, the inquiry, Are there any Jews or Gentiles who answer to these requirements of God, and can thus be rewarded?

We start, then, with the certainty that, in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, He “will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life.” Also, in like manner, in that day, “Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil.”

This, then, is the basis of righteous judgment on which God will act: “In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to My gospel.” The police go about the streets, and arrest men, and take them to be judged for public crimes; but is it not equally true that Death goes about the streets as God’s policeman, to take men, who, after death, shall have every secret thing judged they have done?

Can you stand in that searching judgment? God will judge in righteousness. “Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil.” And all brought out—every hidden thing!

It is well to dwell on this. From that righteous judgment there will THEN be no escape. Man, when left to himself, sank into doing evil continually; as we have seen, the whole Gentile world had sunk into the grossest sin. What, then, of the Jew, the religious man? Yes, the religious man, is he not superior every way? He rests in the law, boasts of God—the only true God. He knows His will is instructed and is an instructor, a confident guide of the blind. Now, if he knows the will of God, and does it, and has the law, and keeps it, will not this give him boldness in the day of righteous judgment? But if he is not a doer of good, if he is a breaker of the law, what better is he than the Gentile who has not the law? No, he is even found to be

worse. How, then, can the Jew under law meet God in judgment?

And if this is your position—a religious man under law, desiring most earnestly to keep it, and yet breaking it; knowing the will of God, and not doing it—how can you meet God in righteous judgment, and, however religious before men, to have every secret brought out in judgment? Do all your efforts give you confidence in looking forward to the day of certain judgment?

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