

The wrath of God - the plight of mankind

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Preacher: Philip Wells

[0:00] We are going to continue looking into this book. If you're not familiar with it, the book of Romans is a letter written in the early days of the Christian church to the congregation in Rome.

To the church in Rome, it's written by the Apostle Paul. Apostle means one of the sent ones of Jesus Christ, one of the key Christian missionaries, and he's explaining what his message is. And we have been looking at this under the heading of Fundamentals. And the fundamental thing that he's talking about and that we're going to think about this morning is the bit in chapter 2, which is to do with the wrath of God.

And he, no, this is my introduction, people dismiss Christianity. People make excuses about Christianity. And they say, why bother? Why worry about religious stuff? Most people don't. It's old-fashioned. Why bother?

And people will say, is Christianity relevant at all? I mean, most churches, people will say, are filled with people who are about to breathe their last breath.

[1:23] It's always boring, cold. The seats are uncomfortable. It just shows how actually few people go into a church to find out. But is it relevant today? People say, no, it isn't. They say, no scientist is a Christian. Science challenges Christianity. Actually, it's not true. There are scientists who are Christians.

Atheists accuse religion of folly and evil. They say it's stupid and it's bad. Interesting to know where atheists get the idea of bad from.

That's a moral idea. Science doesn't teach morality. Anyway, people say this sort of thing. And people would say, anyway, God loves everybody. We're all children of God. There are many ways. Why bother?

Doesn't he smile on everyone benignly? Do you know this word benign? It means in a harmless, ineffectual sort of way. I found as I've got older and my hair has got even towards white, that when I smile at people, they smile back at me.

They think, there's a harmless gentleman who's getting older and older. And he smiles benignly. Probably can't even see who he's looking at. And they think, God is like that. He just smiles at people in a benign sort of way. And you might actually might be thinking something slightly different.

[2:47] But say, well, I've come along to church. I've been, you know, loads of times. I often go to church, you know, once a year, once every decade. Can I be, I'm personally securing the knowledge that I go to church fairly often.

And if push came to shove, I would say I am considerably better than such and such a person. So I feel secure in my knowledge that I'm better than other people in a very quiet sort of way. These are the sum of the sort of dismissals of Christianity and excuses that people make.

And in this chapter, the apostle Paul takes an axe to these excuses. And he takes an axe to these dismissals of Christianity.

And that's what I hope we will be able to look at this morning. What's the story so far? The story so far is in one, chapter one, verse 16. Paul has said he is not ashamed of the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ.

[3:54] I think he's doing a, there's a figure of speech, which I can't remember, where you take one side and you really mean the other side. He's saying, I'm not ashamed, meaning I'm really, the gospel of Jesus Christ is just the best possible thing.

I think that's what he's saying. And he explained why. He says it's the power of God, chapter one, verse 16, for the salvation of everyone who believes. And it's global, the Jew and the Gentile. And in this gospel, in this good news message, a righteousness from God is revealed. So he says that this is a very powerful, special, precious message.

And he says it comes by faith. And this faith business makes it remarkably different from other messages. We're not used to that these days because we think all religions are about faith and we call them faith communities.

But actually, Paul says faith is a very specific thing to the way we relate to the God of the Bible. And in chapter 321, he says, if you just whip over to that, he says, But now a righteousness from God has been made known.

[5:07] So there's a sense in which this is a new entry into the history of the world. Now a righteousness from God has been made known. It's revealed now. And it is urgently needed, Paul was saying in the passage we looked at last week, because God is.

Because we live in a world in which, around which, made by whom, is God. If there were no God, it would be an irrelevant thing.

But there is God. He says that's why the gospel is relevant. And this God who is, is our creator. And he's made everything in his magnificence and power and glory.

And he surrounds us with expressions of his glory. And it says, since the creation of the world, or from the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen.

He says there's something in this world that shouts out, God is God. And the God who has made everything is great and fantastic and amazing and brilliant. And if you wanted just one particular example, you have to think of stars.

[6:23] Okay. Now, best current estimate is that some of the stars are miles away. That is just flung everywhere. And you could say, well, that shows how insignificant people are.

Well, you could look at it that way. But I think the Bible would say it's an invitation to see how big God is. Because this creation that he's made, you know, God could hold the whole thing, as it were, in the palm of his hand.

And to us, it's vast. And we think, well, how much bigger God must be? His vast glory. God is our creator. And God is our judge.

Because if you make something, you are entitled to judge it, aren't you? So I've made a few guitars, actually. And I look at them and I think, that bit's not right around there.

Wish I'd taken more time on that. Or I cracked that bit when I bent it. I made it. I can judge it. And the Bible says God made us, has made the world. And he is in the position that he can judge and he will judge.

[7:24] And Paul says that this, let me just take this off because it's making the microphone make funny noises.

There is a fact that you cannot get rid of that God reacts, the holy good God reacts against sin and wickedness with wrath.

And I've called it a brute fact. He doesn't stop to prove it. He says, this is so obvious and so much a given. This is the world we live in.

He says it in verse 18. The wrath of God is being revealed against sin and wrong and rebellion.

The wrath of God is still in the future. So chapter 2 verse 5 he says, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

[8:40] And he says in 2.16, this will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ as my gospel declares. So he says this is just fundamental basic.

The God who made the world at some beginning point will end the world at some end point and he will judge it. And there is a day coming when that will happen. And this will be a day when all that is unholy and irreverent and wicked will be judged.

It's a day of God's wrath. And he says, that's just inescapable. That's coming. And if you're not too sure about it, God's wrath is actually being revealed now. If you look around in the world, the sort of world we're in is full of beauty.

But it's also full of things that are going bang, bang, you know, going wrong and nasty things happening. And he says this is, this is not an accident. This is what happens in a world made by God if you don't acknowledge God that he, this is the way it is.

And the wrath of God is now being revealed. No doubt that there is wrath from this God of wrath. And that's what we were looking at last time.

[9:56] And Miles made some very helpful points on explaining all about how that worked. But we won't stop on that now. Why is God wrathful to humankind? It goes back to his being God and his being a God of glory.

And our response is an appalling, shocking, irreverence, apathy, insult.

You know, you can insult people in a very nice way just by ignoring them, can't you? Go into a room, just ignore somebody. Very deep insult. And we just ignore God. Nor God put him to one side, as Miles said, shut him out.

How dare we? As a race. How dare we? That God has given us so much. How dare we treat him the way we do?

And in verse 18, it's not the wrath of God being revealed against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

[11:01] And I just want to pick up on a couple of words. Godlessness word means irreverence. Not godly. Not reverence. It's saying there should just be a very deep response to God of reverence and worship and wonder.

And what actually our human race does is use his name as a swear word. And this that I was just hinting at with the boys and girls, he says that he was known, but, which verse is this?

Verse 21. Although they knew God, and there's a sense in which every human being knows there's a God, they did not glorify him as God, nor give thanks to him. And our human race is fixed on not giving God glory.

Not thanking him. And rather, exchanging his glory, taking the glory that belongs to God and the thanks that belongs to God, and pinning them on something else instead.

And as we were told last week, this is a sort of hardwired thing. We just do it. And we give glory to created things and created people and created ideas and put them on the center stage when we should be glorifying God.

[12:23] And Paul says, if you understood this properly, you should tremble. Churches have got so used to being places where everybody gets patted on the back and comforted and have a nice time and sing some nice songs.

And Paul would say, that's fine, but there should be a time when you should tremble. You think how great God is. And what sort of totally inadequate response we have given to him.

And totally blameworthy response we have given to him. We should tremble. We should turn in deep shame. Martin Luther said about meeting God, he says, if you've never met God as adversary, you've never met him.

So if you've been thinking about becoming a Christian and so on and so on, there must be something in that in which you realize that God says, you're wrong.

He says that to you. You're wrong. And in which, perhaps in a big way or perhaps just in a very deep but just tender sort of way, you have to come to the point of saying, I am wrong.

[13:42] I'm very wrong. Got it all wrong. Deeply wrong. We should tremble.

We should turn in deep shame. And if there is a way that we can be brought back from that appalling position of being under the wrath of God, we should grab it with both hands.

And there is a way. And of course, that's exactly what Paul is saying. He says that's what Jesus came to bring. That's what Jesus accomplished. A way back to God.

And if we've begun to grasp what an appalling situation we're in without God, we should take this offer with both hands.

If Jesus says there's a way back, I want it. If Jesus did something to bring me back, let me have it. Would you agree with that?

[14:45] So in the bit that we've got to now, Paul is tackling excuses. And in chapter 2, verse 1, he says, you therefore have no excuse. It is singular.

So he's not saying you lot have no excuse. He's pointing the finger. Perhaps even this is what he said in the synagogue. Perhaps when he went into the synagogue, somebody would stand up and say, Brother Paul, you're very learned, but I think you've got this wrong.

And he would say to this person, excuse me, I've got to point at somebody. And he would say, you, oh man, are without excuse. So it's singular. And he's quite confrontational about this.

And he says in 120, does he not? He says this more generally. Humankind, men, are without excuse.

And he says it in chapter 2, verse 1. You have no excuse. And later on, he's going to carry on to the same theme. So somebody's going to say, well, this is all rather philosophically unacceptable.

[15:46] God is unjust, bringing his wrath on us. And Paul's going to say, absolutely wrong. So he's going to pin this argument on people and say, you are wrong to dismiss this.

You are wrong to make excuses. And he has two particular groups in mind, the Jew and the Gentile. So let's look at what he's saying here. So have this in mind, Jew and Gentile.

Back in those days, you could argue this is the biggest division in the human race that there has ever have been. You know, sort of forget about differentiation on color and ethnicity.

This is Jew and Gentile, biggest, a huge divide. And you could say, actually, a divide that God has put into the human race. Of course, he was the one who chose the Jewish people, wasn't he?

And notice that, as Paul goes on in his letter, he's going to say that there's one thing that unites Jew and Gentile. And that's the church of Jesus Christ.

[16:49] And he's going to go on later on to say, perhaps in quite particular ways, how Jew and Gentile can work together and belong together in one new man in the body of Jesus Christ.

And if you get that, that shows God is in the business of doing miracles. If you can get a church with these people working together, day by day, year by year, situation by situation, that's the power of God.

Now, think about the Jew. So, the one nation that God took under his wing, you alone of all the families of the earth, have I blessed, have I loved?

I think it says in one place. They are the ones given the clarity in a written form of God's ways and God's will. So, they have the law.

And that's one of the things that Paul is going to pick out several times. They have the law. He's also going to say that of all the nations of the world, these are the ones called sons.

[17:52] Do you remember when there was the thing in Exodus? Let my son go that he may worship me. If not, I will smite your firstborn son.

So, there's a sonship thing going on with the Jew. And there is, of course, the unfading mark of circumcision. This would be for the male members of the Jewish nation.

Different to, of course, different to baptism, a Christian mark, which washes off if you see what I mean. But the circumcision was an unfading mark. So, the Jew is one group of people that he's going to refer to.

And the Gentile, does it say Gentile or does it say Greek? Jew or? First for the Jew, then for the Gentile. The idea being all the other nations.

Sometimes he will say Greek, meaning to say the other lot. The nations. And there's a Gentile. And what we could say, just in summary, relatively speaking, God has left the Gentiles to themselves.

[19:00] Now, he hasn't completely left them to themselves because they can see stars, can't they? They can see the sun and the rain. God sends the sun and the rain on all the nations. But they don't have the law.

They don't have the law of Moses. And characteristically, they would end up being worshippers of idols. So, they take God's creation with trees and elephants and things like that.

And then they completely mistake what it's there for and worship created things rather than the creator. So, there's our two groups that he's going to think about.

And also, of course, the Gentiles not having the law of God. Their sensitivity to things like sexual morality is all over the place. Okay.

So, let's look at what it says. You have no excuse. Chapter 2, verse 1. You who pass judgment on someone else. For at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself.

[20:02] Because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now, we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth.

So, when you, man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? So, the Jew judges other people.

So, he's particularly pointing the finger. He's not the only person that does that. He has a particular reason to do so. There have been many, many people, still are, who will say, at least I'm better than them.

I'm better than him. Better than her. But Paul says, this is what you characteristically do. You've got a sense that you're better. You're much better informed, shall we say, than other people.

But what do you do? Notice there's going to be an emphasis on doing. Verse 13. You who pass judgment, verse 1, do the same things.

[21:05] Verse 3. When you pass judgment and yet do the same things. You do the same things. There's going to be more on that.

It's later on in the passage, which we haven't got to this morning. But he says, you know, you pass judgment. You say this, but I can see you.

God can see you. God sees what you do. And you point the finger at other people. And the finger points back at you. It's a true statement, isn't it?

Actually, anybody, you set yourself up and say, at least I'm better than that. And actually, you find in your conscience, actually, well, hmm.

The Jew has privilege. Verse 3. No, verse 4. Do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness and tolerance and patience?

[22:16] You, Jewish person, or other people as well, but particularly Jewish person, look at you. You've got hundreds of years of history, haven't you? You've probably got a family tree.

You probably did it on ancestor.com if it had existed in those days. And you can look back and, you know, Rabbi so-and-so was your grandfather and Rabbi so-and-so. All this privilege.

And the way God's looked after you and your family and your nation for generations. And he's been kind and showed you riches of kindness and tolerance.

And he's put up with your bad temper and your ingratitude. The way you spoke to your children.

The way you spoke to your wife. All of those things he put up with that. And generation after generation, year after year, day after day, he's been kind and patient to you.

And that is meant to lead you to repentance. Repentance is saying, I was wrong.

[23:25] Repentance is turning round and saying, I was going in the wrong direction. I was thinking the wrong way. I need to turn. And the Jewish person, or whoever this person is, is saying, well, look, God's so kind to me.

Look at what, you know, look at the car I've got. Look at the beautiful wife I've got. Look at the money I've got. God's so kind to me. He must think I'm wonderful. And what Paul is saying is, God is so kind to you.

It's meant to lead you to think, I was wrong. And you fail to repent. And he says in verse 5, what you've got here is stubbornness.

And an unrepentant heart. And he said, what you are doing all this time, you're just blithely, blissfully carrying on. God must think I'm pretty great, you know, and I'm certainly better than them.

And all the time you're thinking that what you're actually doing is adding more and more to this weight of judgment that is stored up on the last day.

[24:35] That's what he says, isn't it? You are storing up, the word is treasure, you are treasuring up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

Treasuring up wrath for the day of wrath. And he says, this is just such a deep mistake. To interpret God's patience as his indifference or his approval.

You think of our nation, our culture, our European culture. We have so much, don't we? We have so much. We have security. We have, you know, rich nations, count them all up.

European nations are up there. We have health systems. We have transport systems. We have all this. And we might interpret that and say, well, God must think we're pretty great.

When in fact, all the time, we are failing to glorify God, failing to honor him, failing to give him thanks. And God is just being very patient, giving us more time. I wish you would repent.

[25:58] Let's go on. And think about this judgment that he's going to talk about. So we've got to verse 6 now. He's talking about the day of his wrath when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

And God will give to each person according to what he has done. That's in verse 6. And it's a quotation from the Old Testament of the Bible. God will give to each person according to what he has done.

And he says this is, let us be very clear on the fundamentals of judgment. He says in verse 16, this will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

And, of course, these are both saying the same thing, slightly different ways. God's judgment is about the hidden secrets of the heart. And the hidden secrets of the heart are known not by what you know or the books you've got on your bookshelf or the fact that you were confirmed or circumcised or whatever you were.

What you know or what you can say off by heart. But what deeds come out of your life. Now, when I'm saying deeds, I don't mean when you're just on your best behavior.

[27:15] But looking at the whole thing, you know, a little bit like when these politicians say something in a meeting, forget the microphone is still turned on.

And then go and say, what a stupid person that was. So God notices all of that. He doesn't notice the best behavior bit. He notices the other bits as well. And what the Bible is saying here is that God will judge on the totality of what we've done because what we've done accurately reflects what we're like on the inside.

And, of course, this tells us that God's judgment is totally fair. It's totally fair. Isn't that the principle there? God will give to each person according to what he has done.

There can be no fairer payback than that, can there? What people have done. And he gives us a set of options here.

So there's the heart, the secret bit, the inside bit. And those are the things that come out. And he says that this is what God will be looking at. So can we notice the references to doing?

[28:29] Verse 1. Am I right? Verse 1. You who pass judgment do the same things. Verse 2.

God's judgment is against those who do such things. Verse 6. He will give to each person according to what he has done. Verse 7. To those who do good.

Verse 7. Verse 8. To those who. Am I right? Is it in verse 8? No, it's verse 9. Those who do evil. Verse 10.

Verse 10. Glory, honour and peace for those who do good. Verse 13. It is not those who hear the law who are righteous, but those who do the law.

Verse 16. Yeah, the hidden secrets of the human heart. God will look at what we have done. And you might say, well, that's okay then.

[29:30] That's okay then. That's alright then. Because I'm a lot better than so and so. But I think that's a very bit of a superficial response, isn't it? If you like to think of actually what you've done.

Becomes a bit of a nightmare, doesn't it? Maybe it's just me, but I can wake up in the morning thinking of the things I've done. Oh, if only I hadn't done that. If only I hadn't said that.

I don't know. Perhaps it's just me. I don't know. Maybe you have the same thought. I'm so ashamed if God would see that. Well, of course he does see that. So I don't think the fact that judgment is according to what we've done should give us any comfort at all.

Bear in mind, it's not weighing up. Good things, bad things. Oh, good things. It's not weighing up. It's diagnosing what's on the inside. Oh, it looked good. That speech that the politician made was so brilliant and so self-love.

Oh, hang on a minute. That little comment afterwards shows that there's actually something in the heart which is not quite as good as what you would have thought it was. And our hearts are not different to politicians' hearts, are they?

[30:41] God sees exactly what we have done and how our heart's motives are betrayed in our actions. So I think we should tremble at the thought that God judges according to what we have done.

There was a funny sketch. Do you know, I didn't look it up so I can't tell you the details about giving a tip in a cafe. And the person giving the tip gives the tip and then realizes that the waitress had looked away momentarily.

And he thought, so you think, why was I giving that tip? I was actually giving the tip to impress the waitress. So he puts his hand in the tip box and takes the tip out again so he can give it again when she's looking.

And what she sees is him taking it out. You get the picture of it, don't you? I mean, all these sorts of complicated things about what we do and why we do them. I don't think it puts us in a good light at all.

So now Paul says, he sort of sets up two sorts of people, which I've called type A and type B. And we'll look at what he says. So in verse 7, he says, to those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, he will give eternal life.

[32:06] So these are people who persist in doing good. So it's not something they just do when somebody's watching them. And they're seeking glory and honour and immortality.

This is what all the things that God is. He is glorious and full of honour. And he says, this is somebody who in his heart is seeking the glory and honour and immortality of God.

And to such person or persons, God will give eternal life. And then he gives the opposite, verse 8. For those who are self-seeking, who reject the truth, truth about God, and follow evil or who obey evil.

They disobey the truth and they obey evil or unrighteousness. He says, to such people there will be wrath and anger. Okay, two sorts of people.

Let's follow it again. He says the same thing again in the opposite way. He says in verse 9, there will be trouble and distress for every soul of man, every human being who does evil.

[33:24] So he's putting it the other way around now. Trouble. Flipsis. Trouble. Distress. Distress. Means being put into a narrow place.

Distress. For everyone who does evil. And now he brings in these other two divisions. For Jew and Gentile.

First for the Jew. Then for the Gentile. This applies to both. And then go back to his other categorisation. So we're back to type 8. Glory, honour and peace.

For everyone who does good. And then he brings in this again. For the Jew. This is the same. For the Jew and the Gentile.

Listeners are perhaps wondering why he's saying this. But that's what he says. You've got what God looks at and looks for. He looks for that in the Jew and the Gentile.

[34:25] And what God will give wrath and anger and trouble and distress. Accounts for the Jew and for the Gentile. It's a universal thing. And the Jew.

As we see. That's just what it says. In verse 11. He says God does not show favouritism.

Favouritism. Favouritism is made up of a word for face.

And the word for receive. So. It's saying that God doesn't just look at your face. I've never been in this situation.

I could imagine the situation where you're in a queue of people. And the person at the counter or the person at the door says. Oh. Is that Gina?

Hello Gina. No you. Come to the front of the queue. See. I've been just because I knew her face. But it says God doesn't do that.

[35:23] God doesn't do that. He says no. We're all in this together. Is it persistence in doing good? Or is it doing evil? That's what I'm going to be looking at.

I'm not going to look at your face. I'm going to look at what you do. And he says. Here is the Jew. Verse 12.

All who sin apart from the law will perish apart from the law. I'll come back to that in a moment.

Those who sin under the law will be judged by the law.

And I think you can see that his congregation. Congregation is beginning to get a little bit disturbed by where this is going. And it definitely goes there.

But you can see the disturbances. Because the Jewish people I'm imagining are saying. Where are you going with this Paul? We have the law. And Paul says.

[36:20] Well if you sin under the law. You will be judged by the law. We have the law. But it's not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight.

But those who do it. It's getting uncomfortable. And the Gentiles. Who perhaps are sitting at the back in the synagogue. All those who sin apart from the law will perish apart from the law. And then again he comes back to the Gentiles. Verse 14. Indeed the Gentiles who do not have the law. Well we told you that Paul. They don't know.

They're ignorant. They're ignorant. Rubbish the Gentiles are. Well they don't have the law says Paul. But you know. They can. Let's think of this.

Do by nature. The things of the law. Because in a sense they are a law for themselves. Gentiles. Even Gentiles know right from wrong. Even Gentiles know what a good parenting is.

[37:22] They know that because of the way that human beings are made up. Even Gentiles know that if you're in a relationship. There is such a thing as cheating in a relationship.

And cheating is wrong. Even Gentiles know that. They are for themselves a law. They're a law for themselves. In a sense. And yes.

If they sin apart from the law. They perish apart from the law. But if they don't have the law. They can be a law for themselves. They've got that inside them.

And there's all these sorts of things going on. Like he says in verse 15. Their consciences bearing witness. And there might be in their hearts.

Some sort of work of the law. And their thoughts accuse them. Because Gentiles. So I guess most of us are Gentiles here. You know what it is.

[38:16] If you're a Gentile. They say I felt really bad about that. Oh I felt really bad about that. Even Gentiles. Their consciences accuse them. And says Paul.

And we don't like where this is going. He says even defending them. So where's Paul going with this? He's going to give us two shocking thoughts.

Or two shocking developments. Here's number one. The Jew. With all his historic privileges. And pride. Who is condemned.

And I'm not trying to make an ethnic point about. I'm just talking about the people. To whom he was speaking. And the way they were thinking. And they were thinking. We have the law.

We're God's favorite people. I mean come on. And Paul's saying. Actually you can have the law. And you can be condemned. I don't think Paul's going to get invited back to the synagogue.

[39:22] To speak next week. And if this archetypal person. To whom Paul is speaking. This person.

To whom he pointed his finger. You oh man. If this man. Cannot be secure. And safe from the wrath of God. Because of the privileges that he's got.

How much. Less. If you are sitting here. As the chairman of the golf club. And thinking well God can't possibly. Have anything against me. I'm the chairman of the golf club.

If the Jew couldn't. With all his historic biblical privileges. Couldn't be safe. How on earth do you think. You're going to be safe. By being the chairman of the golf club. Or you might be sitting there. Thinking those chairman of the golf clubs.

They're so stuck up themselves. They are. I'm not that sort of person. I'm just a good laugh. God won't have anything. To criticize me for. Because I'm a good laugh.

[40:24] Just being a good laugh. Or a good bloke. Or a good mate. Do you think. That if that Jewish person. With his hundreds and years.

Of. Culture. And. Privilege with God. Could not be safe. That you can be safe. Just because you're a good laugh. So here's one shocking thought.

That a privileged person. Might not be safe. In fact as he says. Has no excuse. And here's another thought.

That the Gentile. In all his ignorance and darkness. Who. This is the possibility. That Paul is. Is playing with.

Might be. Rewarded by God. Or maybe a Jew. Or a Jew. Or maybe a Gentile. Might. As Paul says. Do good.

[41:22] And receive glory. And honor. And peace. Or maybe a Gentile. Let's just find the other one. Where it says. Who. Persists in doing good. Receives. Eternal life.

I can't be right. That can't be right. Right Paul. Gentiles aren't circumcised. Gentiles don't know. Which day of the week's which. But Paul says. Well actually. The heart of the matter. Might be there. With a Gentile. Paul's definitely. Not getting invited. Back next time. How could a crude Gentile. Ah. Here's a question.

How could he ever get. The law. To prevail. In his heart. How could he ever get that. In such a shape and form. That he was motivated. To keep the law.

How could that ever happen Paul. Well. Paul's going to explain this. He's going to say. I'm going to tell you a way. That even Gentiles. Can receive the favor of God.

[42:17] And be brought into a right place. With God. And it's. It's certainly more subtle. Than saying. They just manage it on their own. But they are Gentiles. And it is.

The. Privilege. And. The glory. Of Jesus Christ. That what he did. Works for Gentiles too. Which is good news for us. Because most of us are Gentiles.

Aren't we? What he achieved. Can be received. In this. Groundbreaking. Thought of. By faith. And that his death. And resurrection. Can give a righteousness. Even to Gentiles.

Who spiritually speaking. Don't know which day of the week it is. Sort of thing. Yeah. Even they. Can receive this righteousness. This is by faith. And God can work.

[43:14] In even their hearts. To as it were. Write the law inside them. In such a way that. What the law. Could not achieve. The Holy Spirit.

Does achieve. In actually making people. Whose hearts are set. On glory. And honor. And immortality. I mean. Not perfectly. But in a sense. That this actually produces.

The desired result. So. Where does this leave us? It leaves us. Without excuse. Paul's saying. Whoever you are.

You don't have an excuse. Spell it out. You. Somebody who think that. Christianity is foolish. You say. There's no evidence for it.

It's just for the intellectual peasants. Of this world. And. And God is saying. Right back at you. The peasant is you. Because.

[44:08] This. The person who is blind and stupid. Professor so and so. Is you. Because God has made it absolutely clear. Who he is.

And how glorious he is. And if you can't see it. It's. Because you. Are blind. And foolish. And people say. Oh well. Christianity is irrelevant.

I don't feel the need to be a Christian. I can do lots of other good things on a Sunday. There are lots of other nice people to meet. I like your songs. You're very cheerful. But.

I don't want to take it any further than that. And to this person. Paul says. You are so stupid.

Because the point of being a Christian. Is not that we will have a happy time. And like one another. Although that's. That's great. That's certainly part of it. But the point is this. There's a day of judgment coming. Everybody's going to face God. On that day of judgment.

[45:05] And would you dare. To go forward to that judgment. With all its fearful implications. Which ought to make us tremble.

To say. Oh. I heard the way of salvation. But I didn't think it was relevant. What. More.

Ridiculous thing. Could anybody say. Or perhaps. Perhaps we think about our innocence. And as somebody says. Well I'm just such a good person. You know.

I haven't. I haven't killed anybody. I haven't cheated. Well. I haven't cheated too much. I'm certainly better than them. And God.

And Paul says. Do you not realize. What God sees. In your life. The very fundamental irreverence. That your life is based on.

[46:04] This great God. And all you can think of. Is that he's a bit like a horoscope. You know. A look in. Oh yes. You'll meet a dark handsome

stranger today. And your business will go well.

That's it. You know. That's what God is to me. He just does a few things like that. And don't you realize. That God will look at our lives. And see. He won't be fooled.

Our actions betray. What's in the heart of us. Do you think. Our innocence. On that great day. When we stand before. A holy. Holy God. That it will be.

Faintly. Conceivably. Possible. To stand before God. And say. Well I'm all right. And those who. Take excuse in their privilege. Whatever it might be. Whichever way round you put it. It's not our ridiculous rags.

[47:13] Of knowledge. Or our veneer. Of morality. To one another. That can save us. From his wrath. There is no one righteous.

No not one. What we need. What we all. Desperately. Deeply need. Is Jesus Christ.

And what he did. And his righteousness. And his forgiveness. And his power. And everything. That the cross has.

And Paul would say. Not only would he say. You. Oh man. Are without excuse. But he would say. Before you leave. This building today. You would be a wise person.

If you said. Jesus Christ. I need you. And if you were to say. I need you so much. I'm not budging an inch. Until I know I've got you.

[48:11] Until I've got you. And what you've achieved. And what you stand for. And what you promise. And everything that belongs to you. That's what I need.

That's what I need. And I cannot go on. Without you. Let's have a quiet moment. Before we sing. And maybe you'd like to pray. A prayer like that.