



NG Study Guide: Romans 2:1-16 “God’s Perfect Judgment” [9.15.19]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: Some of the hardest people to share the gospel with are those who are truly trying to be a good person, live a moral life, and do good. Is it fair that God would judge a person who tried to be good? Why would God judge someone who tells the truth, is politically correct, gives to charity, help strangers, and walks to find a cure for cancer and save whales? If the moralist is guilty before God, where can anyone find hope?

It is not until you appreciate God’s promised judgment is perfect fair and right that you seek to receive and begin to appreciate the gift of salvation through faith in Christ. Judgment is part of the gospel message. You don’t appreciate the good news until you understand the bad -God’s judgment is deserved, but salvation is a gift of God through faith in Christ. Let’s consider God’s righteous judgment, and rejoice in His salvation...

A. Good morals cannot save [1-5]

Therefore, you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. ² But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. ³ And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? ⁵ But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God...

The awareness of right and wrong reveals a moral responsibility to God [1-3].

This section begins, *Therefore, you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.* *Therefore,* refers to verses 18-32 where Paul described man’s responsibility to God, and the

consequences of rejecting God. We are *inexcusable* in the sense that whenever we accuse someone else of actions or attitudes that are wrong we acknowledge that there is right and wrong. Furthermore, we often do the same things we judge others about. For example, when we judge someone for being selfish, proud, gossiping, lying, or envy we acknowledge that those on others. The self-righteous struggle to see their own error (sin) [Cf. the prodigal's older brother (Lu. 15), David when confronted by Nathan about Bathsheba (2Sam. 12)].

Those who recognize others' sin are responsible to God for their own sin. *God's judgment is according to truth* [2] is the idea that God's judgment is just. The self-righteous moralist won't *escape the judgment of God* [3], because they *judge those practicing such things, and do the same* or commit their own moral wrong. There are people who believe they go to heaven because they are "good" people; or that God won't judge them because they are better than others or "moral" people, however God is holy, righteous, and just. Accordingly, no sin can enter His presence. God cannot grade on a curve, and no one can be good enough.

The goodness of God should lead us to repent [4] *Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?* God's delayed judgment is to produce repentance. God has the power to avenge and judge sin immediately but graciously delays to give people an opportunity to receive Christ, and thus receive forgiveness of sin and receive spiritual life with God. God primarily hopes to motivate us to come to Him because of His love and goodness, rather than primarily by fear of punishment or his judgement [2Pet. 3:9]. God's delayed judgment is not approval of our sin against God.

The refusal to repent justifies God's judgment [5] *But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* Those who harden their heart to God and refuse to repent continue to sin against God in their actions and attitudes, day by day, month by month and year by year. Thus, they are accumulating offenses against God, and are thus deserving of God's perfect righteous judgment. The moralist who consider themselves to be a good person doesn't appreciate that no one can be good enough to enter God's presence apart from God's forgiveness in Christ.

B. Good works can't save [6-10]

⁶ *who "will render to each one according to his deeds":* ⁷ *eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality;* ⁸ *but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath,* ⁹ *tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;* ¹⁰ *but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

Those who reject Christ will be judged because of their works [6, 8-9].

God will render to each one according to his deeds [6]. It is sobering to realize that God considers the motive as well as the nature of the works [1Cor. 3:9-15]. Prior to yielding to Christ, no one can be properly motivated to show God's love and to glorify God through their deeds. Thus, God's judgment - indignation, wrath, tribulation, and anguish which are consequences of separation from God. Apart from Christ, our "good works" are like filthy rags before a perfect holy God [Is. 64:6, Rom.3:10], because they are not properly motivated and often are contrary to God's ideal of good. If you reject God's gracious offer of salvation through faith, then people are judged based on their works, and the standard is God's perfection [Matt. 5:48].

Those who receive Christ will experience life with God, glory, honor, and peace [7,10]. God gives His righteousness to those who put their faith in Christ (i.e. commit to Him). "Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent" [Jn.6:28-29]. Committing to follow Jesus is *the work*, the only acceptable work to God.

C. All mankind needs a Savior [11-16]

¹¹ *For there is no partiality with God.* ¹² *For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law* ¹³ *(for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified;* ¹⁴ *for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in God the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves,* ¹⁵ *who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else*

excusing them) ¹⁶ *in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.*

The Jew can't say, "I'm not guilty because we have the law and are Jews" [11-13]

For there is no partiality with God [11]. Thus, no preferential treatment for Jews based on ancestry (Similarly, having Christian parents won't save you, unless you receive Christ).

For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law [12] (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified [13]. The Jews had an advantage in the sense that they were the original custodians of God's specific revelation of His commandments (Old Testament), however you would have to do (perform) the law to perfection to justified or right with God [Cf. Ja. 1:22]. "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all" [Ja. 2:10].

The non-Jew can't say, "I'm not guilty because we didn't have the law" [14-15].

for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them). God has given all people a conscience to help us to understand that there is right and wrong. The conscience brings a sense of conviction or guilt when we have done wrong, and a sense of well-being when we have done right. Although the conscience lacks the specific revelation of God's standards as revealed by the Bible and through the work of the Holy Spirit, all people know that they have done wrong.

The moralist can't say "I'm not guilty because I do good" because God judges the secret attitudes and actions [16]. *In the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel:*

No matter how good someone tries to be, and no matter how good others think the moral person is, God knows every attitude and action that is contrary to His perfection.

Judgment is part of the gospel. We cannot appreciate the good news until we understand the bad. Judgment is deserved, but salvation is available as the gift of God through faith in Christ. So, today is the day to receive Christ and rejoice in His salvation.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. What might you say to a person who feels that it is unfair that God would judge a person who tries to be moral and do good?

Q2. When you think about the goodness of God what thoughts come to mind?

Q3. How does the goodness of God make you feel?

Q4. How would you like to apply this lesson to your life?

“Digging Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

1. Here is a provocative study about whether we care more about God’s righteous judgment than we do our own ease <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/thabiti-anyabwile/do-we-care-more-about-gods-righteous-judgment-than-we-do-our-own-ease/>.

2. Here is an interesting article that help you to respond to people who assert that God’s judgment shows that God is evil <https://www.gotquestions.org/is-God-evil.html>

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

Look for opportunities where you can interact with your neighbors by bringing an indoor activity out of the house.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don’t force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible. A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.

3. The "Digging Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities. As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Digging Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

4. Every time you meet consider asking:

a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing? If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.