

Romans
Message 29
The Morality Cults 06, Is God Fair and Just 02?
Rom 2:1-11

- 1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.
- 2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.
- 3 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?
- 4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?
- 5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;
- 6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds:
- 7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:
- 8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,
- 9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;
- 10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:
- 11 For there is no respect of persons with God. KJV

Introduction:

I skipped over this message to bring you the one we considered together last week. One reason was that I was not absolutely clear on how I wanted to handle this matter. There are a couple of others ideas from this passage circulating around in my mind in just the same way. But, as I looked back this week over this passage, particularly v.11, I gained some clarity and saw a discussion which I believe might be profitable to us.

I truly believe that many people in our world struggle with holding the concepts of God and of His approach to Righteousness and Judgment as they are taught in scripture. Most of that struggle is probably the fault of preachers though, truth be told, those preachers who are distorting the principles of scripture are doing so because they feel pressured by their constituents to produce messages that are pleasing to the majority of church-goers. But the fact is that many church going people in our day are unconverted religious people and their ideas of what they would like to hear do not agree with much of scripture.

Many today have grown up in a world in which fairness is determined by equality of outcome rather than equality of opportunity. This is the day of the “participation trophy” rather than “to the victor belong the spoils.” Some of us grew up in the day when the only people in any competition who received trophies and recognition were those who finished in the top two or

three spots. We didn't complain because we understood that those were the rules and we had all agreed to the rules when we joined the competition.

But, when the people of our day consider the issue of God and His Judgment, their minds are distorted by cultural aberrations and I fear the whole concept is lost to many.

It is stated in v.11 of our text, "For there is no respect of persons with God." But, what does that mean? Depending on one's view of what is fair and right it can mean many different things but quite often they hear it as, "God treats everyone the same."

The first time we find this phrase is in the OT and was used by King Jehoshaphat of Judah as he gave instructions to the judges he appointed. He wanted to make sure that all their decisions were just and proper and that they understood their priorities.

2 Chron 19:5-7

- 5 And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city,
6 And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment.
7 Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts. KJV

What he intended was that they should render proper judgments in the fear of the Lord and refuse to allow the wealth or power of any person in their courts to influence their judgments nor to allow the weakness or lack of status of any person to cause that person to lose just consideration.

Solomon had previously commented on the concept.

Prov 24:23

23 ...It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment. KJV

Prov 28:21

21 To have respect of persons is not good: for for a piece of bread that man will transgress. KJV

Here it was suggested by Solomon that the man who will judge differently for one than another because of who he/she is would also render unjust judgment for money, take a bribe.

We also have the term mentioned four other times in the NT, each time referring to God: Eph 6:9; Col 3:25; James 2:1; and 1 Peter 1:17. Vvery obviously this was an important part of the identity of God to the writers of our scripture. Paul, James and Peter all use this identical phrasing.

So, we might conclude, it is really important for us to have as precise a picture as possible of what picture these men were painting for us of the God Whom we serve and with whom we have

to do.

As I have said, some would suggest that this means that God treats everyone the same and that might be a valid consideration were it not for the fact that the scriptures are so very clear that He does not.

If you look carefully at vs. 6-10 Paul has just made the case of God treating people differently.

- 6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds:
- 7 **To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:**
- 8 **But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,**
- 9 **Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil**, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;
- 10 **But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good**, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

So, it cannot be possible that Paul was intending to communicate the idea that God treats everyone the same.

If you think about it for a moment you will realize that God treats us all differently, there are no two people that He handles in exactly the same way. Each of us is unique and different from everyone else, different strengths, different weaknesses, different abilities and different appearances. We are not cookies all cut out of the same piece of flesh.

We were born at different places and at different times. We who are here today have been born in an amazing time with more information available to us, even about God's Word, than anyone who has lived in any previous century. Most things are better than they have ever been and there are conveniences for us about which most of the world even now knows little if anything.

There are people alive today who were born in very dark and scary places. I do not envy those who are being born in China or North Korea or in places dominated by the fanaticism of Islam. Their lives are certainly very different than yours or mine.

But historically people have been born in very different times and in very different states of privilege or the lack thereof. My father told me of a time less than 100 years ago when my grandfather would catch a ride before dawn and ride to a job site where he would dig (with a shovel) a right of way for a pipeline with a crew of others all day long for \$5 and then ride home arriving after dark because this was the only work available and the only way to feed his family. And many others have known worse.

Some have been born in miserable slavery and have lived their whole lives there. Many young girls have been sold as wives, or worse, as children and have spent their entire existence in misery. This is still happening in our world.

The point I am making is that God has dealt with each person very differently. Each one has a different world than everyone else, even children born to the same family.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul made a point of this very idea and showed that the One Who makes us different is God.

1 Cor 4:7

7 For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? KJV

He was urging them to recognize God's hand in their lives and not to be arrogant over the blessings God had given them and not others.

But then there are those two great groups into which God has divided everyone.

We spoke of them last week but we must realize that the division which is going to happen at the Great Judgment is just a confirmation of the division which God has already made. The gulf that divides those two groups is so immense that it would be impossible for the human mind to correctly calculate it.

There are those given to the Son by the Father and those not given to Him.

John 6:35-40

35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

36 But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.

37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.
KJV

One need not be very skilled at reading "between the lines" here to recognize that Jesus was telling these people that they were not in the group which He designated as "all that the Father giveth me."

And the differences are vast. There is spiritual "food and drink" which will be supplied to one group which the other shall never know, v. 35. There is an embracing of some, v.37, and a casting out of others. Then, there is Resurrection, v.39, and everlasting life, v.40, which will be only available to that group which has been given to the Son by the Father.

There are those whom the Father draws to the Son and those He does not.

John 6:44-47

- 44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.
- 45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.
- 46 Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.
- 47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. KJV

It is very obvious that the ones drawn are the ones who are ‘given’ because both are in the resurrection. The difference between coming to Christ and not coming is the difference between the New Earth and the Lake of Fire. Where would one even begin to catalog those differences?

There are those who are quickened by the Holy Spirit of God and those who are not.

John 6:63-65

- 63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.
- 64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.
- 65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. KJV

There are those whom the Father enables to come to Christ. He gives them, v.65, life, v.63, and they believe. But it is obvious that He does not do that for all else Jesus would never have been crucified. No saint of God would have done to Him what the unbelieving Jews and Romans did.

There are those who have been given the ability to “know Him” and those who do not have any such ability.

John 8:19

- 19 Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. KJV

There are those whom He frees from servitude to sin and those He does not.

John 8:34-36

- 34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.
- 35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.
- 36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. KJV

There are those whom God has made His spiritual children and those He has not.

John 8:41-44

- 41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.
- 42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.
- 43 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.
- 44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. KJV

There are those who are His sheep and those who are not.

John 10:14-16

- 14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.
- 15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.
- 16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. KJV

John 10:25-28

- 25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.
- 26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.
- 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:
- 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. KJV

There is 'clay' which is fashioned into something honorable and some which is fashioned into dishonorable things.

Rom 9:21-26

- 21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?
- 22 What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:
- 23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,
- 24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?
- 25 As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.
- 26 And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God. KJV

It is clear from the passage that the 'clay' is humanity from which some are chosen to be children of God and some are fashioned for other purposes.

In all of this, Paul was clear that God has an Eternal Purpose which shall not fail.

Rom 8:28-31

- 28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.
- 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.
- 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.
- 31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?
KJV

Some people are among those about whom Paul asks the question, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” There is a definite order to the process but the reality is that not everyone is in this number.

God does not treat everyone the same.

This is a lot of scripture for sure but the modern world is so uncertain about God and His system of Justice that I wanted to demonstrate just a portion of the overwhelming evidence that God lives and moves in a different world than you and I, and that His dealings with men are far more complicated than simply “treating everyone exactly the same.” If he did that, you should realize, everyone would be headed for the New Jerusalem and all talk of a Judgment, Lake of Fire or Salvation from sin would be pointless. All mission work would be useless and all churches unnecessary.

And all of this leads to the question, “Why does God make the decisions He makes?”

We struggle with this concept and we really want to know. Why did God choose Paul and leave so many other Jews with never so much as a visit of conviction in their souls? Why did God choose Israel and not the Edomites, or the Ammonites or the Moabites? Why did He turn the Canaanites out of their homeland so that Abraham’s descendants could have it?

And many have labored over that question until they have given up and decided that either there is no God or than if He exists He is quite unfair and capricious.

There is one thing that is quite certain and it is emphasized in many ways in scripture, God does not have mercy on a soul and choose it to bless because of any inherent goodness in it or by anything that it accomplishes in this life.

Titus 3:3-7

- 3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.
- 4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,
- 5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

- 6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;
7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. KJV

And, again.

Rom 3:20

- 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. KJV

So, what is up?

2 Tim 1:8-11

- 8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;
9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, **but according to his own purpose and grace**, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,
10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:
11 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. KJV

What Romans 2:11 is telling us is that God did not factor into His decision to treat us better than others *anything* that had to do with our intrinsic merit or our accomplished deeds.

One need only look at the great kaleidoscope of people whom He has determined to save to realize there is absolutely no figuring it out.

Son of a priest - John the Baptist

Sons of a fisherman - Peter and Andrew, James and John

Tax collector - Matthew

A Canaanite - Simon

A Thief - name unknown

A Pharisee Assassin - Saul of Tarsus

On and on one could go for 2000 years and never discover a pattern or anything these people had in common apart from the Work of God in their souls.

Not a single one of them *ever* could be honestly said to have deserved the mercy and kindness that God showed them. And not one of them could even explain 'why' even to himself.

Every one of them would testify that God passed by better people than himself/herself on the way to save him/her.

The riddle of God's choices in Redemption may never be solved but one thing will always be clear. "God is no respecter of persons."

There will never be one saved who can honestly say, "It was because of something in me."

Not one redeeming action of God toward anyone has had anything to do with who that person was or is in and of himself/herself.

There are some useful applications of this principle.

Our own humility. We must live embracing the Truth that our Regeneration, our Salvation, had nothing to do with our own goodness, it was all of Grace.

Our hope for others. There are none who are beyond the reach of God. Anytime we begin to think that we are, at the same time, taking up the notion that there are real intrinsic differences between individuals which keeps Him from saving some. It is not true. He is able to save any kind of human and has proven it by doing so. **Don't ever give up on anyone's salvation.... Pray!**