

The God of Truth

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 May 2024

Preacher: BK Smith

[0 : 00] Please take out your Bibles and turn to Romans chapter 2. Romans chapter 2. As you are doing this, next week, next Sunday, Mother's Day, we're having our taco celebration to celebrate mothers.

I didn't make that. I didn't make that decision. But one thing that we are doing next week is we're having a baby dedication. So we're going to be dedicating some new births, new adoption. And one of the things that we, I would encourage you, a lot of new faces. It's also an opportunity during these times, a baby dedications are really great to remind us who we are supposed to be as a church.

And you'll hear, I'll be talking a little bit about that next week. But use this fellowship time to get to know a lot of the new faces. We've had a lot of new faces, new people coming in, new people moving to Squamish.

So it's just such a great opportunity to connect. And I don't know why anybody would connect over tacos, but that's just the way it's rolling that next Sunday. But anyway, before I go any further, let's just invite the Spirit here to continue His work, not just through the preaching, but through our hearts as well to receive God's word.

[1 : 24] Dear Holy Heavenly Father, we thank you for the God that you are. We thank you for this church. We thank you for the people that you have redeemed, that you call to be a remnant in this society, to continue calling out to those who need you.

And they need to hear your word. They need to know your loving embrace. They need to know your forgiveness. They even need to know about your judgment, O Father, and all the things of the Lord that sometimes we fear are some of the greatest blessings that you have for us because they magnify your character in such a way that there is no duplication of it of here on earth.

So, Father, I ask that you'd bring clarity to my words this morning as we just go over the God of judgment that you are and the attributes of your judgment and the characteristic of who you are as God.

We ask these things in your most holy and precious name. Amen. So, as you guys know, or if you've been here for a while, we've been working our way through Romans, but one of the contexts or prism that we've been looking to understand, Romans chapter 1, is that of a courtroom-type setting.

It's almost like there's this heavenly court drama being played out before us. The judge who rules over all mankind is Elohim, the creator and sustainer of the universe.

[3 : 05] James 4.12 identifies God as the lawgiver and the only one with a right to rule. So, there is no better judge that can preside over this court.

Acting as the crown attorney is the Apostle Paul. He represents the people to bring about the accused or the charges against the accused.

The accused is us. It's mankind. The charge is suppressing the truth about God, which has led to ungodliness and unrighteousness.

The judgment is God's wrath. However, in this court, there's an objection. The defense attorney, acting on behalf of the Gentile part of mankind, states, Your Honor, my client, these Gentile people, these Greeks, these Romans, state that they are innocent by virtue of not knowing you, Your Honor.

Unlike the Jews, you never appeared to them in a burning bush. You never showed yourself through a pillar of fire by night or a cloud of smoke by day.

[4 : 28] The Gentiles, Your Honor, did not have fathers like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Gentiles were not provided with prophets like Moses to teach them the law.

And the Gentiles never were provided with prophets such as Samuel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah to warn them that they were going astray of your law, God.

So we're asking for an adjournment on the basis that it's simply not fair. As you know, Romans 19 to 32 is Paul's response to their objection.

Paul responds and proves quite aptly that they are not only guilty of suppressing the truth and ungodliness and unrighteousness, that they have demonstrated to be inexcusably ignorant because God has clearly shown himself, yet they choose to ignore.

that the Gentiles chose idolatry over God. They chose not to honor God.

[5 : 43] They chose not to thank God. They chose to pursue the lusts of their hearts. They chose their dishonorable passions. They chose their debased mind to do what not ought to be done.

The final verdict for the Gentile hearers as we read in Romans 1.32, it's though they knew God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them, but they give approval to those who practice them.

Now, what you guys don't know is there is actually a Romans 1.33. It doesn't show up in your Bibles. But it tells us that the gallery is abuzz.

Paul has made this statement, and people from the gallery are yelling, you go, Paul. Get justice.

You get them, judge. Right?

Hallelujah. Those Gentiles are getting what they deserve, right? They've been tormenting us for thousands of years. They've stolen our land.

[7 : 02] They've destroyed our temple. They've come across our city of Jerusalem. They've taken our women, our gold. They have destroyed our faith, all because now that money-grubbing Caesar and his Roman cronies in the Senate.

Now, the text doesn't tell us how order came to be in that court as the Jews were screaming in the background.

We don't know if it's the angel, the archangel Michael, or maybe it was one of another cherubim or seraphim, or maybe one of the guards from the Garden of Eden.

But we do know that order was restored in the court of the Lord that day. We also hear what the crown attorney responds to the people.

Romans 2.1 Therefore, you in the back that are yelling, go get them, that are yelling cries of justice, you have no excuse, O man.

[8 : 10] Every one of you who judges, for in passing judgment on another, you condemn yourself because you, the judge, practiced the very same things. Who are you to cheer?

Who are you to cry out and demand justice? Who are you to cry out asking for the Lord's justice on these Gentiles, these Roman, these Greek defendants?

You hypocrites. You who judge those who practice such things and yet to do them yourself. Now what's interesting, we know that the Gentile is not the only one who Paul will charge at the beginning of this book of Hebrews, or Romans, sorry.

He says, hey, you think the Gentiles were wrong. Wait till I get to you. Right? We know in Romans 3.9, Paul just simply asked the question, are we the Jews any better off?

No, not at all. For we have already charged that all both Jews and Greeks are under sin and none are righteous. But what's interesting about this section is before Paul gets to the Jews, Paul takes his time not to simply call out the hypocrites.

[9 : 30] And if you were here last week, we kind of expanded on that motif of us being the greatest hypocrites of all. But what Paul also does in this section is he reminds the people the principles that govern God's justice, that govern God's judgment, what aspects of his character and attributes we see in this text.

So this morning, while looking at Romans 2, 1 to 16, I don't want to just simply call out or show you attributes of God's character that we read here in the text, but I want us to truly understand the significance of God's character and how it affects us on how we are to live our lives as a part of the body of God.

My prayer this week is that the Spirit would use this understanding. Remember, we do not learn the Bible just to acquire knowledge. We want effectual changes in our own hearts, do we not?

We do want God to expose us. We do want God to reveal those secret places that sometimes we do not even see, we don't want to admit are there. But my prayer and encouragement to you this morning is that perhaps there will be a little extra special beauty that you will see about God in his

judgment and in his righteousness this morning.

So the first characteristic that the Apostle Paul points out about God's judgment is that God's judgment is inescapable. God's judgment is inescapable.

[11:20] The fact of the matter is there is nobody that exists that is above the law. God is the law. God is justice. Everything is sworn against who he is.

We see this in Romans 2.1. Paul takes no time cutting through the excuses that man is prone to make. You have no excuse, O man.

Every one of you who judges for in passing judgment on another, you condemn yourself because you the judge practice the very same things. We love to judge, right?

Heck, we have a whole industry that's based on judging, right? We judge talent. We judge singing, right? You can even call in and judge who you think is the best person to go on in these TV shows. In case you did not know, one of the longest running TV shows is Judge Judy. Who doesn't love Judge Judy, right? We love to hear the judgment she's bringing down.

[12:28] You see, it's in our nature that we love to judge others harshly while making exceptions for ourselves. We point the fingers, but in the same breath we overlook the sin within us.

But here's the thing about God's judgment. It's inescapable. The same God who sees the secret thoughts of the heart will one day bring everything into light.

There are no excuses that will be good enough for God. There's no pleading of ignorance to God. There is no amount of moralizing. There is no amount of self-righteousness that will keep us from that moment when every single human being will stand before God.

You see, what separates God's judgment from our judgment is that God's judgment is based on truth. God's judgment is based on truth.

Anybody here use a King James Version? All right, we got someone still based in the 16th century. All right. Good thing you don't dress like him still, right?

[13:41] Anyway, when we get to verse two, verse two is kind of an oddly worded verse. It says in our ESVs that we use this, now we know the judgment of God is according, oh, sorry, we know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.

But the Greek and the King James Version and there's a version of the NIV, in case you don't know, they do updates to translations. So sometimes they kind of monkey around with some of the words. But if I were to read it or translate it from the Greek, you're going to see it here. It says, now we know the judgment of God is according to truth upon the ones doing the things.

So at the foremost, the standard that God uses to judge is truth. God's judgments are based on truths.

The fact of the matter is, man's judgment can be flawed in so many ways, even when we are sincere in thinking we are right. You just need to take some time and ask Josh, as a police officer, what was it like looking at a witness's testimony?

[14:52] They vary, right? You can have multiple people looking at a thing. And you guys know it, right? You got these memories and you go back and you tell your loved one this went down and they look like, what are you talking about?

I wasn't even there, right? You just, our memories get kind of mixed up with other memories. And even though we are certain that it is right and true, sometimes it's not.

Sometimes we inverse numbers. We get facts wrong. We make mistakes on colors. But with God, there is no mistake.

James 1.17 tells us that with God, there is no variation or shadow due to change. You know that idea that we can look at something and a shadow can change a perspective.

There is no shadow with God. He sees everything perfectly every time that he looks at it and there is no variation of that standard. Now what Paul is communicating here is there is no separate standard for Jews.

[15:56] There is no separate standards for Gentiles. Let's be honest. Even the best of us have separate standards, right?

We favor our kids over other kids, right? Sometimes we favor people because of the clothes they wear. Sometimes we favor people because of the color of their skin or we even judge people by depending upon their accent or how well they speak English.

I remember this funny story about myself. I'm at a Bible study. I'm visiting my friend. He lives down in Florida. He's going to seminary and I go to one of his Bible studies and this one woman speaks.

And it was the roughest, toughest woman I had ever heard speak. And I just said, you know, what does she do after? Like, does she ride bulls for a living or build skyscrapers? Because she was a diminutive little girl, but she just had this Bronx-type aspects from the States. And my friend says, oh yeah, she's got a PhD in aerospace engineering and she works on the shuttles that are taking off that you see.

[17:09] Right? Like, duh, talk about getting any picture wrong on who this girl was, right? Praise God he's not like us. Praise God.

No matter how we may try to hide it, what excuses we may offer, God sees it all. God's judgment pierces through to the reality of our hearts, exposing every false pretense that we might have. You see, it's one thing to judge others, but when you do so without examining our own hearts, we are simply condemning ourselves. That's because at the core, we're all in need of the grace and mercy of God.

Verse five, Church, my friends and family here, God's judgment is escapable because it's based on the truth of who we are and how we live.

We can't escape it through moralism. We can't escape it through claiming some sort of self-justification. We can't escape it through any type of denial.

[18:33] The fact of the matter is we need to deny our self-deception and we need to come face-to-face with the reality that we are broken. The law does not give us an excuse to judge others.

The law is given and we're going to hear a lot about the law in this book of Romans, but the law demonstrates for us how desperately we need a Savior, how desperate we need a rescuer.

The fact of the matter is we need to be quick to examine our hearts. We need to be quick to repent of our sins and we need to be quick to trust fully in the grace that Jesus Christ himself offers.

So the first characteristic that the Apostle Paul points out about God's judgment is that it is inescapable. The second characteristic is that God's judgment is righteous.

God's judgment is righteous. You see, and this is something that we really need to understand. The fact of the matter is it's easy for us to get wrapped up in how we see the world and often we need to recalibrate ourselves to get God's perspective.

[19:56] Anybody ever have that, right? It's just so easy to get caught up in our own selfishness, our own comfort at times and we're wanting to look at something and we kind of almost need to shake our heads. You know, what is it to see through the eyes of God this person that's really annoying me?

Right? Or something that I believe, you know, they could be so easily out of this predicament in their life if they just listened to me.

Right? But God's judgment isn't like ours. It's not distorted by our biases or our limited understanding. The fact of the matter is God's judgment is based on his perfect righteousness. Romans 2, 5 to 11 makes it clear that God's judgment is perfectly just because it's rooted in who he is. We read about his perfect justice, his perfect patience, his perfect tolerance, his perfect kindness, his perfect holiness.

You see, Paul lays this out by God saying in Romans 2, 6, he says, God will render to each one according to his works.

[21:07] Now, a lot of people struggle with what Paul is saying here, but what we are saying here is that we do not earn our salvation by works, but what he's emphasizing is that our works are evidence of our faith.

Right? If we are renewed, regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit that lives within us, our works will coincide with a heart that pursues God.

Right? A tree is known for its fruits. Right? God's judgment will be based on what's revealed through our actions and whether they align with his truth.

Now, this is where it can get uncomfortable for some of us because it is easy to put on a mask and pretend to be something we're not.

It's easy to look moral. It's easy to look religious. But we need to come to the understanding that God sees through all that. And here's the other thing.

[22:14] God is perfectly consistent in how he judges. God is consistent in how he judges. He doesn't show favoritism or bend the rules for anyone.

For God looks at the inward man. If you remember in the Gospels, there's the group of Pharisees who looked good and people looked up to them and they looked religious.

They looked right. But yet God called them whitewashed tombs. They looked really good on the outside. But on the inside, they were decrepit and unclean.

Romans 2.11 tells us quite simply, God shows no partiality. All right. Who here loves Western movies?

Thank you. All right. So you guys are going to be answering this skill testing question. Who is the most feared man in all of Westerns?

[23 : 23] Too precise. All right. All, okay, thank you. All right. Hush, gallery. Hush. All right. Is it the man who wears the black hat?

Is it the gunslinger? Is it the sheriff? The marshal, perhaps? I'm going to tell you who the most feared man in all Western movies is.

It's the hanging judge. It's the hanging judge. You know, every criminal knows that when he's going to court, if it's the hanging judge, it is all over for him.

God is not the hanging judge. Whether Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, religious or not, everyone stands before God on the same level ground.

There's no loopholes. There's no backdoors. There's no special treatment. God is fair and his standards never change. Do you know that God's standards are the same in every century?

[24 : 26] That God's standards are the same in every continent? that God's standards are the same in every condition in all circumstances? And it's all based on the fact that God never changes.

Amen? Imagine we're used to living our Christian life in one place and all of a sudden we go to another country and there's a whole different way of living this life, right?

But God's righteousness never changes. And here's another thing. God cannot be bribed. God cannot be bribed. And I know what you're thinking now, right?

How can God be bribed? But I guarantee you each and every single soul here in this room at one time or another has attempted to bribe God.

Right? Money may not be our currency, but we make promises, right? God, if you save my marriage, I'll love you forever, right?

[25 : 26] You turn my kid into an NHL star forward, I'll give a tenth of everything he gives me, right? We always try to use promises and offer God some sort of false worship.

We try to bargain with what we think will please God. There's a perfect illustration and it's a, it's a, it's a crazy story.

It's 1 Samuel 15. It's the perfect illustration of how a man is to bribe God. And I'm going to tell you about it. Saul is now ruling. Samuel comes.

There is a group of people called the Amalekites. And he, and Samuel is sending Saul and he's got to kill them. He's got to wipe out everything.

Children, men, women, cattle, goats, gold, everything they have has to be utterly and horribly destroyed. But he doesn't do it.

[26 : 32] He doesn't do it. It says, but Paul, but Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the ox and of the fattened calves and the lambs and all that was good.

they kept for themselves, right? And would not utterly destroy them. All that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction.

When the prophet Samuel confronted Saul on why he did not do what God had directed him to do, he responded, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord.

I have gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me. I have brought Agag the king of Amalek and I have devoted the Amalekites to destruction.

But the people took of the spoiled sheep and oxen, the best of the things devoted to destruction to sacrifice to the Lord your God at Gilgal.

[27 : 43] basically they took all the stuff they didn't want and were going to sacrifice that. Look, we kind of did this, right? So there's this bargain and he's bribing with God. And Samuel said, has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord?

See, what he was saying is there's sacrifices but what's more important is to obey the Lord. Lord, behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to listen than the fat of rams.

Probably the greatest sermon I ever heard is a sermon by John MacArthur on this subject, but Samuel goes and hacks the king to death. It's called hacking agog to death or to pieces.

It's what it is to live a life without compromise. How often do we offer God the despised and worthless things of our lives to him just so we can say, well, I worship God.

I save the best time for me. I serve when it's convenient. I give when I can and I'm not even talking monetary gifts.

[29 : 02] I'm too busy with my life. the fact of the matter is we can't bribe God. If we could, what kind of judge would God be?

He is righteous. If he could bribe, he would not be righteous. Why is it that we work so hard to demonstrate that God is not righteous?

Maybe we need to drop the illusions of self-righteousness and face the reality of God's righteous standards.

You see, in God's court, we can't say, well, I'm better than them and I did more than them. That defense never holds with God.

The standard is not how we compare ourselves to others, but how we align with God's truth. It's important to remember that God's judgment is not a game of weighing good deeds against bad deeds.

[30 : 17] The idea is about the orientation of our hearts. Are we truly seeking the Lord's glory or are we living for ourselves?

Romans 2 7, Paul tells us that those who seek God through patience in well-doing will receive eternal life.

Their work does not justify us before God, but it is a reflection of a justified heart before a loving God. God's God's judgment.

The righteous judgment of God is not arbitrary, but it is grounded in His consistent and holy character. God's God's love.

See, but here's the thing. We can't hide from God. We can't pretend in front of God, and there is no escape, no excuse that's going to get us away from God, but there's a good thing.

[31 : 22] If you have placed your trust, your faith in Jesus Christ, you do not need to fear. You do not need to fear that God's righteousness is inescapable.

Because of Jesus, we can stand before God's judgment with confidence, knowing that He has taken our sins and given us His righteousness. So let's not be afraid of God's righteous judgment. Let's use God's righteous judgment to drive us to Christ, where we find grace and forgiveness. And as you and I live out our faith, let's remember that our actions should reflect the heart that has been transformed that comes from knowing Jesus Christ.

Amen? So my friends, the first characteristic that the Apostle Paul points out before God's judgment is that it is inescapable.

The second characteristic is that God's judgment is righteous. The third characteristic found in Romans 2, 12 and 16 is that God's judgment is impartial.

[32 : 39] We've already touched on this theme, but I think we need to drive it home a little bit more. As we said, God shows no favoritism. You cannot impress God with your family heritage.

You cannot impress God with your nationality. You cannot impress God with your religious knowledge. The fact of the matter is here today, God doesn't care if you grew up in this church, came here for the last 30 years, or if today is the first day you have ever set foot in this church. When it comes to God's judgment, all are equal. Notice what it says in Romans 2, 12. For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.

What Paul is getting at here is so whether you're a Gentile who didn't have the Jewish law as the Jews did, everyone will face judgment for their sins.

The fact of the matter is God doesn't give special treatment to everyone. Although the Gentiles did not have the law, you know what they had? Their conscience. They had their conscience.

[33 : 55] They knew what was right. They know how to raise their kids right and wrong. Right? They know how to live in this life right and wrong. So they already have something that is attesting what is true.

And when they start to act according to what they know and what is right or wrong, they're attesting there is a law. And by that law they are bound sound.

So when Paul talks about the Gentiles who don't have the law, he means they didn't have the Torah or the Mosaic law given to Israel. But they had their conscience.

You see, God has written a basic understanding of right and wrong into the hearts of all people, which means nobody can claim complete ignorance. conscience.

So when you do what's right, it shows that God's moral law is inscribed on your heart. That's why Paul says their thoughts either accuse them or defend them.

[34 : 59] Their conscience is at work. But for those who have the law, the standard is even higher. They know God's word, so they're expected to live by it.

And here's where it gets real. God's judgment isn't about the outward appearance or knowing the right answers. And it says here in Romans 2.13, for it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law will be justified.

It's not enough to listen to sermons, attend Bible studies, or even know your way around theological debates.

What matters is, are you living out that truth that is revealed in the word of God? In this world, favoritism is all too common.

We see it in workplaces, schools, and even churches. If you've been paying attention to the news right now in the States, what's going on with President Donald Trump, and he's been hit with a whole bunch of lawsuits, right or wrong, I do not know.

[36 : 14] But what a lot of people are finding out is that a lot of the judges are demonstrating they've got relatives and family members who have outside interests in preventing him from running.

And what's interesting is there was a poll I was reading, and it showed that the majority of Democrats are understanding, even though he's a Republican who would be running against Joe Biden, the Democrats, they recognize that this is wrong.

That they are afraid that any judge that could be so rigged to someone's favoritism will eventually come against them.

What a frightful place to be. Do you know even in the Old Testament, when you would go to the market, one of the things that God calls out over and over are those that used faulty weights to weigh the merchants and the trade that you were doing.

Like God issued a curse on you for doing that. That is considered one of the heights of injustice. God hates that. See, God doesn't play favorites or show partiality.

[37 : 28] God's judgment is always fair and just. And what's even better is that his grace is available to all who seek him. See, the beauty of the Gospels is that for everyone, whether you come from a religious background or you're hearing it for the very first time.

That's why Paul says in Romans 1.16, why he's not ashamed of the Gospel. You see, the fact of the matter is, when we talk about God's judgment, it's easy to feel overwhelmed.

It's easy to feel frightened, going to be judged, shame. The thought of standing before a holy and righteous God is intimidating, and it rightfully should be.

But that's not the whole story. We must remember the mercy and grace of God in judgment. Look at Romans 2.4, and we talked about this last week.

Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? So often we think, as soon as I sin, there's going to be a meteorite that hits me or the earth is going to swallow me.

[38 : 47] And in our arrogance, we think, because I got away with that sin, God is okay with it. It's not. You see, God's heart is for us to repent and find grace, not to condemn.

God's mercy means that despite our guilt and the certainty of judgment, he extends a hand of grace. This kindness is intended to lead us to repentance, to draw us back to him.

God doesn't delight in judgment. God delights in mercy. The entire narrative scripture points toward a God who desires to redeem and restore us.

Amen? This finally leads us to the beautiful and wonderful role of Jesus Christ. God, in his infinite wisdom and love, sent his son, Jesus Christ, to bear the judgment that we so rightfully deserve.

On the cross, Jesus took our sins upon himself, ensuring that those who put their trust and faith in him are justified, which means made right before God.

[40 : 05] In Jesus Christ, the righteousness of God is revealed. And those who believe are declared righteous. It's not our works.

It's not our efforts. It's not our moral performance. But it's only by the sheer grace of God through Christ's sacrifice. No one is beyond the reach of God's grace.

Listen, I get it. Sometimes we carry the weight of our past mistakes, or we think of our sins are almost too great to be forgiven. But God's mercy continues to extend to everyone who repents and

believes.

There's no condition in scripture that my grace is sufficient, except if your sin is too bad. You see, the grace of God is for all people, regardless of their religious background or their cultural past. In Christ, there is no condemnation. See, the moment we put our faith in Jesus Christ, we are covered by his righteousness, and we are shielded from the wrath of judgment.

[41 : 24] You see, when I say living in the light of God's grace, I mean understanding that God's judgment is very real, but so is his mercy.

As Christians, we don't live in fear of judgment because Jesus has already paid it all on our behalf. Instead, we're called to live out the fruits of repentance, which means loving others, showing grace and walking in humility.

mercy. And it also means extending mercy we have received to those who are around us. Don't cheapen God's grace by treating it as a license to sin.

instead respond to his kindness by turning from your sins and embracing a new life that he offers.

The fact of the matter in Christ, we have hope and assurance.

God's mercy triumphs over judgment, and this is the good news that you and I need to cling to every single day of our lives.

[42 : 39] The fact is, we all need God's grace, and he is willing to give it. If we generally repent, he offers us forgiveness and restoration. Let us run from the cross of judgment, but let us run to and cling to it.

Let's pray. Dear Holy Heavenly Father, sometimes even looking at the subject of judgment can be a somewhat daunting one, but when we understand it in the light of your character, we also see your hand of mercy.

Father, even in our sin and your grace that you so, we so undeservably deserve, but you continue to give to us, it's your patience with us that you call us to repent.

How easy it is for us that are mature believers to abuse the grace that you give to us so we can enjoy our season of sin.

Father, I pray that this church would be known that their first fruits are worship, that we are called to worship together as a church, that nowhere in scriptures are worship to be isolated from the church, but we are meant to be together.

[44 : 15] That is why God grants us each our own spiritual gifts to be a part of this organism, this body. And when we do not serve, we do not participate in the life of the church, we're handicapped.

We're working with less when we could work with more. I would hate to think that someone refusing to use their gifts in the church could be the bottleneck to prevent God's blessing upon an assembly of people.

or seeing someone come to new birth in Christ because they're deciding to serve themselves rather than just serve the body.

Father, I pray that you give us a great love for yourself, a great desire to worship you, and a great way to respond in love to the challenges of our lives and the people that come in.

And may we always respond, not in a heart of judgment, but in a heart of grace. We thank you for these things, O God. In your precious name, amen.