

The Verdict of God

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[0 : 0 0] Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word. Father, we thank you that it speaks the truth. And so, Father, we pray that you would help us to have ears to hear, minds to understand, and hearts that would seek to live in light of this truth.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Ali, I might get you to unplug that fold back. Now, I'm going to take a bit of a risk this morning.

I'm going to start with a joke. Okay. I was told it was about an out of 10. The funny scale was about a 2. So, we'll see how it goes.

A man had died. It's a pearly gates kind of thing. A man had died and he fronted up to the gates of heaven. St. Peter asked why God should let him in. And the man replied, Well, I've been a pretty good bloke.

Not perfect, but certainly better than others. You know, better than those bikers around the pub in my street. In fact, I even rescued a lady from them.

[1 : 0 9] Really? St. Peter said. Yeah, I saw them hassling her. And so, I crossed the street, told them to leave her alone, kicked over their bikes and told them that I mean business. Wow, said St. Peter.

When did you do all that? The man replied, about two minutes ago. Maybe a 3 out of 10. Now, while it's not a hilarious joke, it does, and I don't think St. Peter will be at the gates of heaven marking people off a roll or anything like that, but it does highlight the point that was highlighted for us in the kids talk.

And that is, people still think that getting to heaven is about doing good things, about being good, or at least better than someone else, the person next to you.

And there were people like that in Paul's day who thought the same way. You see, in chapter 1, Paul announces the news or the gospel. Gospel means news, news of Jesus.

And in chapter 1, verse 16, if you've got your Bibles there, he says that, I'm not ashamed of the gospel because it's the power of God that brings salvation.

[2 : 2 0] Okay? The gospel is God's power to save people. How? Well, in verse 17, it tells us, because in this gospel, God's righteousness is revealed. He gives us righteousness.

He makes us right with him. And the reason we need to be right with him is because of verse 18. It says, the word for is missing, but for the wrath of God is being revealed against all the godlessness and wickedness, or literally unrighteousness of people.

And as we saw last week, our unrighteousness is pretty bad. I mean, we reject the truth that God is God, which leads to all sorts of things. Like, have a look at chapter 1, verse 29, for example.

Chapter 1, verse 29, you know, people have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, depravity, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, gossips, and so on.

It's pretty bad. And so we need to be made right with God. We need his righteousness so that we can be saved from the wrath, his judgment that we deserve.

[3 : 2 7] But there were some people who would hear all of this in chapter 1 and think, you know what? We're not as bad as that people in verse 29 in that list. We're not as unrighteous as they are.

And there would have been people who thought, we're actually pretty good people. And so they pass judgment on the others. They look down on them and think that they are better. And then they say, well, we don't need your gospel, Paul, because actually we're pretty good.

And so chapter 2 today, Paul addresses these types of people, people who think they're pretty good. And he says, you know what? You're not. You're actually just as bad.

In fact, you're hypocrites because you do the same thing. And so with that background in mind, we're at point 1 and verse 1. Have a look there in your Bibles. Chapter 2, verse 1. He says, you

therefore have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, because at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself.

Why? Well, because you who pass judgment do the same things, you see. Paul says, you people think you're good, but actually you're just as bad.

[4 : 38] Oh, sure. You may not look as bad as those other people on the outside, but you still do the same sorts of things on the inside. You may not swear at someone's face, but you might still gossip behind their backs.

You may not steal from a shop, but you'll cheat on your tax return, for example. You may not murder anyone with a knife, but you'll hate people with your heart. They are just as bad.

And Paul says, these type of people are just as bad, even if they have a belief in God. And God's verdict for these type of people, says Paul, is that they are just as deserving of God's judgment, because they are just as bad.

So have a look at verse 2. He says, Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them, and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment?

The answer, of course, is no. They won't escape. And the time between now and judgment day is not for judging others and being judgmental, you know, looking down on them, thinking you're better than them.

[5 : 47] Rather, the time is to be used to repent. Turn away from your own sins and trust in Jesus. So verse 4, Or do you show the contempt for the riches of God's kindness, forbearance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness, you know, this time is intended to lead you to repentance.

See, in God's kindness and patience, he's holding off the day of judgment, giving people more time to repent, to turn back, to believe the gospel, to be made right with him.

And so Paul says, that's what you should be doing with your time, not judging others and looking down on them, as though you're better. And if you don't use this time to repent, then you're actually showing contempt for God's kindness.

I used to be a primary school teacher, and I was teaching grade 6, and I gave my students a project to do. And for each day of the week, they would go to the library and have research time to do a project.

I'd give them a structure and some scaffolding kind of things to help them with this. And the main idea of the project, I didn't particularly mind what they did. It was just to prepare them for high school, to learn to be self-disciplined, self-starters, that kind of thing, with some help.

[7 : 00] Of course, some children are more self-disciplined than others, right? And so by the end of the week, one student hadn't finished. In fact, he hadn't really started. He had just mucked around and distracted others, despite encouragements to focus.

And so I gave him another week to finish. Let him have extra time in the library and miss on other lessons. I asked the librarian to encourage him and help him, but not to do the project for him.

But by the end of the week, no project still. But what librarian said that he actually had become very good at using his ruler to flick elastic bands. His accuracy was amazing, apparently.

But you see, he had misused the extra time that I gave him. And in doing so, he'd shown contempt, I guess, for my kindness. And that's what Paul is saying here.

These hypocrites are not using the extra time that God's given us to repent. Instead, they're showing contempt for God's kindness and patience and judging others.

[7 : 59] And so because of that, verse 5, because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you're actually storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath.

when the righteous judgment will be revealed. You see, if they're just continuing to sin and continuing to be judgmental and so on, instead of repenting, then all they're doing is just storing up more judgment for themselves.

For God is going to judge people according to what they do. And if they do more bad stuff, then God's going to judge them according to that. And that's what the next passage, part of the verses are talking about.

God will judge all people according to what they do. Have a look at verse 6, for example. God will repay each person according to what they have done. And to those who, by persistence in doing good, seek glory, honour and immortality, well, he will give eternal life to them.

But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, well, there will be wrath and anger, he says. See, God will judge according to what people do.

[9 : 07] And for those who do good and seek glory and honour and things like that, God will give them eternal life. The problem is, no one is able to do good perfectly, persistently.

It's kind of like when our kids ask for McDonald's or KFC and we say, well, if you don't fight with each other for a whole day, we'll give it to you. Okay? But to this day, they've never been able to do it.

You know, it lasts a whole day without arguing. And so they, we've never had to shell out for McDonald's or KFC. Now, I'm not suggesting that McDonald's or KFC are the same as eternal life. Far from it. Right? But if people were persistently to do good, then God would give them eternal life. The problem is, no one is able to persistently do it.

And so, to this day, God has never had to reward them for doing good because they persistently can't do it. And so, that means what awaits all people then is wrath and anger, judgment, fury.

[10 : 15] But the point here is that judgment is going to be according to what we do. And that's right, isn't it? I mean, that's justice. You do the crime, you do the time. That's fair.

Of course, it's not always what happens in our world, is it? I mean, it seems as though if you're rich enough, you can bribe your way out or hire lots of lawyers to worm your way out and get you off.

But Paul says, on judgment day, it won't matter who you are. God will not show favoritism or be bribed. Instead, he will judge everyone fairly, justly. Have a look at verse 9 to 11.

He says, there will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

For God does not show favoritism. God says he will judge everyone accordingly. Now, we need to remember here that in the Jewish mind, there are only two types of people in the world.

[11 : 15] There were Jews who knew God, who had God's law, and there were Gentiles, which is basically everyone else here. The rest of humanity who didn't know God didn't have God's law. And the Jews did have a special or privileged place in God's plans.

Jesus was a Jew. The gospel of Jesus went first to the Jews. The Jews knew God first and so on. And so if they did good, then they will be the first to receive eternal life.

But if they would do bad, they will also be the first to receive judgment. But Paul's point here is regardless of whether you are a Jew or a Gentile, everyone equally will be judged by what we do.

For God does not show favoritism. Paul makes the same point again by saying that we will be judged by what we do with the law, whether we obey the law or not. So have a look at verse 12. He says, all who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law.

And all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but those who obey, do the law who will be declared righteous.

[12 : 24] You see what he's saying? It's not about just having or hearing the law. It's about doing, obeying the law. For God will judge people according to what they do. That's justice. That's fair. But hang on a second.

The Gentiles do not have God's law. So how can they obey it? I mean, they don't even know it. Well, Paul says that they have their conscience and their conscience acts like a law.

Their conscience tells them what's right and wrong. And you see verse 14? He says, indeed, the Gentiles who do not have the laws do by nature things required by the law.

Then it's as though they have a law for themselves, even though they don't actually have the scrolls of the law physically. Verse 15, they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts.

Their conscience bearing witness. Their thoughts sometimes accusing them, other times even defending them. This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ as my gospel declares.

[13 : 26] Paul says that Gentiles, you may not physically have the book of the God's law, the Moses' law, but you've got your conscience. And their conscience tells them what's right and wrong.

And I'm sure we've all experienced that, have we not? You know, felt in our conscience, oh, we should do that. Oh, no, we shouldn't do that. In fact, even people who are not Christians and don't have the spirit working through our conscience, even they know what's right and wrong.

Before there were laws about do not murder, people knew it was wrong to murder. Didn't they? Non-Christians who don't have the spirit still know that if you're in a car park and someone's trying to pull in front of you, the right thing to do is to let them in.

They know that in their conscience. And so it's as though they still have their own law. It's your conscience. And that conscience will either accuse you of doing wrong because you ignored it, you disobeyed your conscience, or it will defend you on the day of judgment because you obeyed your conscience.

That's what Paul is saying. And so it all depends whether you obey or not, whether it's the law or your conscience. For God will judge people according to what they do.

[14:35] That's the point. Now up until this point, Paul I think has, he hasn't explicitly said it, but I think he has the Jewish people in mind. He hasn't come out and said it straight away, perhaps to try and get the Jews to see his logic first and agree with him.

I mean people don't tend to listen to you if you blame them straight away, do you? You know, if someone dropped a piece of paper on the floor here and I said, what did you do there? You know, they're going to get all defensive.

Oh no, it just fell off. I just walked past it. I don't know how that happened. But if you go, oh, that's papers on the floor. People should really pick that up, shouldn't they? And they go, oh yeah, yeah. I said, I wonder how that one got there.

You know, I think that's what Paul is doing here. He doesn't hit them straight out up front. He gets them on side first and says, look, this is fair that God judges all people according to what they do and then he pulls the gloves off and God's verdict is that the Jews are just as bad as these hypocrites.

So point to verse 17, he says, now you, if you call yourself a Jew, if you rely on the law and boast in God, if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law, if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind and a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children, because you have the law, the embodiment of knowledge and truth, you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself?

[16:04] You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you not rob temples?

You who boast in the law, do you not dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written, God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.

You see what Paul is saying? He's saying, you Jews, you are in a privileged position because you know God, you have his law, but don't you dare look down on those others because you do the same things.

You're just as bad as the Gentiles. You see, the Jews' confidence before God was in their physical identity. They were Jews by birth. They had the law. They had the temple.

They had the sacrificial system. They were God's privileged people. And so they thought they were safe. But their confidence in their physical identity was misplaced.

[17:05] Look at verses 25 to 29. And here where it says circumcision, he means being a Jew because that was the sign of being Jewish. So verse 25, he says, circumcision has value if you observe the law.

But if you break the law, you've become as though you had not been circumcised. So then, if those who are not circumcised, that is Gentiles, keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised?

In other words, Jewish, one of God's chosen people. The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who even though you have the written code and circumcision, you are a lawbreaker.

A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew if they are one inwardly and circumcision is circumcision of the heart by the spirit, not by the written code.

Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God. See what Paul is saying? It's not about physical or outward signs like circumcision that makes you a true Jew, a true person of God.

[18:22] No, it's about obeying God's law with your heart. That's what makes you a true Jew, a true person of God. In fact, he says in verse 26 that if the Gentiles who don't have God's law actually do the right thing, then they're going to be regarded as a true Jew.

They're going to stand up in judgment of the Jews. As we heard from our first reading from Isaiah 66, the one whom God esteems is the one who trembles at his word, who obeys his word. But the Jews, well, Isaiah says they sacrifice the bull on the one hand, then they commit injustice on the other. They put their confidence in outward signs on the one hand when their hearts are far from God on the other.

You see, their confidence is in their outward identity and that confidence is misplaced. I remember going camping with our family when I was a teenager or maybe just before I was a teenager. My parents decided to, you know, four kids, cheap holidays, let's get a tent. First time we ever went. And they bought this big second-hand tent.

[19 : 29] In fact, it came with a trailer because they just needed a trailer to take this tent. It was that big. And it kind of had a sleeping area then it had a living area. And now, my father, you know, had never been camping before in his life but he thought that'd be fine.

He was pretty confident in his ability. How hard can it be, he said to mum, I remember. And so we got to the campsite and we rolled out the tent and dad went around and he got us kids to help as well because we were causing trouble.

Got us to hammer in all the pegs and we hammered them all the way into the ground, got them all in, all around the edge. Then we put up the tent. Now this tent had the living area with a floor, sorry, the sleeping area with a floor but the living area had no floor.

It was just grass, okay? And so when we put up the tent we realised there's only half a roof. He put the tent upside down. We had pegged the roof to the ground thoroughly.

And so the sleeping area had a roof because it had the floor but the living area stars. We cracked up at our father who was not impressed at this point because it started to rain and so we got locked in the car while he went around by himself.

[20 : 43] The point of the story though is his confidence was misplaced, wasn't it? I can do this, how hard can it be? The Jews, their confidence was misplaced because their confidence was in their outward physical identity, being a Jew on the outside, their race, their religion, their religious practices and so on.

But God's verdict here is that they too are under judgement because they are just as bad. They've done wrong too. Now at this point Paul anticipates four objections to this verdict against the Jews. We can see one in chapter 3 verse 1 for example. He says, someone might say, what advantage then is there being a Jew? Or what value is there in circumcision? And Paul goes on and he answers these four objections.

We don't have time to look at those now, but I want to skip down to verse 9 and point 3. God's verdict for all people. So have a look from verse 9.

He says, what shall we conclude then? Do we as Jews have any advantage? Not at all. For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin.

[21 : 54] It is written, there is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands, there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away. They have together become worthless.

There is no one who does good, not even one. Their throats are open graves, their tongues practice deceit. We've all done that. The poison of vipers is on their lips, their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness, their feet are swift to shed blood, ruin and misery mark their ways and the way of peace they do not know.

There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God, Jew or Gentile.

Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by doing works of the law. Rather, through the law we simply become conscious of our sin.

It's pretty clear, isn't it? The verdict of God is that there is no one righteous, not even one. Now how many, no matter how many ladies we rescue from bikers, how many good deeds we do according to the law or our conscience, it will never make us perfect like God.

[23 : 13] We've all fallen short of God's glory, his perfection. There is no one righteous, not even one, and so no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by doing good deeds because no one is good enough, you see.

Instead, everyone will be held accountable to God. This is God's verdict on all people, even the Jews who thought they were pretty good. So, if this is God's verdict that all people are guilty,

unrighteous, then it follows that we all deserve God's wrath and anger.

And if we understand that, then the very next paragraph ought to be music to our ears. Paul says in verse 21, but now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the law and the prophets testify.

This righteousness is not about doing good things to earn it, it is given, a gift, through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

Now, these are great verses, but we're going to look at them more next week in depth. For now, there are just three points of application I want to draw out from our passage this morning.

[24 : 29] The first is, do we believe God's verdict? God's verdict. You see, society says that people are basically good people, doesn't it? I've had people say to me that they should be right to go to heaven because they've lived pretty good lives, but that's not God's verdict from this chapter, is it?

God says there is no one righteous, not even one, no one good enough. Society says, though, people are basically good. God's verdict is people are basically not good.

At our core, we can do good things, sure, but at our core, we are not good but guilty. A friend of mine called Richard told me a story of a Christian man at his church who would ask people how they were going.

He'd say, how are you going? And one day Richard said, good thanks, to which the man quickly replied, no you're not, you're not good, there's no one good, not even one. He stopped talking to this man, he didn't stop talking to this man.

But Richard learnt to reply, I'm well thanks. Now, this Christian man, he's being a bit picky and I think it was all in jest actually, but he makes a good point though, doesn't he? There is no one good.

[25 : 37] As I said, we can all do good things from time to time, yes we can, but not persistently do good. At our core, we are not good but guilty. This is God's verdict. And as gloomy and politically incorrect as it is to say it, it's true.

And so do you believe that? Because if you don't, then you won't come to Jesus to find righteousness, to find forgiveness.

But if you do, then please do come to Jesus. Turn to him, put your trust in him, and be made right with God. And so can I ask at this point, have you put your trust in Jesus?

If you haven't, then all you're doing is storing up wrath for yourself on the day of judgment. So please do trust in Jesus. And for us who already have, then do we continue to put our confidence and hope in Christ?

You see, we can fall into the trap of the Jews who put their confidence in their outward identity, their religion, what they did. I mean, the more we grow as Christians, the easier it is to put our confidence and hope in what we do rather than what Christ has done.

[26 : 46] After all, I go to church every week. I go to Christian conventions at Belgrave Heights. I take communion. I serve on the rosters. I can say all 56 books of the Bible in order.

But as good as those things are, none of them makes us right with God. Our confidence and hope must remain in Christ. In a song we're going to sing in a moment, the last line of the second verse says, I must confess my righteousness.

Jesus must rest in you, in Christ, not in us. So let me ask you this question. Imagine St. Peter was actually at the pillar gates of heaven and he said to you, why should God let you in?

What would you say to him? Or put differently, who is your confidence and hope in? It's not rhetorical. Who is it? Who is it in?

We had one person whose confidence and hope is in Christ. Jesus! Yes, that's right. Don't be ashamed to name his name. It's in Christ. And having our confidence and hope in Christ means that our confidence is great and our hope is certain.

[28 : 02] Last story, I was visiting a lady last week from our 745 service. She has cancer. She's at home basically to die. She doesn't know how long she's got to live.

And when I saw her last week, she joyfully exclaimed, still here Andrew, great to see you. And she told me that she wasn't worried about death at all.

She was in the Lord's hands. And when I asked her why was that, she said, well, I've got Christ. I'm in his hands. You see, her confidence was in Christ and so she knew for certain where she was going.

See, it's in Christ that our confidence can be great and our hope can be certain. let's pray. Now, gracious father, we do thank you for these hard truths this morning that your verdict for all people is

that there is no one who is good enough.

But the great news of the gospel is that Jesus is good enough. and so that we can be made right with you not by what we do, but by what Christ has done.

[29 : 12] And so father, we pray that you would help us to find our righteousness in Christ. And we pray it in his name. Amen.