

Romans

Condemning Ourselves

November 02, 2014

- I. Removing all excuses by condemning ourselves
 - A. Romans 2:1-4 . . . Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. [2] And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. [3] But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? [4] Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?
 - B. Prayer

- II. Review – God’s wrath against sin and unrepentant sinners
 - A. God’s wrath against sin and unrepentant sinners has, in essence, been the same from Adam onward, and will remain the same until sin is defeated.
 - B. God’s wrath is against ALL ungodliness and unrighteousness, but it is especially against those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.
 - C. Known sin willfully practiced receives greater condemnation and punishment from God, whereas sin, unknowingly committed, though it is still wrong and deserves discipline or punishment, receives a lessor or lighter amount of condemnation and punishment from God.
 - D. Sinners don’t just sin once and that is the end of it, they progressively get involved in worse sin and progressively lose their inhibitions over sinning.
 - E. God has had and continues to have a system for making His presence, His invisible attributes, His eternal power, His divine nature, and as we have already seen, His wrath against sin and unrepentant sinners, universally known.
 - F. God has established boundaries that restrict our evil inclinations so that individually and universally we can not become as evil as we are capable of becoming. However, when we deliberately turn away from God to go our own sinful way, God begins turning away from us and allowing us to move into greater impurity and sin than we had participated in before.
 - G. God’s purpose in stepping back from practicing, unrepentant sinners is to allow them to get involved in evil activities that will shock their

sensibilities, shame them, and bring new and greater troubles into their lives in order to bring them to their senses and repentance.

III. Removing all excuses by condemning ourselves

A. Romans 2:1 . . . Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

1. Here in Romans 2, Paul is addressing two of the most common responses to getting caught after doing what we know is wrong.

a. The first common response is to make an excuse or explain away our bad behavior.

(1) History teaches us just how common excuse making is, for it began with Adam shifting the blame for his disobedience to Eve, and Eve shifting the blame to the serpent.

(2) And though this was their first sin and their first time being confronted for having sinned, blame shifting rolled off their tongues as if they were experienced excuse makers.

b. The second common response to getting caught is to claim privileged status, as if privileged status should shield us from condemnation and punishment for wrong doing. Some examples of claiming privileged religious status are:

(1) claiming to be a Jew who belongs to the only people group specially chosen by God to be a special nation, and to receive the Law, and see forms of God's visible presence;

(2) or claiming to be a Christian and belonging to the only group who have eternal life and who will dwell with God forever, and to whom God gives the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, an abundant supply of grace, and forgiveness of sins;

(3) or claiming to be circumcised or baptized or filled with the Spirit or a member of a certain denomination or holding to a particular theology.

(4) In other words, the claim of privileged religious status is the claim that you have favored status with God, and therefore you can expect favored or gracious treatment from God in spite of doing what you know is wrong or living in ways contrary to God's will.

2. Paul's first words here in Romans 2:1 are: "Therefore you have no excuse." With these words, Paul makes it clear there is no legitimate excuse, that is, no acceptable to God excuses for turning away from God and doing what we know is wrong.

3. And why don't we have any legitimate excuses? Paul give two reasons.
 - a. First, the "Therefore" at the beginning of his statement points back to what he said in chapter 1 about God so creating us and His creation that each of us has an innate knowledge of God, along with a knowledge of His invisible attributes, His eternal power, His divine nature, and His wrath against sin. Therefore, within each of us there is sufficient knowledge of God and right and wrong to remove any excuse for doing what we know is wrong.
 - b. Second, Paul follows his "no excuse" phrase with these words: "for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things."
 - (1) In other words, when you pass judgment on someone else for doing something wrong, you prove that you know enough about right and wrong to recognize when someone else is doing what is wrong.
 - (2) And in condemning them for the wrong they have done, you go beyond proving you know the difference between right and wrong to showing that you believe condemnation is the right response to wrong doing.
 - c. To help confirm in your own mind the truth of what I just said, answer these two questions.
 - (1) Can you or would you judge someone for doing something wrong if you didn't already know that what they were doing was wrong?
 - (2) Would you condemn and punish them if you didn't believe that wrong doing should be condemned and punished?
 - d. In summary, Paul is saying we have no excuse for wrong doing on two counts. First, we have an innate knowledge of God and a proper sense of right and wrong. And second, when we judge and condemn others for wrong doing, we prove that we know right from wrong and that we believe wrong doing should be condemned. Therefore, we show God to be just when He judges and condemns us for doing what we know is wrong.
4. This principle or truth about judging is not unique to Paul.
 - a. In Proverbs 11:17, Solomon said, "The merciful man does himself good, but the cruel man does himself harm."
 - b. In Luke 6:37-38, Jesus said, "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. [38] Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed

down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”

- c. In Matthew 5:7, Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”
 - d. And in Matthew 6:14-15, Jesus said “For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. [15] But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.
 - e. In other words, we can make God’s dealings with us harsher than He would otherwise be or easier than we deserve based on how we deal with others over their wrong doing. Either way, we have no excuse for wrong doing.
5. I want to say three more things about Romans 2:1.
- a. First, Paul says we condemn ourselves when we practice the same things that we are judging another person for doing. I believe we are wise to take this phrase “practice the same things” in the broadest possible way so that in applying it to ourselves we are able to gain as much benefit and spiritual profit as possible.
 - (1) We obviously practice the same thing when we commit the same wrong or do the same sin we are condemning in someone else. For example, when we get angry or defensive or withdraw when others try to correct us and then condemn them for getting angry, being defensive, or pulling away when we try to correct them, we are practicing the same thing.
 - (2) And we are also doing the same thing “in principle” when we break the same principle that is behind the words or activity we are condemning in someone else. For example, if I condemn my spouse for not loving me in some way, I am breaking the principle of love if I am not loving her as I ought even though it is not in the same way as the failure I am condemning in her.
 - (3) Therefore, when examining yourself to see if you are doing what you are condemning in someone else, do not look only for the same wrong behavior in yourself, also look to see if you are in some way breaking the principle you are condemning the other person for breaking.
 - b. Second, we are most prone to judging others and overlooking the wrong doing in ourselves when we feel superior to others, either because we are proud to the point of arrogance, or because

we belong to a group that assumes superiority and therefore feels justified in judging those who do not live up to their standards.

(1) For example, the Jews, given their heritage beginning with Abraham to Moses, to the Law, the Promised Land, circumcision, and the Temple, viewed all non-Jews as heathens who were unworthy of what God had done for the Jews and therefore deserved God's wrath.

(2) Sadly, we can find this same attitude of arrogant superiority within the Christian community. Protestants and Catholics look down on each other and condemn each other as being outside God's saving grace. Presbyterians look down on Baptists, non-denominational churches look down on denominational churches, large, growing churches look down on small churches, and small churches look down on large churches, and on and on it goes.

(3) My purpose in pointing this out is that humility is essential to honest judging, for the humble person always judges himself first, rather than starting with others. Therefore, make it your aim to run from pride and a sense of superiority, and cling to humility in all areas of life, but especially in this area of judging others.

c. Third, this passage is not inferring that all judging is to be avoided as if it were intrinsically, or by its very nature, wrong.

(1) We know from other portions of scripture, such as Matthew 18:15-18, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, Galatians 6:1, and James 5:19-20, that there is a place for judging others and speaking to them about the wrong they are doing.

(2) However, the point of this passage and others like it is that when judging, we are to do so humbly, we are to use a single standard that applies to everyone, including ourselves, and as Jesus said, we are to take the log out of our own eye before trying to take the splinter out of someone else's eye (Matthew 7:3-5).

6. So be wise, make God's judgment easier on yourself. Judge yourself first and with the same standard you use in judging others. And let us not forget that Paul is laying the foundation, a foundation of truths and principles, that will enable us to properly understand what he has to say in the rest of Romans.

B. Romans 2:2-3 . . . And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls (*or, is according to truth*) upon those who practice such things. [3] But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?

1. Here in verses 2-3, Paul begins crushing the foolish assumption that having a privileged status as God's professed people – be we Jews or Christians – means God will not be as strict with us in regard to our practice of sin as He is with unbelievers who practice sin.
2. In countering this illusion, Paul says we [all] know – whether we admit it or not – that God's judgment is just (*impartial*) and it rightly falls on those who practice evil – including Jews and Christians, you, and me. Peter affirms God's impartial judgment when he says in 1 Peter 4:17 . . . For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?
3. Now I am not saying that Jews have not had and Christians do not have a superior relationship with God compared to the non-believing world. However, the intended outcome of the superior relationship of both Jews and Christians is holy living, which will then result in God's blessings, so the rest of the world can see the glory of God and be drawn to repentance, conversion, reconciliation, and becoming a healthy member of God's family.
4. Sadly, there were Jews and there are Christians, who, feeling confident that their privileged status exempts them from God's judgment, end up practicing the same sins as unbelievers. They feel safe with God and eternally secure even though their light shines brighter for the world, the flesh, and the devil, than for God.
5. If we believe what God says about condemning ourselves when we condemn others, and if we can see how guilty the Jews are for their false sense of security while being hypocritical in their daily living, then we can see this same foolishness and hypocrisy when it crops up within Christianity, or within our church, or within ourselves.
6. Therefore, let us beware, for God's judgment is impartial and in its impartiality, it rightly falls on all who practice sin. May we remember this truth and use its remembrance to bring us back to our senses if and when we go off course.

- C. Romans 2:4 . . . Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?
1. Though we often use this verse to emphasize the kindness of God in leading us to repentance, that is not Paul's point. The point Paul is making is similar to the point made in Ecclesiastes 8:11 . . . "Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men . . . are given fully to do evil."
 2. In other words, it is foolish to think we have escaped the judgment of God on our unrepented practice of sin because He has not executed His justice quickly, but rather continues to treat us with kindness, tolerance, and patience.
 3. Jesus gave us an example of such foolish thinking when He said that many will say to Him on that final judgment day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" (Matthew 7:22) It is likely they believed God overlooked their unrepented practice of sin because of His grace, and that He removed their ongoing practice of sin – as far as the east is from the west – because of His forgiveness, and that they never lost their righteous standing before God because of Christ's imputed righteousness.
 4. And yet, in spite of their theology – a theology that convinces them they are secure in their eternal salvation – look how mistaken they will be on that judgment day.

IV. Conclusion

- A. Is God gracious and forgiving? Yes! Does God credit righteousness to us through Jesus Christ? Yes! Are we, as Christians, privileged children of God? Yes. Are we justified by faith? Yes. Can we then expect to continue in the practice of sin and not experience the judgment of God? No.
- B. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life (Galatians 6:7-8).