

# The Verdict of God

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] but I am going to lead us in prayer let's pray our great God we do thank you that you have not left us alone in this world to wonder about how we got here about who you might be but you have given us your word which speaks the truth and so far we pray that you would help us to understand your word but more than that to live in light of it we ask it in Jesus name amen well I heard a slightly amusing story once about a man who fronted up to the gates of heaven he died he fronted up to the gates of heaven and St Peter then asked him why God should let him into heaven the man replied well I've been a pretty good bloke well at least better than some of the others like those bikers who hang out outside the pub down my street in fact I've even rescued a lady from them St Peter replied oh how did you do that well when I saw them hassling her I crossed the street I told them to leave her alone I spat at their feet pulled their beards kicked over their bikes and gave them my most disappoint disapproving glare now St Peter said wow when did you do all that the man who had died said about two minutes ago it's a slow release joke okay now I doubt St Peter will be guarding the gates of heaven or whether there will be literally gates in heaven at all but this untrue story illustrates for us something that is true and that is people still think that to escape God's judgment and enter heaven is all about being good or at least about being better than others but as we see today in our next look at Romans that's not God's verdict for even those who think themselves good are actually not good enough they're actually hypocrites which brings us to point one and verse one so please I'm going to follow along this insert it'd be great if you did too and you'd find it helpful I'm sure so verse one he says you therefore have no excuse you who pass judgment on someone else for at whatever point you judge another you are condemning yourself because you pass judgment so you who pass judgment do the same things you see so far in the book of Romans Paul has announced his gospel his news and he says he is not ashamed of this gospel because it is God's power to save people by giving them righteousness then last week Paul started to highlight why we need to be saved and given righteousness and as we saw last week we need to be saved from God's wrath at our unrighteousness or wickedness but there were some who thought that they weren't all that unrighteous some who may have been listening to Paul and thought I don't need the gospel because I'm pretty good or at least better than those wicked you've just described at the end of chapter one in other words like the man at the start they had confidence in their own good works their own good deeds but Paul says your confidence is misplaced you have no excuse either why well end of verse one again he says because you who pass judgment on these other people do the same things you see these people who are self-righteous and think they are better than others well in the end they are hypocrites because they do the same things oh sure it may not be as blatantly as obvious as other people's sins but in their hearts they still do the same things they may not swear at someone's face but they still gossip behind their backs they may not steal from a shop but they still cheat on their tax return they may not murder anyone with a knife but they'll still hate people in their minds these are the people that Paul has in his mind here at whom he'll actually identify more specifically later but they are the people who think they are better than others yet do

the same things and so verse 2 to 3 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'll escape God's judgment the answer is of course not they won't escape God's judgment on whoever does these things is right because it's based on truth verse 2 and so even these self-righteous people who do the same things well they're not going to escape judgment either no rather the time between now and judgment day is a time for them to turn around to repent and put their trust in Jesus see verse 4 he says or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness forbearance and patience not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance see in God's kindness and patience he's holding off on judgment day why so that people might have time to repent repent just means to turn around to do a u-turn and come back to God by trusting in Jesus and so for these people to use this time to look down on others and judge others instead of repenting back and turning back to God then they're actually showing contempt for God's patience they're actually spitting the face of God's kindness and what's more it simply leads to greater judgment on that day see verse 5 he says but because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath when his righteous judgment will be revealed you see if people are not using this time before judgment day to turn back to God then they're simply using the time to store up more judgment for themselves and with the mention of judgment day of God Paul turns to consider it now which is point two and here he highlights the underlying principles of that day which so far have been assumed the first is that God judges according to what we do have a look at verses 6 to 8 he says God will repay each person according to what they have done to those who by persistence in doing good seek glory honor and immortality he will give eternal life but for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil there will be wrath and anger you see God will judge people according to what they do verse 6 and for those who seek eternal life which is described as a glory honor and immortality for those who seek it by persistently doing good it says well God will give it to them he will give them eternal life of course this is simply a hypothetical category for as Paul will make clear there is no one righteous not even one no one who persistently seeks good it's a hypothetical group but there are plenty though who are self-seeking who reject the truth as we saw in chapter 1 the truth that God is God as creation screams out and so verse 8 for these people there will be wrath and anger it says of course the word wrath refers to

God's just anger and so really really it's saying there'll be anger and anger in other words it'll be really bad but the point here is that judgment is going to be according to what you do and that's right isn't it and that's the way we expect justice to work today if someone does something wrong to us we want them to be paid we want them to pay for it you know we want judgment according to what people do of course today it seems it doesn't depend on what you do but on who you are if you're rich and can afford good lawyers then you seem to be able to get away with it but not on that day it won't matter who you are on that day for God will not show favoritism or be bribed but will judge everyone justly have a look at verse 9 there will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil first for the Jew then for the Gentile but glory honor and peace for everyone who does good first for the Jew then for the Gentile for God does not show favoritism you remember that in the Jewish mind there were only two types of people in the world there were the Jews who knew God and had

God's law and there were the rest of the people of the world the Gentiles who didn't know God and didn't have God's law and the Jews thought they were special and in a sense they were but they thought that because they knew God and had his law they were God's favorites and so they could get away with judgment but Paul says nope God doesn't play favorites he judges everyone justly according to what they do and so it doesn't matter if you have the law or don't have the law it's about obeying God and doing good 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 it says verse 13 for is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight but is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous you see the law here refers to the law that God gave through Moses you know the 10 commandments and so on and Paul says it doesn't matter if you have the law don't have the law it doesn't matter if you're a Jew who has the law or a Gentile who doesn't either way if you sin and do wrong then you'll be judged for it God judges according to what we do but some may ask how can a Gentile obey the law if he doesn't have the law well Paul says they have their conscience which kind of acts like a law and so they can do good according to their conscience verse 14 he says indeed when Gentiles who do not have the law do by nature things required by the law they are a law for themselves even though they do not have the law of Moses they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts and their consciences bear witness and their thoughts sometimes accuse them and at other times even defend them and this judgment according to obedience of the law will all take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ as my gospel declares see Paul says that God will judge everyone according to obedience to the law what about the Gentiles well they don't have the law of Moses but they have their hearts their consciences their brains deep down people know what's right and wrong deep down they know that there is a God who created the world because creation screams it out as we saw last week and so their conscience becomes like a law which they can either obey or disobey when I was a primary school teacher there was an unspoken rule in the classroom that said the children should put their desks chairs under the desks as they left for recess and lunch and I pulled up one child up who didn't do that Regan was his name and I said Regan you didn't put your chair in to which he replied but there's no rule that says I have to little Pharisee this one and I kind of just went you know they're kind of disapproving the head down glared at him and then he changed his stories okay okay I was just being efficient and left it out for when I came back in yeah right but you see he came up with that excuse because deep down he knew that he's wrong he was wrong deep down he knew that he was supposed to put his chair under the table even though we'd never spoken about it in class there was no rules on the board or anything like that it's just what everyone did and it's kind of like what Paul is saying here we know deep down what is right and wrong that there is a God who made the world who deserves to be praised and thanked and if we obey our conscience as Gentiles it will defend us but if we disobey it will accuse us Paul says of course no one persistently obeys it's another hypothetical example as we saw last week no one naturally acknowledges that God is God even though our eyes can see it from creation and our consciences confirm it instead everyone naturally exchanged the truth of God for a lie and so although Paul says their conscience could hypothetically defend them it never will because all people disobey whether it's the Jews who disobey the law of Moses or whether it's the Gentiles who disobey the law of their conscience and so God will judge all people based on what they do even those Jews who are self-righteous and think they're safe

point three here Paul returns I think to where he started in verse one have a look at verse 17 he says now you if you call yourself a Jew if you rely on the law and boast in God and on he goes but now you of verse 17 seems to match verse one you therefore you see the connection there now Paul may have had some people self-righteous Gentiles like philosophers who thought they were pretty good and looked down on others he may have had some of them in mind but verse 17 with the connection of now you it seems to suggest that he had particularly the Jews in mind all along after all it was the Jews that thought they were safe they were God's special people so how could they face judgment but he goes on to show 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 he is superior because you're instructed by the law if you are convinced that you're a guide for the blind 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 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 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

[ 13 : 55 ] Paul says here that the Jews who thought they were so much better than the Gentiles even though they knew God they had the law and so were given responsibility to be teachers and guides and a light to the Gentiles even though that's who they were in the end they were just as bad as the Gentiles they did all those things on the one hand they boasted in the law but on the other hand they dishonored God by breaking the law verse 24 as it is written God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you Jews he says you see their confidence before God was in their physical identity you know they were Jews by birth they had the law they had the temple they had the sacrificial system they even had circumcision and so they thought they were safe but their confidence in their physical identity was misplaced have a look at verse 25 verse 25 circumcision has value if you obey the law but if you break the law you have become as though you had not been circumcised so then if those who are not circumcised

Gentiles keep the law's requirements will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised the one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who even though you have the written code of circumcision are a lawbreaker he says a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly nor is circumcision merely outward and physical no a person is a Jew who is one inwardly and circumcision is circumcision of the heart by the spirit not the written code such a person's praise is not from other people but from God he says you see it's not about the physical outward signs like circumcision or being a Jew by birth it's about obeying God with your heart that's what makes you a true Jew that's what makes you a true person of God as we heard from our first reading in Isaiah 66 the one whom God esteems is the one who trembles at his word but the Jews well they sacrificed a bull at one time and then committed injustice another time they did something that was outwardly good with one hand and then something inwardly bad with the other you know they put their confidence in outward signs when in fact their hearts were far from God in other words their confidence was misplaced I remember going camping with our family it was our first ever camping expedition as a family my parents even just bought a second hand family tent for the occasion it was one of those big ones that kind of had two compartments you had the sleeping area here which had a floor and a roof like most tents and then in the living area which just had the roof it had no floor you kind of just set your picnic table on the grass that was kind of what it was and we picked it up in a trailer and the people we were buying it from said to dad look we can explain how to and show you how to put it up now if you like he said no no it'll be right how hard can it be yeah that's right so we got to the campsite and dad said unrolled the tent and he hammered all the pegs all the way around all of them which you're not supposed to do but he got us kids to help and they were big pegs we hammered them right down into the ground he got the poles we put up the poles then we put up the sides of the tent we walked into the living area it looked up there was no roof he pegged the roof to the ground and so the bottomless living area was now our roof under the stars at that point it started to rain i kid you not we all laughed at dad and he locked us all in the car you see at this point he had misplaced confidence in his ability this is being recorded isn't it if you're listening dad i love you but at that point he had misplaced confidence in his ability similarly the jews had misplaced confidence in their physical identity for despite being jews god's verdict is that they too are under judgment because they too have done wrong they have not obeyed as they should have now at this point paul anticipates a number of objections to this verdict in chapter 3 verses 1 to 8 there's four objections but because of time we're just going to skip over those we're going to go to his conclusion in verse 9 so if you find verse 9 on your sheets chapter 3 verse 9 this is where paul concludes this big section verse 9 he says what shall we conclude then do we have any advantage in being a jew not at all for we have already made the charge that jews and gentiles alike are all under the power of sin as 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 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 whether it's the law of mores or the law of the conscience so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to god therefore no one will be declared righteous in god's side by works of the law rather through the law we become conscious of sin paul's conclusion about god's verdict is clear is it not god's verdict is that there is no one good enough no one righteous not even one it doesn't matter how many ladies we rescue from angry bikers or how many other good deeds we do will never be perfect like god we've all fallen short of his glory there is no one righteous not even one and so no one will be declared right in god's eyes through doing good works because we'll never have done good enough we'll never be perfect as god created us to be instead everyone it says will be held accountable to god this is god's verdict on all people even the jews who thought they were so secure in their physical identity and this is why all people need the gospel you see all people need the gospel because there is no one righteous not even one and when we understand this then the very next verses are such music to our ears 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 given to us through faith in jesus christ to all who believe there is no difference between jew and gentile for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of god and are all justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by christ jesus these are great verses uh worth pondering in depth which we'll do next week i don't want to steal any more thunder from the preacher next week but what makes these verses such good news is the bad news we've been hearing for the last two weeks that there is no one righteous not even one except of course for jesus who died for us the righteous one for us who are unrighteous to bring us to god but today's passage clearly does away with the myth that society believes which says that you know generally people are all good now have you heard that before of course there's criminals of course they're the bad ones but otherwise you know all people are basically good people but that's not god's verdict is it a friend of mine called richard told me a story of a christian man at church uh this christian man would ask him uh him and others uh how you were going and often when you when someone asks you you know how you're going you say good thanks and so richard replied good thanks to which the man quickly replied no you're not no one is not even one and so richard learned to reply i'm well thanks and if you're not feeling well then you can say i'm fine thanks or whatever it is now this christian man was perhaps being a bit picky but he made a good point didn't he there is no one good no one right i'm sure we can all do good things from time to time people can do good things yes but there's no one who persistently does good there's no one who perfectly is righteous but society wants us to believe that we are because if they accept the bad news that people aren't then they might actually have to search for some good news and find jesus they don't want to do that we must not give in to this myth that says all people are generally good otherwise we'll start to think that our nice neighbor our polite friend or relative will be okay on judgment day and so we might stop praying for opportunities to talk with them but you see without jesus no one will be right on judgment day for there is no one who is good enough which brings me to i guess the second point of application and that is have you repented have you turned back to god and put your confidence in jesus or are you showing contempt for his kindness and patience you see judgment day

will come and there is no one in this room who on their own will be good enough to enter heaven so have you put your confidence in Jesus and if you have then we need to be careful that we don't fall into the trap of the self-righteous hypocrite you see we can look at others and think oh how sinful is that person how bad are they when in fact but for God's grace that's us too you see far from being judgmental towards those who reject God it ought to make us all the more thankful that God has saved us who once rejected Him we need to remember that we were once worthy of wrath and still are but God but by God's grace and we also must make sure that we don't have a misplaced confidence like the self-righteous hypocrite you see the more we grow as Christians the more likely we are to kind of put our confidence and hope in what we do rather than what Jesus has done after all you know I go to church every week I go to Christian conventions up at Belgrave Heights I take communion I'm on the rosters I can say all 56 books of the or 66 books of the Bible in order but as good as all those things are none of them make us right with God do they and so if we have confidence in any of those things then it is misplaced for God's verdict is that there is no one who is perfect no one who is completely good and so if Saint Peter was actually at the gates of heaven and said to you why should God let you in I wonder what you'd say in fact let's have a crowd participation moment I'm going to ask you a question who is your confidence and hope in don't be afraid to name His name you know I mean you're not going to front up to God on the last day and go Jesus let me ask it again who is your confidence and hope in fantastic Jesus Jesus is the one who enables us to have confidence and hope on that day that we will be able to stand before God and enter heaven forever for it's in Christ alone our hope is found let's pray and then we'll sing that song let's pray our gracious heavenly Father we do thank you for these truths in your word truths which many people and perhaps even some of us find hard to accept but nonetheless are true that there is no unrighteous not even one and so all people need Jesus all people need to hear the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and so far we pray that you would help us be prayerful in this task to take the opportunities that come our way and to never look down in a judgmental attitude at others who don't know but to be ever thankful for your grace towards us may we also always have our confidence in hope not in what we have done but what on J what but in what Jesus has done on the cross for in Christ alone our hope is found we ask in His name amen