

## Why We Need a Savior

### Romans 2:6-11

#### Introduction

This last week – a couple of thieves were arrested for stealing bronze grave markers from a northern Iowa cemetery - - - many of the markers identified the burial place of veterans - - - the thieves used a grinder to cut apart the bronze markers from the grave stones - - - removing all the names and lettering - - - and then selling the bronze for scrap metal - - - for a couple thousand dollars

Aaron Dodd, Franklin County sheriff: "Pretty disgusting crime. We can't even believe. You know, it happened here. Especially when you talk about the dollar amount that they received. You know, it's just really unfortunate,"

Barb Furman - - - whose father's WWII bronze plaque was taken from his grave site - - - is disgusted

"How can you do that? But people do," Furman said.

We know such things are wrong – even outrageous

We don't just think some things are wrong - - or not suitable to our taste - - - we know people should not act that way

1992 – in the fury of the Rodney King riots in LA - - - Damien Williams was a young black youth – who was seen on video - - - as part of a group who pulled truck driver – Reginald Denny from his big rig - - - Damien threw a brick at his head - - - shattering parts of his skull

On trial – his lawyer successfully argued that Damien was in thrall to the mob – incapable of forming a conscious intent to kill

And – Damien was acquitted of the most serious charges against him

Not only do we know that people do not always do the right things – but also that justice does not seem to always be served in the human courts / judicial process here on earth

Where does this sense of right and wrong come from?

Author C.S. Lewis argues that it is this reality of a moral law - - - that some things are right and others are wrong - - - points us to inescapable truths about our universe – that match the Christian worldview

We find in Christianity - - that man's biggest problem is that he is a sinner / in rebellion against God - - - and that he needs to acknowledge this truth and repent

Further - - - we find that our sins merit the wrath of God / that some sinners are storing up wrath for themselves unto the day of judgment [Rom. 2:5]

In fact – we will see in this next section that God is a just judge - - an impartial judge who will render to every man according to his deeds

Paul tells us here that God is someone who:

**Romans 2:6 - 'Who will render to every man according to his deeds.'**

**Romans 2:9-10 - 'There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also to the Greek.'**

God - - - is one who will carry out a just judgment of humanity

This is the fundamental reality that shows us why we and all people desperately need a Savior / why we need the gospel

If there is a God above who sees all / knows all - - - and pledges to judge the sinner on the basis of his deeds - - - then every sinner is in trouble

The gospel begins right here

### **I. The Just Judgment - vv. 6-8**

We see a key phrase which Paul speaks here about God the Creator and what He pledges to do at a date in the future

God is someone who:

**Romans 2:6 - 'Who will render to every man according to his deeds.'**

This is important truth that every person needs to know

In school - - we sometimes hear a teacher say: 'Now – this will be on the test'

All of a sudden – our ears perk up - - - we might get out a pen and jot down a note

Napoleon lost the battle of Waterloo - - - [got it - will be on the test!]

One of the messages of the Bible is that there will be a judgment – based upon deeds and actions

**Proverbs 24:12 - 'Will He not render to man according to his work?'**

God is portrayed as a just judge

Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14 - 'The conclusion when all has been heard is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.'

The OT Scriptures liked to emphasize the idea that there is a God who sees and who is keeping track

We see this idea behind some passages of Scripture

Psalm 94:3-9 - 'How long shall the wicked exult? . . . They slay the widow and the stranger . . . and they have said, 'The Lord does not see' . . . When will you understand, stupid ones? He who planted the ear - does He not hear? He who formed the eye, does He not see?'

The sinner goes to great lengths to cover his tracks – make sure no one sees or finds out

President Nixon – for some reason - had an audio recording system installed in the White House to record all his conversations while he served as President – then when the Watergate story broke – and prosecutors found out there were White House tapes - - - he was told to turn the tapes over to the FBI to examine in their investigation

Nixon did turn the tapes over - but the tapes contained some suspicious blank gaps in the recording – some for as much as ten minutes long

We'll just delete this conversation and this one

If God is going to judge us for our deeds - - - wouldn't it be nice if we could just delete certain acts from the record?

Oh - - - yelling at the waitress for lousy service - - [delete]

Being cranky - impatient with your spouse - - [delete]

Looking at that computer screen you should not have looked at - - - [delete]

That act of road rage / flipping off another driver – [delete]

We all have some things we would like to delete from our record - - - but it's there - - - and if it's not covered by the blood of Christ - - - we will answer for it in judgment

\*\*\* An interpretive issue arises in this text over who Paul is speaking of in vv. 7, 10

Who are these people who persevere in doing good?

Is Paul talking about the Christian / the faithful Jew who looked forward to Christ - - - and the overall direction of their life

Or is he merely laying the foundation of the Law - - - in which he will come around and show us that *nobody* fits this category

The commentators are divided between these two positions

Context is key: The overall flow of Paul's argument is to show both Jew and Gentile that they need Jesus - - - and that all are sinners - - - nobody meets the criteria the Law demands

One of the highly revered commentators of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – Charles Hodge expresses this view:

Charles Hodge: 'The Apostle is not here teaching the method of justification, but is laying down those general principles of justice, according to which, irrespective of the gospel, all men are to be judged. He is expounding the Law, not the gospel.'

Paul is laying the foundation of what the Law taught

The Law says that all will stand or fall on the basis of their own goodness or lack thereof before God.

The Law does promise life to the one who keeps it - - - but nobody does or even can in our present sinful condition

Romans 2:13 - 'Not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.'

There Paul is poking at the Jew - - - basically saying - - - 'you have the Law – great! - - - Do you obey it? No – you don't!'

Theoretically the Law could justify you - - but you have to keep it perfectly as Jesus did

If we could avoid condemnation by the Law - - - then Jesus did not need to die

Galatians 2:21 - 'I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.'

Rom. 3:9-11 - 'We have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written, "there is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God.'

Romans 3:23 - 'for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.'

Robert Haldane [18<sup>th</sup> century commentator]

Robert Haldane: 'All that the Apostle says in this chapter is intended to show the necessity of another mode of justification, than that of the Law, namely by grace.'

So – the point here - - - is that there is a judgment that is going to take place - - - and it will be based upon one's deeds

This is foundational to the gospel – it shows us our great need

But – we also must understand how that points us to Jesus

Larry King once did a show where he had a panel of religious teachers on his program 'Larry King Live' – and he asked them all a simple question: 'What happens after we die?'

A Jewish Rabbi Marvin Heir gave this answer: 'admission to paradise is based on righteous conduct and not based on any specific religion. A righteous person of any religion and a righteous person who may in fact be irreligious . . . '

King interrupted: 'You mean an atheist'

Rabbi Heir continued – 'Yes – they would be granted admission because it is determined by deeds.'

Rabbi Heir was teaching the Law - which is true as far as it goes

What he failed to realize is that nobody lives a truly righteous life by that standard

But – that is what 1<sup>st</sup> century Jews believed as well - - - and Paul corrects that error

Romans 3:20 - 'by the works of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for thru the Law comes the knowledge of sin.'

In Scripture – the most comprehensive picture of this judgment is found in Revelation 20 - - - a future event

**Revelation 20:11-15**

We note the judgment – is based upon deeds

Some have stored up wrath unto this day

On the other hand - - - there are those who do not face this judgment - - - and it is not because they lived a perfect life

Their names are in the Lamb's Book of Life

Romans 8:1 - 'There is therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.'

Romans 3:24 - 'Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.'

Salvation is a gift - - - not something earned / merited by our works

MLJ: 'You will never be good enough; nobody has ever been good enough. The essence of the Christian salvation is to say that He is good enough and that I am in Him!'

Will we have good deeds / righteous living as Christians?

Absolutely – but we know it will still fall short of the Law's standards of perfection

Our confidence – is never to be placed in our righteous living / etc.

R.C. Sproul: 'Those who possess saving faith necessarily, inevitably, and immediately begin to manifest the fruits of faith, which are works of obedience. The ground of the person's justification, however, remains solely and exclusively the imputed righteousness of Christ.'

Imputed Righteousness - - - is the righteousness of Christ credited to our account

There is another important point made in this passage

## II. No partiality - vv. 9-11

As Paul considers the issue of judgment - - - he points to the impartial nature of it

Romans 2:9 - 'There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek.'

The point here is that of the impartiality on the part of God

God is fair or impartial in His judgment

He doesn't care if you are Russian or Chinese / black or white / Jew or Gentile

**Charles Hodge: 'The Law, while it threatens death to the transgressor, promises life to the obedient. And it matters not in either case, whether it is a Jew or a Gentile who receives its award.'**

Will God make any mistakes? [No – there will be no mistakes in judgment]

Paul wants the Jew to understand that he cannot claim 'most favored nation' status before God

This was one of the reasons the Jews hated the gospel - - - because it did not exalt the Jew - - - it taught that they would be judged right along with the rest of the world - - - and the being a son of Abraham didn't mean anything – if they didn't trust in Jesus

They thought - - - 'we are descendants of Abraham – we have the promises / the covenants / we're good'

John the Baptist addressed this when he called Jews to repentance

**Matthew 3:9 - 'And do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.'**

So Paul points out that judgment is to the Jew first and also to the Greek

**Calvin: 'This is the universal rule of the divine judgment; it shall begin with the Jews, and it shall include the whole world.'**

The underlying premise behind such a judgment is that God fully knows all that takes place in this world - - - the good and the evil

He saw the cemetery grave robbers doing their foul deed

Last September - In NYC – upper West Side - - - a 37 year old man – Hansel Esparragoza - - - was caught on video walking past an 81 year old woman who was walking her dog outside her apartment building - - - when he turns around and punched her in the face – causing her to lose consciousness and fall to the ground -- - the attacker then walked away

All was caught on a surveillance camera and played on local news channels

Esparragoza was apprehended in a Staten Island deli after an employee recognized the him from news reports

Esparragoza has 21 prior arrests – and faces up to 3 years in prison

God's video cameras are rolling – and some people are storing up wrath for themselves

**Proverbs 15:3 - 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, watching the evil and the good.'**

In 1989 – Ted Bundy was executed for the murder of some 30 women - - - some of his crimes committed on the campus of Florida State University

So - - - when he was executed – there was a celebratory rally across from the prison - - - where many college students and others had gathered – some dancing / lighting off of fireworks

One writer for Newsweek – lamented the celebratory nature outside - - - it looked more like a football rally - - - complete with beer / stupid t-shirts - - - and signs which read: 'roast in peace' and – 'This buzz is for you'

While we might note the crass nature of some of the signs - - - to celebrate justice is not wrong

**N.T. Wright: 'We need to remind ourselves that throughout the bible, not least the Psalms, God's coming judgment is a good thing, something to be celebrated, longed for, yearned over. It causes people to shout for joy and the trees of the field to clap their hands . . . Faced with a world in rebellion, a world full of exploitation and wickedness, a good God must be a God of judgment.'**

The Tribulation martyrs cry out:

**Revelation 6:9 - 'And when He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of their testimony which they had maintained.'**

**Rev. 6:10 - 'And they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'**

A great act of injustice has occurred upon the earth

They appeal to the God of heaven - - - to make things right

Here is the rub: A fair and impartial justice leaves all condemned and in need of a Savior – Jew and Gentile alike



We don't lament God's justice - - - we long for a world of righteousness

If we want to live in that world - - - which is coming - - - we need to trust in Jesus

### **Conclusion**

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

None of us will boast in our works

Ephesians 2:8-10 - 'For by grace you have been saved thru faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God, not as a result of works lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.'

Colin Smith: 'A Christian's confidence before God in life and death does not rest on the quality of his or her Christian life, which will be patchy at best. Our confidence is in the character of God who is faithful and just, and the work of our Savior who has sealed our justification by paying our debt through the shedding of His blood on the cross.'