

An Impartial God

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Romans 2:6-11

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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.

(Pastor prays)

Although God has revealed Himself as a father, He has often shown His love to us through our mothers. Is there on earth a deeper more patient love than that of a godly mother? Giving, sacrificing, lovingly providing, supporting, forgiving mothers. Godly mothers are here to remind us of a higher, holier, even more forgiving love found in God's grace given to us in Jesus. A grace expressed in the life, death and resurrection of His son Jesus. It's given to the world so that anyone here who turns from their sin and by faith believes in Jesus is adopted as a child of God.

That's the Gospel of Jesus and the prevailing theme of Romans. In fact that's what Paul tells us in Romans 1: 16 when he says, *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.* And it's that little phrase right there—to the Jew first and then the Greek—that connects our passages today with his theme back in Chapter 1. Paul is right in the middle of showing us that everyone 'who's ever lived stands in need.

Whether you are a Jew or a Greek, a man or woman, black or white, rich or poor, there are no distinctions before the holy eyes of God. And in Romans 6:6-11, Paul explains for us how God's judgment works.

Many scholars believe that this passage is an early Christian confessional statement that was used to teach believers how God's justice operates, that God's standard is the same for everyone whether you're religious or not religious. You know we're partial and prone to racism, classism and sexism. And this passage reminds us, whether it's in grace or judgment, God is not like us though we imagine Him to be.

This passage tells us our God shows no favoritism.

God's Impartial Judgment Calls for God's Amazing Grace

This passage reminds us— all of us—of our need for the saving and sustaining grace of God found in Jesus. Let's take a look at the passage and let the structure of the text drive the sermon. We will start at the outside edges and work our way in to the middle.

God is impartial in judgment and grace

You can see this truth in verse 6 and in verse 11. Let's read the two together and then pull them apart.

Romans 2:6, He will render to each one according to his works: Romans 2:11, For God shows no partiality.

The themes of this passage are introduced in verse 6. God's justice. God will render— pay— each one according to his works. That's justice, getting what we deserve. If the wages of sin is death and if even our righteousness is filthy rags, then without Christ we stand before God without hope. For the religious or the atheist there will be no partiality. The standard is the same for everyone.

This reflects what James tells us, that faith without works is dead. If there is no Christlikeness, then there's no Christ. This flies right in the face of “fire insurance” Christianity and the bogus sanctity of American folk religion. This passage reminds us that we are saved by faith alone, but faith is never alone. We are saved by grace and judged by works. In fact this passage is a direct quote of Psalm 62 and Proverbs 24. Even Jesus said the very same thing in Matthew 16:27, *For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.* We are saved by grace but how we live matters.

Faith in Christ is not freedom *to* sin but freedom *from* sin. When we are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ, there is a new God-given desire to live for Jesus. From the moment we are saved by grace, we enter into a new responsibility of obedience, and the prevailing mark of new life in Christ becomes obedience to God.

And according to verse 6, each person individually will stand alone to give account. Why? Because of verse 11. God shows no partiality, which is a radical declaration. By the way, this is an original Christian thought and not found before the New Testament. It is another weapon in the war on racism. Before Christ, partiality or “isms” ruled the day. But, in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free, for we are *one* in Christ. If the ground at the cross is level then so is the floor in front of the judgment seat. This reminds us that we all need the saving power of Christ to set us free.

God is impartial in judgment and grace. Let's go to the next point and move a little further into this passage.

God is impartial in who He rewards

You'll find that in two parallel verses, verse 7 and verse 10. Let's read them and talk about them just a bit.

Romans 2:7, to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; Romans 2:10, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.

You hear the impartiality of God in verse 7. Regardless of what you used to be, in Christ your reward is peace and immortality. And when you come to verse 7, that's where you find some of the descriptions of a Christian. Verses 7 & 10 are about life; verses 8 and 9 are about death, both marks of a Christian. A Christian is faithful in the hard things.

Notice verse 7a, “patience in well doing.” This is the humble unseen work of quiet faithfulness. This is the reminder that authentic saving faith invariably shows itself. That word patience means endurance under pressure. Fortitude. Dealing with the same old painful grind in seeking to be obedient to God. This is the Christian version of the movies “True Grit,” “Rocky I,” and “Apollo Creed.” This is what Paul meant in Galatians 6:9 when he said, *And let us not grow*

weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. (By the way, I think this is motherhood.)

Perseverance in adversity becomes the mark of Christianity and the promise that God's grace is sufficient for you. Notice something else in verse 7. Notice the *seeking*. Romans 2:7, *to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life;*

What you have here is the attitude of those who seek certain qualities, not keep certain laws. Their trust is in God, not in their own achievements. Notice the three things in verse 7 that we seek:

We seek glory. The highest desire of every believer is God's glory. Isn't that what Paul meant in when he said in 1 Corinthians 10:31, *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* Do you treat people for the glory of God? Parents? Your mom? Opposite sex? Your eyes? What else do we seek?

We seek honor. To honor God, to seek God's approval, to live in a way that adorns the Gospel and makes being a Christian attractive. Some professing Christians are just plain mean, two-faced. How does that honor God? Kindness honors God, kindness to enemies.

We also seek immortality, the unending joy of His presence, the secret of trusting that there is more to life than this. This is a radical reorienting of life. This is a change in values and what you see as important and what you give your life to. As believers in Jesus we orient our lives to the things that moths can't eat nor rust destroy. And that reward is immortality and the real peace with God in verse 10. It is something found at the cross but given freely and without partiality to anyone who will believe. God is impartial in judgment and grace. God is impartial with who He rewards.

God is impartial in who He punishes

This brings us to the very middle of the passage where it's the strongest and most important statement of God's judgment. Let's read verses 8 - 9 together and discuss. Romans 2:8-9, *but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek,*

There are three descriptions of those who are not in Christ and four words that give us insight into God's judgment.

Let's look at the three descriptions first. Self-seeking. This is someone who does everything for himself, is totally wrapped up in himself and has no room for God. Our world promotes this, and the most common picture of it is a selfie. Verse 8b says "do not obey the truth." This is someone in open rebellion, someone who has heard the Gospel, understood it and has still rejected it. Some of you are here.

Verse 8c says "obey unrighteousness." This has the feel of someone who at one time claimed Christianity but has now put himself in the opposite camp. They have given in to their allegiance to evil and not to God. It is an absolute high-handed display of rejecting God and all He calls for.

And in verse 8 - 9 let's look at the words of judgment that are piled up. Wrath. Fury. Tribulation. Distress.

Let's look at wrath first. God's groaning, swelling, multiplying anger at sin. It's when God's grace and mercy have been fully exhausted and only judgment remains.

Fury. An agitated pursuing anger in which there is nowhere to hide and no excuse to give.

Tribulation. Extreme pressure. It's stress and anxiety pressing down on your soul.

Distress. It is a narrowing constricting confinement. It is claustrophobia pressed in so you can't get your breath.

Add those four together and you get just a feel of God's judgment. For every human being who is not in Christ, God's judgment is impartial. But thanks to God His grace and mercy is impartial as well. Isn't that what Jesus meant in John 7? John tells us on the last day, on the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, "Is anyone thirsty? Let him come to me and drink.

Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, from his innermost being, shall flow rivers of living water." God's impartial judgment calls for God's Amazing Grace.

(Pastor prays)