



# HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

## Good People Getting Judged

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Romans 2:1-3

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*2 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?*

*(Pastor prays)*

Millions of people, good people, church people, respectable people, take strange comfort in knowing that they are better than the common thugs you read about in the paper or see on the news. We lock our doors at night and have alarms for our houses because there are bad people in the world and we need to protect ourselves from them. Whether you voice it or not, you probably actually believe there is an “us” and also a “them,” never believing that “us” is actually “them,” never understanding that there is a solidarity of sin that embraces the whole human race. We constantly reach for the speck in someone else’s eye while ignoring the plank that is in our own. As James says, “My brother, this should not be so.”

In chapter 1:18-32, Paul tells us that God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness, and he outlines many of those sins found out there in the world. And then he shares how all those Gentiles, all those who don't know God, are actually right now under the wrath of God. But he does something unexpected and sobering in Chapter 2. In Chapter 1, he shows us how all the Gentiles and pagans deserve God's wrath. Now he turns his sights to those so-called “holy people,” baptized, respectable, God-fearing people. He turns to people like us, to say we also deserve God's wrath, that “them” is really “us,” that it takes just as much grace to save me as it does the abortion doctor or the drug dealer or the fornicator.

This is a sobering judgment-filled passage. I don't mind giving a full-throated condemnation of the world's sin. There's plenty of it to condemn. But when it turns to *me*, when it becomes *personal*, that's when I get uncomfortable with the message. It's just three verses, but in three verses, the word "judge" or "judgment" is used six times. In every verse the word "judgment" and the word "practice" are used to remind us that what you *do* (practice) and what you *think* (judgment) must match.

There is a natural tendency toward self-deception and we all must come to grips with it. And Paul's description of being judgmental is a clear reminder of our need for God's grace in Christ, a reminder of our need for the Gospel.

### **Our Judgment of Others Calls for God's Grace to Us**

I think there are four lessons we need to hear from this passage today.

#### **Don't look out the window, look in the mirror**

Chapter 2:1 starts with the word "therefore," telling us that to understand what Paul is going to say you've got to know what he has already said. In chapter 1:18-32, God's wrath is revealed against all those who suppress the truth. I want you to notice something about his argument. Let's go back and read Chapter 1:20-23. <sup>20</sup> *For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.* <sup>21</sup> *For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.* <sup>22</sup> *Claiming to be wise, they became fools,* <sup>23</sup> *and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*

Verse 20 says, "So they are without excuse." Chapter 2:1 says, "you have no excuse." Paul is talking to supposed Christian people and saying "you are just as indefensible as everybody else. Don't look *out the window* thinking how bad they are, look *in the mirror* and think what grace you need." Jesus addressed this very thing to the religious in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:27– 8, <sup>27</sup> *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'* <sup>28</sup> *But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

When you are quick to point out others' sin and slow to recognize your own, you deaden the Gospel and commit the sin of hypocrisy. It is the easiest thing to do and the deadliest delusion of all. The sin of hypocrisy is being *indignant* at other people's sin and being *indulgent* of your own sin. Especially if your sin is a "quiet" one and others' are more renowned. It takes grace for both. Jesus died on the cross for materialism and anger and greed and pettiness and pride just like He did for homosexuality. And part of Paul's intent in verse 1 is to say the *big* sinners, they are without excuse; and the *secret* sinners are also without excuse. You need to hear that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins and offers His righteousness to all who will repent and believe! So don't look out the window at them, look in the mirror at yourself and ask, "Have I really believed? Is my heart changed? Am I a totally covered child of God?" If so, we learn to see ourselves and others differently. Don't look *out* the window, look *in* the mirror.

There is a second lesson we can learn from this passage.

### **You Are as Bad as You Think Other People Are**

Let's look at the whole verse now. *2 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?* Here we are again talking about the hypocrite.

Paul underlines the basic human tendency to be critical of everybody except ourselves. We are harsh on others and lenient on ourselves and therefore expose ourselves to the judgment of God and leave ourselves without excuse. This verse speaks to many things, but one of the primary truths here is that we do not understand the nature and extent of sin. We are not realizing that Hell will be full of judgmental, good people.

There are very few things in church life more destructive than self-righteousness. Instead we must realize that God is our standard and not other people. It's not self-righteousness we need but the righteousness of Christ who lived a perfectly righteous life, died on the cross, taking the penalty for sinners. And the Gospel of grace is for everyone who will trust in what Christ has done. That person will be saved, and anyone who trusts in his own righteousness will perish. I need to pause and be clear here. Calling something a sin is not judging. The Bible has clearly

revealed what is and is not sin. Calling sin “sin” is not judgment. It's when you elevate yourself to the position of determining what is right and wrong and yet are an all-out sinner yourself.

Paul is not saying to not make right assessments of sin; we must do that. What he is addressing here is hypocrisy. We don't need to look at the imperfections and sins of others without seeing the perfection of God's judgment in that even the most religious do not fool Him. We need to realize that the unblinking eye of God has heard every word, seen every deed, knows everything, he has searched every motive and laid us bare. Isn't that what Hebrews 4:13 says, *And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.* This reminds us of our personal need for Christ and to be clothed in His righteousness. We need to repent of our own goodness realizing what Terry Bridges says, “Even our tears of repentance need to be washed in the blood of the Lamb.” So verse 1 tells us we are as bad as we think other people are and need the love and forgiveness of God found in Jesus. Don't look out the window, look in the mirror. You are as bad as you think other people are.

Now there is a third lesson.

### **God is as Holy as the Bible Says He is**

Notice the settled statement in verse 2. It's a universal shared truth about God. <sup>2</sup> *We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.* Paul simply says that God punishes sinners. He's just. Justice calls for punishment for crime. Where our judgment and perspective is always flawed, God's judgment and perspective is always perfect. We all agree that God's judgment on those who practice evil is just.

Now we know that God's law has three purposes. It is a mirror to reflect the perfect righteousness of God and our own sinfulness. The civil use is to restrain evil. The law doesn't change hearts but it does inhibit bad behavior. The law guides Christians into good works for God's glory. That's God's law. What about judgment? Judgment is meant to be preventative. Hearing the wrath and the judgment of God prevents us from behavior. 'It's a fear of God's hatred for our sin. Judgment is for conviction. We become aware that God hates sin and will punish our sin. We are awakened to our need for a Savior, and our gratitude for grace is strengthened if we are believers. Judgment is redemptive. God's judgment of sin should take

us immediately to the cross of Christ as we are made aware of His holiness and our need for grace. Judgment is what we deserve; grace is what we get at the cross. The cross is grace.

Let me give you one last thing and I will just touch on it.

### **Escape Isn't Possible; Rescue is the Only Hope**

Let's read verse 3 and try to drink it in. <sup>3</sup>*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?* “Do you suppose.” The word is *logizomai*. It means “logic,” to think, to reckon, to figure out a way, to rationalize, to weigh out your good against your bad. It's a rhetorical question. “You” is emphatic. The obvious answer is “no!”

Escape isn't possible; rescue is the only hope. Thank God there is a rescuer. That's what Paul says in 1 Timothy 2: 5–6, <sup>5</sup>*For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.*

We need a rescuer because no one escapes judgment. That rescuer is Jesus. His life, death and resurrection is how rescue is offered to all who will believe.

*(Pastor prays)*