

XII. Romans in Biblical Perspective
The Gospel of God
“Clarity and Reality on the Day of Divine Judgment”
Romans 2:12–16
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III
May 23, 2021 • Sunday Morning Sermon

I will start with the previous verses in order to capture the context of the text for this study in series in Romans. This is a tightly constructed epistle in the Gospel of God. Romans 2:1–11 says *[1] Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. [2] We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. [3] Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? [4] Or do you presume on the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? [5] But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.*

[6] He will render to each one according to his works: [7] to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; [8] but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. [9] There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, [10] but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. [11] For God shows no partiality.

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

It's interesting to see how people respond differently to the same things. When I was younger and would go to class the first thing I would do when I received the class syllabus was find out when the exam was going to be, because I knew for me that was the day of reckoning. It would be the day in which what I put in comes out and that would be the day of accountability, assessment, evaluation and verdict that I would then have to bear afterwards.

God is letting us know that when we're born into this world that we have two appointments and we don't know when they will take place. When know from Hebrews 9:27 that it is appointed unto man once to die and then the judgment. If you are not living when Christ returns you will meet the appointment of judgment, in which God's divine assessment and our accountability focus on that Day. Romans is Paul's exposition of the Gospel of God and Paul's number one desire is to preach the Gospel but because it was not in God's plan for Paul to go to Rome at this time, his plan B was to write this Gospel for them. We see why this was God's plan A for Paul to write this epistle because not only does the church in Rome get blessed but we get blessed for over 2,000 years with this Gospel.

This was the epistle that converted Augustine. Martin Luther called this epistle the clearest Gospel and Luther was converted because of Romans. It was the epistle God used in the conversion of Calvin, Wesley, Whitfield and in the life of a British actor who was in despair, began to read the Bible and read Romans 1:16–17 and said 'this is it.' It was confirmed when he got to Romans 8:1 and he was saved. I saw recently that a Muslim came to Christ after he was handed the book of Romans and said 'now it makes sense.' Another person who was a Jewish atheist recently came to Christ because of the book of Romans. These are people from the

Middle East, North Africa, Europe, North and South America. We don't have to make the Gospel relevant for it transcends all cultures and goes to the most relevant message of all – to answer how a man can be right with God and know the presence of God right within his life.

In this study we will look at Romans 2:12–16 that is really earth shaking and transforming in your life if you grasp it. People probably think I am repeating much of what I'm saying in this study and I would say 'welcome to the book of Romans.' Paul just goes deeper and deeper into the Gospel of God for us to grasp who we are, what Christ has done for us and how we can be right with Him. In this particular text of Scripture we are studying today Paul makes an astonishing statement.

Paul introduces himself and the Gospel in Romans 1:1–15. Then he starts his exposition of the Gospel about the grace of God revealed in heaven from Christ. Romans 1:16–17 says *[16] For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. [17] For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."* Then the wrath of God is being revealed against all ungodliness where in Romans 1:18–32 Paul shows that all pagan Gentiles are under the judgment of God, with no one being innocent. To point to the eternal wrath and judgment of God, He will unleash the temporal wrath of God by giving us over on this side of eternity. Whenever people sin, they try to cover it up with euphemisms, try to blame others, be the victim or they will recruit others into their sin. That is what you see in the culture of death who bring shame in the face of a holy God. There is a decent into the sacrament of sin which is sexual anarchy, sexual immorality – that physical declaration of rebellion against God that sends them into that death spiral.

Then Paul talks about the pagan Gentiles who pass judgment in a way that they take the position of God. We all have to pass judgment but these pagans do toward others as though they are God. We have to pass judgments on what is right, wrong, righteous and sin from the standard of the Word of God, but we don't know the heart of man so we have no authority to sit in judgment over men and their heart in eternity. We can warn them of the judgment of God, not our judgment, which determines eternity. These are judged according to the light that they have. Then in Romans 2:1–16 Paul goes into the Judgment Seat itself. Romans 2:17 Paul will pick up matters in how to deal with the Jew. Paul has said a number of times that the Jew and Gentile are both guilty before God which goes back to Romans 1:16 and this shows how relevant it is. Then Paul will bring it to a consummated statement when he says in Romans 3:23, *[23] all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.* This is why the Gospel of God is so glorious because it saves all who are lost. There is hope and help for all found only in Christ the Redeemer who saves us from our sins.

We need to understand this sin and judgment thing in order to understand the Gospel thing and in Romans 2 Paul throw this grenade into what we have just learned. Here is the text for this study, Romans 2:12–16 which says *[12] For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. [13] For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. [14] For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. [15] They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them [16] on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.*

The judgment by Christ at God's appointment is not a doctrine to set up the Gospel, it is a vital element of the Gospel. If you don't communicate who we are as sinners and that we are all accountable and will appear at the Judgment Seat then you haven't preached the Gospel, because the Gospel is the message that by God's grace you are delivered from your sin and the wrath to come. One commentator put it this way; people won't be brought up to salvation until the Gospel message brings them down and they see their condemnation. We won't speak up to confess our sins and claim Christ until our mouths are shut up when we see our sin before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The Gospel is not good news that Jesus is going to be with you, the Gospel is the Good News that Jesus will save you from your sins and will never leave you. It's not that you get this divine buddy or a religious rabbit foot. It's not if you get Jesus then it will be amazing what it will do for your business or how much better you will feel about yourself in life, no. The Gospel is Jesus who will one day judge the world in righteousness, has come to save you from that judgment through His death, burial, resurrection and ascension. That's the Message. So you can't be brought up in salvation until you realize that sin has brought you down in condemnation and this is not the condemnation of your neighbor or an organization for it is the condemnation of a holy, righteous God as the day of reckoning – the Judgment Day. Paul says this judgment and the reality of our guilt before it, is the initial proclamation of the Gospel. You can't come to Christ for the solution until you understand the desperateness of your situation.

Then you come to Christ and you won't have to be pumped up to sing Amazing Grace, for you can't wait to sing Amazing Grace. I was lost, blind – couldn't see, deaf – couldn't hear, helpless and hopeless and the Gospel came and told me I was all of this as He gave me eyes to see and ears to hear not only about my situation of condemnation but God's Divine solution of salvation in Christ alone. That's why this is so powerful. Paul talks about judgment because judgment is part of the Gospel message which communicates to us the desperateness of our situation to show the magnificence of the Divine solution. Here is the theme I want you to see. The day of Divine judgment is not simply an important doctrine to understand to appreciate the Gospel of God, it is an integral element/part in the proclamation of the Gospel of God.

What are some things it shows? The Judgment Day is a day of reckoning, a day of reality, a day of clarity. I remember people used to tell others 'boy you could use a reality check' or 'you're living in a fool's paradise.' I remember when my dad and I used to talk with people who didn't seem to make a lot of sense and as we walked away my dad would say 'I wonder what color the clouds are in that boy's sky.' Perhaps some of that was our problem but that was my dad's way of saying that it seemed like this person was living in another reality that isn't a reality and he needs to get to reality. The Judgment Day brings us to reality and says 'sorry you're not a victim, there are no excuses, there isn't a pass lane' for we all must appear before the Judgment Day and what has been done in secret will appear before the light. Jesus said we will give an account for every word, the thoughts of our hearts and minds and that Day is part of the Gospel message.

If its not clear then the solution makes no sense. Then the solution becomes a prosperity gospel, a name it and claim it gospel, a therapy gospel, a moralistic gospel, a tribal god for a nation instead of the Gospel of saving grace that is found in Christ – to be saved by grace alone, through faith alone through Christ alone. The glory of what Christ does is unheard of. When you understand that you are dead in your sins, your argument with the sovereignty of God's grace ends, because dead people can't choose to live. There is a sovereign God who doesn't regenerate me when I believe but regenerates so I can believe and the Spirit blows where He

wishes. We don't know where He is coming from and where He is going but we see, hear and feel Him when He comes. That means now I see the glory of His grace.

So let's look at how the Day of reckoning brings clarity and reality from Romans 2:12–16. The first thing this text tells us is that on the Day of Judgment, there is no doubt Who will sit in judgment for God has appointed Christ, His Son to be the Judge on that Day. So here is this Divine appointment coming where if you are in the Book of Life you will have eternal life with Christ and if you are in the books then you will have everlasting condemnation. Those in the Book of Life will have a profile of honor, glory, eternity governing their heart imperfectly, but evidentially in their life. The profile for those in the books is lovers of themselves, obeyed unrighteousness, disobeyed the truth from the heart. Who will make these assessments? It is the Son of God, and from Him will pour forth, what is called in the book of Revelation, the wrath of the Lamb that is so horrific and the place is hell and there is no day of atonement in that Day. Those who hear this assessment will say 'let the mountains fall on us, not the wrath of the Lamb' according to Revelation.

The One who will dispense the unmixed wrath of God – the Lamb – is the same one who over 2,000 years ago went to the cross and bore that wrath as the Lamb of God to save you in your place from that Day of wrath. That wrath that those who pray the mountains fall on them, is the same wrath that fell on Him instead of you on that Day so that you could be saved. Do you see how the judgment becomes a part of and vitally integrated with the very message of the Gospel of God?

Secondly, because it's Christ who brings this judgment, it is a judgment that is impartial and righteous or as we say rightly from Scripture, the judgment we have will be according to the light we have been given. Let's look back at the text. Romans 2:12 says *[12] For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.* According to this, some will be judged by general revelation and some will be judged by special revelation for you are accountable by the light that was given to you but no one is innocent for everyone is guilty and perishes if they haven't come to Christ. Let's continue in the text.

Romans 2:13 says *[13] For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.* We have to be careful here because this is not saying if you work hard enough you can be saved. This is saying when the judgment comes and the lives are displayed those who have saving faith will be evident through a changed life. It's not their work that saves them but Christ's work that saves them by faith. Works aren't the reason for our salvation for they are the evidence that we had saving faith in Christ who did the work of our salvation. If there is a root there will be some fruit – some 30, some 60, some 100-fold. Those who have Christ will be evidenced in that day. So, what about the Gentiles who don't have the written law? Let's continue on in the text.

Romans 2:14 says *[14] For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.* Have you noticed those who don't have the law do instinctively the things of the law? Where do they get this notion of right and wrong or that people ought to be accountable? That comes from general revelation through creation, where God puts the work of the law on their heart. They are made in the image of God.

Think about it this way; the law of God is how we love the Lord with all our heart, soul and mind and how we love our neighbor as ourselves. We are made in His image. The law of God is based upon the attributes of God. Those who don't have the written law of God bear His

image being made in His image so, therefore, when they are born they have the work of the law imprinted upon them, but what do they do without grace? They will suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Their problem is not an information problem but a heart problem. So, did you sin against God having been given general revelation or having been given special revelation? Having handled that to that degree, none who have been in the church of Jesus Christ will be judged under general revelation, for anyone who has been given special revelation (heard His Word preached) and said 'no' to Christ, will come before the Judgment Seat having trampled under your feet the blood of the covenant, when you have been told to flee the wrath to come. Come to Christ today, while it is today. Why would you not come to Christ today?

Thirdly, another reason the Judgment is a vital part of the Gospel of God according to the text is because Divine judgment of our works is applied to reveal the condition of our hearts and therefore our destination for eternity. Romans 2:15–16 says [15] *They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them* [16] *on that day when, according to my gospel, **God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.***

In other words, the judgments of the decisions that we made in life – in thought, word, and deed – when displayed, will reveal the condition of our heart. No Christian in that Day will get a perfect grade or will have done enough to save them for they weren't doing things to save themselves. They did what they did for Christ who gave them a new heart and a new record. If Christianity or practicing Christianity became against the law, would there be enough evidence to convict you? According to the Bible, when we get to the Judgment Day the righteous Judge will declare you had a saving faith in Christ and then show the evidence of it. The profile of this evidence is they wanted from their heart honor, not depravity even though they had to fight depravity because of the old man still living in them. They also wanted eternity to shine through. They wanted glory, worship, and praise to the living God. There's the verdict.

I want to make this very clear that there will be one Judgment and all will be there. The question will be whether you will be in the Book of Life as your life displayed it or will you be in the books where your life displayed you were seekers of themselves, disobedient to truth and obedient to unrighteousness. Paul is not telling us works save, he is telling us that God's salvation works and it will show up. Here is how Jesus puts it; 'Why do you say to Me, 'Lord, Lord' and do not do what I say?' Saving faith, true Christianity, is not a say-so faith but it's a do-so faith. It starts as a say-so where we say we agree with God, that we are a sinner, we have no hope, we're hopeless, and rightly under Your judgment. I believe Your Son died for sinners like me to bring sinners from death unto life, to remove shame, guilt and condemnation. He died to break the power of sin, to help me by grace eradicate the practice of sin, to assure me that one day I'll be with Him where there will be no presence of sin so I say-so that He is my Lord and Savior. Then He says 'if you say-so, now go do-so.' And on that Day the do-so will affirm the say-so. It will not take the place of what Jesus did for you but it will affirm that you cast yourself upon Jesus and what He did. The Christ who paid for your sins will show how He was at work in your life to kill sin and follow Him. When a new life evidences the new heart then you can be assured they had a new record for their sins had been wiped away, paid for by Jesus and His righteousness has clothed them for everlasting life.

Number four, the Day of Judgment will reveal both the depravity of our sin yet the majesty of His grace. As a Christian there will be a day of reality and clarity. Paul says in I Corinthians 13:12, [12] *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.* It will also be a day of clarity and

reality for the unbeliever in which their life will evidence they didn't have that personal relationship with Christ. To get to heaven you have to go through a narrow gate where only one fits through at a time (Matthew 7:13–14). Then you walk on a narrow road on your way to the celestial city. They don't get on the narrow road to get to the narrow gate. No, they get to the narrow gate first, who is Jesus, to get to the narrow road, as they follow Jesus. The Judgment Day will reveal they were on the narrow road even though they may have fallen off a couple of times. There is a mixed dynamic that is there but there is the overall evidence they were walking on the narrow road.

That Day will be a day of stewardship judgment for us. How did we handle our gifts, our skills, our calling, our job, our business, our marriage, your children? What is required of a steward? It is to be found faithful so we're accountable. Everything you do in life will amplify in eternity, but there is one thing many of us have done in life that will show up in eternity and is eternal and that's our children. What did I do with that life that was entrusted to me? There is something that God used me and my wife Cindy to bring into life and their life is forever. Did I make them into an idol? Did I turn them into idolizing me or did I raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? It is a day of doxology.

The Day of Judgment will reveal both the depravity of our sin and yet the majesty of His grace. You have no idea how much Jesus loves you. I have no idea how much Jesus love me, why? It is because He has saved us by grace from our sin. I don't know your sin and you don't know mine, praise the Lord. You know more than others do about your sin but you don't know all of it and on that Day you will see the true length, height, breadth and depth of God's love and grace for you, like never before because He is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. That is what that Day is about – to show you your heart and what He did to save you to give you a new heart and a new record. On that Day we'll see it in all of its glory, it will be fully known.

Fifthly, the Day of Judgment is a day of condemnation for the lost but it's a day of anticipation for the believer. Everything I have just shared with you about this Day I believe with all my heart because it's Bible, now I will tell you something as I look to that day that is speculation. I can sense for me things I didn't do during certain sermons and I know I'm forgiven but I know I will wish that I had been more faithful, but just remember we're never profitable servants, yet we do want to hear 'well done, good and faithful servant.' There is also that sense of anticipation because this God who appointed His Son to die for my sins is my Father and I know how I felt when my small children came up to give me a hand drawn picture of me and my wife. I didn't say 'You can't do any better than this?' The first time they came up with their crayon book they didn't hear 'stay in the lines for cryin' out loud' for you just went gaga over what they showed you and probably thought your child would be an artist one day. That's what I anticipate from my Father for the 'well done.'

The same God who gave His Son to save us now judges us by His Son who took the wrath for us, will then present it to the Father. Ephesians 2:8–10 says [8] *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; **it is the gift of God,*** [9] *not a result of works, so that no one may boast. [10] For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* Here is your workmanship created by Christ and I'm bringing what they did for Your glory to You out of love to Me. I anticipate that Day and I believe it will carry on into all eternity.

Here is the takeaway. It will not be the Gospel message that condemns on the Day of Judgment, but the Gospel message today warns us to flee the wrath of the Lamb on that Day to

come to the triumph of the land in this day. People have asked me if there will be those who spend eternity in hell who didn't hear the Gospel of God and I like what my friend Sinclair Ferguson says about this. When people ask me that I can take them to Romans 1 to show them that we're all accountable for the light we receive and when Ferguson is asked from someone about those who haven't heard, he says 'what are you doing about that?' What if I said right now that we were going to stop training people how to share the Gospel at Briarwood, what would you do? Perhaps I might get an email from you, but I believe you would probably be really upset and rightly so. Have you been trained how to share the Gospel? Have you been sharing the great news of salvation that the One in that Day came to bear your judgment in this day so you could be saved on that Day?

When I go to that Judgment I will be saying 'I know whom I have believed – Jesus.' On that Day Jesus will display 'yes he believed' and I want you to be there in Christ, to live for Christ and to honor Christ. The wrath of the Lamb administered by the Lamb on that Day is administered by the One who has the victory, having bore the wrath of God for us at Calvary so that you can have new life today. If you get there on that Day and you don't know Jesus and the life displays it that will be the only day you ever see Jesus for on that Day He will say, 'depart from Me.' On this day though, you can come to Jesus and Jesus says 'come.' The Gospel says 'come.' The Spirit says 'come.' The church says 'come.' Come, just as you are. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You so much that we can have a new life, not a perfect life that displays a new heart, affirms a new record and we will stand in that Day clothed in the righteousness of Christ, saved by the blood of Christ and with a display of Christ in us – imperfect but a pulse that was beating from death unto life. Father, I pray on this day that You will keep Your people fixed on Jesus and this day would You move us into this world, for we have the Message that tells them of sin and the judgment and that the Judge has come to save them. If you come to Him, on that Day the One who judges will be your Defense. Jesus come and minister and to You glory I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

The Day of Divine Judgment is not simply an important doctrine to understand to appreciate the Gospel of God, but is an integral element in the proclamation of the Gospel of God.

Clarity and Reality on the Day of Divine Judgment

1. Christ the Judge.
2. The Day of Judgment is impartial and therefore according to the Light we have received.
3. The Divine Judgment of our Works is applied to reveal the condition of our Hearts and therefore our Eternal Destination.
4. The Day of Judgment will reveal both the Depravity of our Sin, yet the Majesty of His Grace.
5. The Day of Judgment is a Day of Condemnation for the Lost and a Day of anticipation for the Saved.

Life Takeaway

It will not be the Gospel Message that Condemns us on the Day of Judgment, but the Gospel message warns us to flee the wrath of the Lamb on that Day to come to the Triumph of the Lamb in this Day.