

Turn to God and let Him work in your life

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[0 : 0 0] 32, which says, though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them, but give approval to those who practice them.

Therefore, you have no excuse, O man, or every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another, you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same thing.

We know the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man, that you who judge those who practice such things, and yet do them yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?

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? But because of your hard and impenitent heart, you're storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

He will render to each one according to his works. To those who by patience in well-doing seek the glory and honor of immortality, he will give eternal life.

[1 : 1 0] But to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be the wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but the glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first, the Jew and also the Greek, for God shows no partiality.

For all have sinned without the law and will perish without the law, and all who sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.

For when the Gentiles who do not have the law by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show their work of the law written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness with their conflicting thoughts, accuse or even excuse them.

On that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God, and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law, and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, and instructor to the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law an embodiment of the knowledge of the truth, and then you teach others, do you not teach yourself?

While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that one must not commit adultery, do not commit adultery. You who abhor idols, do not rob temples.

[2 : 5 6] You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. For as it is written, the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. For circumcision is indeed of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision.

So if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law.

For no one who is a Jew, for one who is a Jew who is merely outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart by the spirit, not by the letter.

His praise is not from man, but from God. It sounds a little bit complicated towards the end, but I can assure you it's incredibly important for the Christian to understand what God has just said about him.

Another very good hymn, really, to precede a chapter, this chapter in particular. You know, don't forget about the cross as we read through, or as we have read through Romans chapter 2.

[4 : 28] Romans chapter 2 opens with a particular insight that there are those in the world who think that they're going to escape the judgment of God.

You know, this can vary from my nan, who says to me, I've been a good person my whole life. It doesn't seem right for God to judge goodness.

That makes a lot of sense, even to a Christian. But unless this is someone who trusts in the cross, unfortunately, you cannot escape the judgment that is to come.

So there's a lot of people in the world, you know, very nice people, old grannies, you know, that we love dearly, but the truth prevails. And when the truth goes up against people that we know and love well, you know, that's quite hard to handle, quite hard to stomach, perhaps.

You know, and there's a lot of other people who think they'll escape the judgment of God simply because they don't believe that it's real. You know, why would anybody worry about something that isn't real?

[5 : 46] Well, of course, if you believe the judgment of God is not real, then it's no wonder why you would wander through this life, you know, carefree. You've got nothing to worry about.

It's not true, however. Romans 2 says, as Romans 1 says, really, that the only way of escape is Jesus Christ. The only way of escape is for God to do a work, you know, within your heart and transform you as an individual.

So there are a few challenges that come out of Romans chapter 2. Number one, don't think that time's on your side. If you've not repented and believed, you know, don't make the mistake you've got time to.

You know, you may have, and you may look back and say, well, I've had a lot of time in the past, but past performance is no guarantee of future direction. It's, you know, it doesn't work that way.

Here's another challenge. You know, don't think that if you disagree with sin and that you can spot sin in other people's lives, like child molesters and those who go to prison for doing paedophilia and all of that type of thing.

[7 : 03] Yeah, don't think that if you can spot those type of sins and call them evil, just like God does, that you're in the okay, because you're not. You know, just because you can say other things are wrong, just like God can, that doesn't mean that you're in the clear.

Here's another thing, perhaps for a few people in this church. Yeah, don't rely on your religion to save you. Don't rely on your religion to save you.

What happens is some of you are purely just religious. Yeah, there is a danger of that. It can, it's always easily spotted, but it's never spotted by the religious person.

Yeah, that's the blind spot. It's one of those difficulties. Jesus can spot the difference between a genuine disciple and a Pharisee, but the Pharisees can, right, because their religion blinds them.

So there are a few challenges that come out of Romans chapter 2 here. The other challenge is this, is that repentance is absolutely essential.

[8 : 13] Okay, repentance is absolutely essential. Turning to Jesus is absolutely essential. There is, there is no other way of escape from the judgment of God than turning to Jesus.

Don't leave it to another day. Don't, don't rely on your parents being saved or your grandparents being saved or, or being christened or being, even being baptized.

Repentance is absolutely essential for escaping the judgment of God to come. And that's why Romans 2 can open with this valid statement that no one has an excuse.

No one has an excuse for two reasons. No one has an excuse to avoid the judgment of God because all have sinned. And therefore, no one has an excuse being that all have sinned not to repent.

So you don't have an excuse when it comes to the judgment. You know, oh, I missed that lesson, God, on that day. I was poorly. And you don't have an excuse when it comes to the judgment for not belonging to Jesus, for not repenting.

[9 : 29] So there's no excuse either way. Repentance is something that we all must do. Believers must continue to do it. Unbelievers must do it for the first time and then continually do it.

Repent and believe. Repentance doesn't save you, by the way. Repentance is the turning. God saves us. Repentance is the wonderful gift of God that enables us to turn and to be filled and to be worked by his hands.

Put it that way. We come then to the first thing that Paul mentions, and that is passing judgment. You know, we all like to pass judgment.

And sometimes we get it right. Some people get paid to pass judgment. They're called judges, and we're very thankful for them, that we have courtrooms and galleries, and we have judges.

You know, we want people to pass judgment in this world, don't we? So passing judgment is a good thing. How many of you read the first part of Romans chapter 2 saying, well, no, passing judgment is the bad thing?

[10 : 44] That's not what Paul is saying. That's not actually what Paul is saying at all. What Paul is saying is this, that you're passing judgment on others when you yourselves are committing the same sins.

Okay? In other words, what is Paul saying? He's saying this, look. If you're passing judgment on somebody else because you recognize that what they're doing is wrong, it's wrong before God, and you've said to them that it's wrong, and you've also said that they need to change.

Yeah, there's nothing wrong with that. The problem is if you can recognize sin, then why aren't you repenting of it in your own life? Right?

That's the point that Paul is getting to. Just listen to it again. Why do you condemn yourself?

Well, you don't condemn yourself because you're passing judgment. You condemn yourself because you're practicing the very same thing. Do you get the point? So it's not the act of passing judgment that is wrong.

[11 : 54] It's the act of passing judgment on sin, which is, yeah, because you recognize that sin is wrong, but then not doing the same thing on yourself. Not recognizing sin in your own life that needs to be repented of and put right before God.

That's the sin that Paul is getting at here. You know, Jesus alluded to the same thing. What did he say? First, take out the speck where?

In your own eye. He didn't say don't ever take out the speck in your brother's eye. No, you know, there's nothing wrong in pointing out to your brother when he's got something wrong, but make sure that you do it having done it to yourself first.

This is the problem here. So Paul's speaking to religious people in the church, right? So the past people in verse 32, you know, they say, yeah, go sin.

It doesn't matter. Do whatever you like. And then you've got these people in the church saying, that's wrong. That's wrong. You can't do that. That's sinful. Have they got it right? Yeah, they've got it right. The bit that they've got wrong is that they're passing judgment while not recognizing that they need to repent for their own sin.

[13 : 06] That's the thing that they're condemned for. You know, just imagine, you know, if we lived in a world where, you know, nobody could make any more judgments.

You know, nobody could say that anything was wrong. You know, think about the further chaos that we would be in. You'd have to get rid of law courts, insurance agencies. You know, whose fault was it?

Was it their fault or mine? Well, you can't. No, passing judgment is a good thing. Paul says in Corinthians that he says, I'm not allowed to pass judgment on unbelievers.

I have no business with them. He says, I'm only allowed to pass judgment on those in the church. Why? Well, the reason being is because we all adhere, or at least we all ought to, adhere to the same standard of God.

And we don't pass judgment to condemn. We sort of pass judgment to say, look, brother. Look, sister. Do you realize this isn't sort of consistent with living the Christian life?

[14 : 09] How about coming back into line with God? How about, you know, let's get this right together. You know, I've sinned as well. I've done the same thing. You know, but let's not continue down that track.

You know, it's that mutual encouragement out of chapter one. Encouraging one another to obey God. So passing judgment. Yeah, it's wrong. It's wrong here because they're doing it forgetting about their own sins.

They condemn themselves. They're able to spot sin, but they're unable to spot it in their own life. Or even if they do spot it, they don't repent of it. That's the problem.

Big problem. The next thing to notice, you know, is that God is incredibly patient. You know, I mean really patient. You know, super patient.

Do we repent quickly? No. Do we actually come to see our sin quickly? Probably not.

[15 : 13] It probably takes us a long time before we ever come to see our sin. Does it take for somebody else to point it out to us? Yeah, often. You know, whether it be God by his spirit through another person, or whether it just be something that you pick up on and say, yeah, God is really addressing me here.

That this is something that really does need to be dealt with. The problem here, again, is that these people misunderstand the patience of God.

God is incredibly patient. And they take it as, well, if God's not going to punish me for not repenting, guess what I'm going to do tomorrow? I'll just carry on the way that I've always been doing.

So, listen to verse 4. He says, 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?

And they're going, Well, you know, as long as I can get away with it, I'll just live life trying to get away with it.

[16 : 31] And that's the point. That's what Paul is addressing here, that we take the patience of God not as an indication to repent, not as God is being incredibly kind with me to be able to turn to him, but actually this is time for me to repent and believe in Jesus.

That's what God gives us time for. You know, if you're an unbeliever, do you notice God's challenging you much in your life?

Well, maybe today you do. And now God has given us time to repent and believe. So don't presume.

Don't go away from here this morning, presuming you have a lot of time on your hands. No, go away from here that God is allowing you all the time that you need.

But he's allowing you that time to come to repentance. Why? Well, one day the time's up. Time's up. And time's up when you get to meet God at the judgment.

[17 : 45] You've heard enough. You've seen enough. Come to God. Here's why. People who don't repent don't understand what's happening when time passes.

Verse 5. Because of your hard and impenitent heart, the time is passing, you know, and you're storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

Yeah, imagine it this way. Okay. You know those clicker counters that you can have when people walk through the door to count how many people come in?

Well, imagine you have one of these. And God gets to press it every time you sin. Okay. And you look at it at the end of the day and you go, wow, 20,000 steps.

Well, it's not 20,000 steps. It's 20,000 sins. Repentance. It's resetting it to zero. That's what repentance is.

[18 : 50] Imagine it that way. You're not storing up for yourself sins. You're not storing up for yourself wrath, but it's a reset. Repentance is resetting it back to zero.

God's got nothing against you because you're repenting and believing Christ who's taken all those sins away. Those who don't repent, well, it just starts stacking on top of each other.

It starts collecting. You know, at the end of the day, yeah, the number is great. But at the end of the amount of time before you come to meet God, it could be a whole lot greater. Every day that passes where you don't turn to God is a day that God has against you.

Every day that passes. But every day in which we repent and we believe, you know, we trust in Jesus, you know, God deals with us. But he doesn't condemn us. He gets rid of all those things so that we don't have to face the judgment, so we don't have to face the wrath of God.

You know, hit the reset button. Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the reason why is because of what Paul says next.

[20 : 05] When we are judged, even Christians, we are all judged according to our works. We're all going to be judged according to our works.

The visible parts of our faith count. Verse 6. He will render to each one according to his works. What does that mean?

Well, it means that God is going to take into consideration how we have lived our lives. So just think about it this way. Take this into consideration.

Or rather, take into consideration what God takes into consideration, and it's this. How you live. When you meet God, and God judges, he weighs everything in the balance, God's going to take how you live into consideration.

What you have done, what you have not done. Whether or not you have lived the Christian life by the Spirit, or you have walked your own way of life, even in the church.

[21 : 15] Remember, this is a gospel written to church people. God is going to judge us all according to what we have done. Are we different now that we're saved?

That's the point. Are we different now that we're saved? Here's a step-by-step understanding of how you should come to this. Number one, the gospel message shows us that salvation causes us to obey God.

That's an absolute joy. The gospel tells us that salvation causes us to obey God. God. That means you don't just come to church, but you want to.

You don't just pray and repent, but you actually want to. These are fruits of the Spirit. You don't just serve God in the sense that, you know, I'm doing it because you actually want to serve God.

The gospel saves us to obey God in a whole number of ways, or completely. Number two, in the gospel, we learn that only by belonging to Jesus can we escape the final judgment.

[22 : 32] That's the only way of escape, Hebrew says. You know, belong to Jesus. That's the message. Then you'll escape the judgment. Number three, when the judgment comes, it will be according to your works, what you've done, how you've lived.

So, here's the point that Paul's getting to. The gospel, the message of the gospel, the achievement of Christ, must produce in you good works.

It must produce in you good works, because that's what God is going to judge. And God judges the changed life.

So, as we stand before God, you know, has the gospel gone to work on your life. Have you noticed anything? Have you actually really come under the power of the gospel?

Will you begin to notice the change that God is creating in your life? Well, here's the first thing that you'll notice. You'll repent. And you will repent quite frequently over all the years.

[23 : 39] that is a gospel fruit. And that's what Paul's getting at here. We'll all be judged according to our works by the evidence, the visible evidences of our faith.

Repentance is one of them. There's a lot of others, but repentance is most definitely one of them. So, we need to take God seriously. And we need to take into consideration what God takes into consideration.

How do we escape the judgment? Repent and believe in his son. What will happen at the judgment? You'll be judged according to your works. What works?

Well, there'll either be good works that God has produced in us through believing in his son, or there'll be the works of disobeying him and going our own way and doing whatever we want. Yeah.

I know which one I'd rather be in to face God. You know, the one where God is reset the counter back to zero every day. Perfect before God.

[24 : 43] The only thing that's being counted up now are all the good things that I do, not the bad things. God is quite selective that way in the God. It's wonderful, isn't it? The God, you know, God sort of goes through the tally sheet of my life since I've been a Christian only counting the good things.

Why? Because the bad things have been forgiven. All the sins have been forgiven. God only counts the good things now. That's a wonderful thing for me to put my head down on the pillow at night knowing that when I meet God there's going to be a list of good things and not a list of bad things.

And the same for you as you stand and sit before God this morning. So we move on then. We move on then to the fact that all have sinned.

You know, whether you're a believer or an unbeliever, whether you're a Jew or a Gentile as Paul points out here, yeah, everyone's sinned. Whether you're a believer who's had all the privileges of God, like a Jew's had all the privileges of God, or whether you're an unbeliever who, you know, seems to not have had the law of God but God says here you've had it written on your hearts, the point is that we've all sinned and God knows that we've all sinned and we know that we've all sinned.

You know, how many of us have had our conscience attack us, you know, accuse us or even excuse us that says, you know, no, you're okay.

[26 : 12] You've really done nothing wrong. But then sometimes our conscience can actually say, well, no. Well, that's what the conscience does.

It's sort of, it is a law that God has written within our own life. You know, it's sort of a self-correcting, you know, I want to go this way and the conscience makes it hard for us.

But the conscience can be broken. You can ignore it enough and then you can go your own way. And how many of us have had those conflicting thoughts?

Whether to obey or not to obey Jesus. As unbelievers, you may not have them but, you know, you have conflicting thoughts nonetheless when it comes to do the right thing or the wrong thing.

It's a challenge for all of us. Yeah, the conscience is not enough to protect us from the judgment of God to come. Well, Paul says, you know, the Jews are people that God raised up in the Old Testament to be a light to be a light to people who walk in darkness.

[27 : 22] They're given the law, they're given all these privileges but it didn't help them. It should have helped them but still they turned their back on God.

They had the law of God, they knew God, they knew what was true. It was a very privileged position to be in. They had numerous blessings to walk with God through this life.

In other words, they were a people with real advantages and yet they still seem to mess everything up. Verse 23 points it out quite clearly.

It says this, that you who boast in the law, you know, those who have been blessed with it, dishonor God by breaking the law. In other words, look, Jew, you've not preached what you, you've not practiced what you've preached.

You've proclaimed it but you've not practiced it yourself. That's a problem. Oh, why is it a problem? Not just because it condemns you but it's a witness problem.

[28 : 27] Verse 24, for as it is written, the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. In other words, what Paul is saying is this, you can either be a witness in the church that leads other people to repentance or you'll be a witness in the church that leads other people away from repentance.

You know, that's what Paul's getting at. He's saying, look, you believers have had a wonderful privilege, a great privilege in having God and having, knowing God and having his law and having, having all these things and yet when you disobey, when you don't repent, guess what you're teaching others?

That's what Paul's saying in verse 24. You know, God is dishonored by people out there because guess what? He's dishonored by his own people in the church. That's the, that's the, that is something to stomach that.

You know, God is saying, first, let's get our own house in order. You know, yeah, we can make judgments and get them right but let's get back to the main issue. Let's get our own sin right first.

Let's deal with ourselves first. So yeah, we are meant to be people who are witnesses that, of repentance that then lead other people to repentance but he says that, unfortunately, many in the church have actually become witnesses to unrepentance and have led many other people to the same thing.

[30 : 02] are we right in saying that sin is wrong? Yeah. What we're not right in is not repenting of our own sin. That's the problem.

That's, that's where the, the, the bad witness starts. Let's, let's get that bit right, Paul says. Let's, let's concentrate on our own sin before God.

Here's another thing that, is it possible that, that people don't repent because of, of a misplaced confidence?

Yeah, I think it is. You, remember my, remember my nan. I've been a good person my whole life. You know, there's, there's no way God can judge a good person and send them to hell.

God can't do that. Is she a nice person? Yeah, she's a really nice person. Is she old? Yeah, she's really old. Sometimes because she's older, it's, you think it's harder to tell her the truth.

[31 : 06] Yeah, because she's old. Is she right? No, she's not right. You know, she's, she's, she's not right. It's a misplaced confidence.

I'm sure there's many people in the church who'll say, you know, I've gone to church God my whole life. It's not good enough. It'll be some people say, you know, I've given to the church my whole life.

Yeah, okay. But it's not good enough. It's, it's not what God's looking for. Repent. Repent.

Trust in Jesus. Come to him. Don't, don't be like the Jew here who, who believe that because they were circumcised, that everything's okay. I've got the sign that I am God's person.

Paul's saying, no, you don't, don't rely on that. You're trusting in the wrong thing. The sign is always something that points to God, never something that points to you.

[32 : 16] It's a bit like baptism. look at what God does. Here's the exhortation then as we, as we bring it to a close.

It's, it's quite clear what God takes into consideration at the final judgment and it's, you know, how have we lived? The question that faces us is God will judge us according to our works and therefore how we have lived matters.

And verse 29 says that, you know, that God must do a work by his spirit in our heart. Real change must be a change that God's spirit brings to us.

You know, there are, there is time for all of us, both believers and unbelievers to repent or repent again and to get right with God.

For the unbeliever it could be, you know, stop trusting in the wrong things. For the believer it could be, stop trusting in the wrong things. Let's get back to a close walk with God, the right kind of walk with God that we need.

[33 : 28] You know, Romans chapter two, you've probably figured out by now, is not just looking at one type of person, the unbeliever. Romans chapter two, shockingly, is looking at the believer.

And he's saying, look, don't go pointing the finger at everybody else's sin. You may get it right, but that's not the point. Deal with your own sin before God.

You know, get right yourself before God. You know, repent and believe yourself and don't trust in the wrong things. Yeah, are unbelievers wrong? Yeah, of course they're living in sin.

But I think we do it more to divert attention away from ourselves rather than to point out something that's true. Maybe that's what Paul's saying.

I'm not falling for that one. Listen to the gospel. Turn to God yourself. It's a sobering message.

[34 : 30] message. The command is, look, we've all got to trust in Jesus and we've all got to repent and come clean before God. We've all got to see our need for Jesus. We've all got to trust in Jesus.

In fact, repentance is trusting Jesus. Repentance is turning to Jesus. Then our sin is dealt with.

Repentance is not you dealing with your sin. Repentance actually has nothing to do with sin. Repentance comes from the Greek word metanoia. Meta meaning change, noia meaning mind.

It means to change your mind. Change your mind from what? Change your mind from trusting in the wrong things to trusting in the right thing. Only God can deal with sin through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Repent of them, but you repent by turning to God so that he can deal with them. Turn to him. Trust in Jesus alone for the changed life.

[35 : 32] Why? Because that's where the judgment is going to fall. Here's the final consideration. The gospel message doesn't just need to be heard by the people in the world who are unbelievers.

It also continually needs to be heard by the people who are in the church, especially by those who are lost in their religion. they need to be saved.

One of my favorite stories of revival is the Northampton revival in America. Jonathan Edwards, back in the day, not the triple jumper, the other one, the Puritan theologian, brilliant man, preached that sermon, sinners in the hands of an angry God.

He actually held on to a pillar because he was so feeble with a candle and read the sermon. Hundreds of people came to faith.

Massive revival. But do you know where all those people were saved? In the church. 95% of the people that were saved were people in the church.

[36 : 51] Religious people need saving. You know, most of us would have gone to that church, looked at it today and go, wow, it's a strong church, it's a vibrant church. Look at all these people, look at all these young people.

But when the Spirit of God fell and revealed the truth, look at who came to Christ. They were never saved. God's message needs to be preached in the church not to cause doubt but to bring people to absolute certainty that they belong to Jesus.

It's not about separating people. It's about bringing people into the absolute certainty that they are trusting in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone.

Well, I suggest you leave here this morning and having read chapter 2, perhaps go away and read it again and take its message seriously. Act upon it wisely.

Use it to repent. Use it to turn to God. Romans 2 understands you don't come to these things quickly. But make sure you come to them.

[38 : 05] Make sure you come to them. You've heard the message this morning. You've read Romans 2 this morning. You know what God soak it in. Let it dwell heavily upon your heart.

Let it do its work of change within your life. Don't leave here this morning relying on anything else. Especially yourself.

Don't leave here relying on yourself. Turn to Jesus. Repent. Repent. And allow God to do the work within your life.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.