



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Romans 2: 1-16

Romans

"Justice for All"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Our test this morning is Romans chapter 2 and we're going to look at verses 1 through 16 which is a lengthy passage of Scripture and somewhat involved. If I could simplify it, put it in the simplest words as I can think of, it would be that this is about God's judgment. His judgment is against all who are outside of Christ, and His judgment is just. Paul writes:

Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each person according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.

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; for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

May the Lord bless this reading of His word. Let's bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for this time together. It's a privilege and it's a blessing to be able to open the Scriptures and read them as we have done. And then, to consider the meaning of the text, and we look to You to bless us as we do. We come to a text which speaks of Your judgment, speaks of justice, speaks of that which all men, who are by nature children of wrath, are under. And so, we pray that as we study, You would guide us in our thinking and help us to understand the text, apply it to our lives. We thank You, Father, that as we come to a text like this, we who know Your grace, we who have experienced Your love and Your mercy in Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, can see in this not that which is applied to us, but the background against which Your grace is magnified, and we can praise You because You've delivered us, delivered us from ourselves, and the wrath that we had stored up for the day of wrath. But, rather than pour that wrath out on us, You have poured it out on Your Son, our substitute. May we see that. May we sense that. May we be encouraged by that.

So, bless us, Father, as we study. Give us a right understanding of these things. We are privileged to have the Scriptures, and yet the Scriptures alone would not be enough because we cannot understand them. Our minds are darkened in and of ourselves. But You have given us a teacher, and that teacher resides within new hearts, hearts which have been transformed from stone to flesh, living hearts, new natures which have capacities for understanding. And we have the teacher who resides within us, a third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, who instructs us. We pray for His teaching ministry this morning. May it go unhindered. Prepare our hearts to receive it and build us up in the faith. This is how we grow, Father. This is

how we grow in the faith. It's through the study of Your word. And so, we are thankful that we're here this morning. Bless us in that, and bless us in other ways as well, Father. We are physical beings. You've made us that way. You've made us as dependent creatures. We're dependent on the things around us. We're dependent on one another. You've created us in that way, so we are people with needs that we can't meet in and of ourselves. We fail to realize that so often, Father, because You are so faithful in giving to us the things of this world, the things of life that we tend to take it all for granted. We don't wonder about the next meal that we will enjoy. We don't think about those things because we have such an abundance of material goods. But the reality is: it all comes from You. And every once in a while, we experience privation in various ways. Maybe in health or in employment, and it reminds us that these things are not givens. We can be presumptuous about what we have, that it's all a gift. It comes from You. And so, Father, we pray that You would instill that conviction in our hearts, remind us that we are dependent, and You are the giver of good gifts. Make us grateful and give us concern for those who are without at this time, those who are in poor health, those who are recovering from surgeries, those who are without employment. Bless them. And through all of that, through the trial that they are experiencing, bless them spiritually. Cause them to draw close to You, to approach the throne of grace, and then to see Your hand of mercy.

Bless us this evening when we return, Father. We pray You'd bless the evening meeting, bless those who participate, bless those who speak. May we all be built up in the faith, and bless our time of fellowship afterwards, and bless our time now as we sing our final hymn. Prepare our hearts for our time of worship and study together. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] From an early age, we have been taught the importance of justice. When we were children, at least when I was, we began the school day by standing by our desk facing the flag and pledging allegiance, ending on the words, "With liberty and justice for all." In fact, though, that is more an aspiration than a reality. The world is a place of inequality and injustice. Certainly less so here in our country than in other places. But still, what George Orwell wrote in *Animal Farm* is to some extent true everywhere. All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others.

Now, people often find that to be true at work when they are passed over for a promotion and they learn what is often said: that it's not what you know, but who you know that counts. It's called the "old boy" network. People play favorites. That's typical. They don't judge others on their merits. And so what happens, what do people do when that occurs? Well, they cry out for justice. They want fair play. They want equal justice. They want to be judged on their merits. It's only right.

The good news is: the world will get that. There is a judge who does not play favorites and will give justice for all, and that's the Lord. In verse 11, Paul writes, "There is no partiality with God." His justice is impartial. He rewards men and women according to their worth. His justice is perfect. It is righteous, Paul says in verse 5.

The bad news is: we are not righteous. No one can stand before God's justice in the strength of his or her merit. The very thing that people cry out for will be their undoing. That is true for Jews, as well as Gentiles. It is true for all. That is the lesson of Romans chapter 2 verses 1 through 16 where Paul explains the judgment of God, and he explains it in three ways. First, in verses 1 through 4: God's judgment is inescapable. Second, in verses 5 through 11: His judgment is righteous. It is fair. And thirdly, in verses 12 through 16: His judgment is impartial.

In other words, if we could summarize it all very simply: God is just. This is the continuation of the argument that Paul began in chapter 1 to prove that all human beings are guilty and without excuse before God, and in need of salvation. They need the gospel that he was anxious to come to Rome and preach, the gospel which he was not ashamed of. All men need it. Well, he wrote, to begin this section of his book and this part of the argument in chapter 1 and verse 18 that the wrath of God has revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Then, he exposed ungodliness and unrighteousness in the Gentiles. He showed how they have rejected God's revelation in nature and worshipped the creature rather than the creator. Then he traced their downward descent from idolatry into moral corruption and mental delusion. God's wrath is clearly against the Gentile and deservedly so, and the Jew would have agreed with everything that Paul wrote about them in chapter 1. The Gentiles are depraved idolaters. They call them the dogs, spiritual pariahs, deserving of divine wrath.

But Paul now turns his attention to the Jews to say, you think you're okay? You think that you are right with God because you are his people? But you're no different from the Gentiles. And he assures them that in their present condition of unbelief, they will not escape the wrath of God either. Judgment is inevitable.

He begins the chapter by exposing the failure of the Jew and proving that he has no ground for self-confidence, and is no better than the Gentile. "Therefore," he writes, "you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things." Now that word "therefore" indicates that he's drawing an inference from the preceding, and it seems very clear that he's drawing an inference from the previous verse where he comes to the end of his indictment on the Gentiles with the worst charge of all. The Gentiles not only practice sin; that is bad in and of itself. That is evil. That is wicked. But in addition to that, they encourage others to do the same thing, to do the very thing that they do, practice the very sin that they practice, knowing full well that those who practice such things are worthy of death.

Still, they encourage them in that way. Now, Paul says that the Jews have done the very same thing. Only, their sin is much more serious. They had great advantage over the Gentile. They had a law and the prophets. They know right from wrong and could evaluate Gentiles according to the standard of Scripture, according to the revelation that God had given, and they did that. They judged Gentiles severely and correctly, but also hypocritically because while they condemned sin, they themselves committed it themselves.

Jewish history is filled with the proof of Paul's statement. From the incident with the golden calf, through the days of the judges and the kings, Israel committed idolatry, it committed murder and gross immorality. The prophets preached against it. Paul's fellow Pharisees were really no better. You remember in Matthew chapter 23 where Jesus addresses them; He calls them hypocrites who lay heavy burdens on men's shoulders, but not move them, He said, with so much as a finger.

The Pharisees were very good about giving instruction on how people ought to live, telling others how to conduct themselves, but not do it themselves. They cleaned the outside of the cup, He said, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. They gratify themselves. They gratify their flesh. Having the law, knowing the law, doesn't enable a person to keep the law. In fact, Paul will explain later in chapter 7

that the law does not prevent us from sinning. Just the opposite, the law arouses sinful passions within an individual.

Well, the Pharisees are a good example of that. They wrote the law down, they put it in phylacteries, they tied them to their foreheads and still, they broke the law. The indictment that Paul makes on the Jew here is that of blindness and hypocrisy.

Now, in fairness, that is not true of Jews only. It's true of everyone. John Stott, in his commentary on the Book of Romans wrote that there is a strange human foible, namely our tendency to be critical of everybody except ourselves. He describes this as a device that enables us simultaneously to retain our sins and our self-respect. In other words, we're able to fool ourselves into thinking that we're okay. There were Gentiles in Paul's day that did that. Not all of them behaved with the moral abandon recorded in chapter 1. There were moralists in his day who objected to the corruption around them. Seneca, who was Nero's tutor, his instructor, was such a man. He was a moral philosopher, and he probably would've agreed with everything that Paul said in his condemnation of Gentile morality. The Roman historian Tacitus was like that. He described Rome as a place where everything shameful and horrible collects and is practiced. And in saying that, he's condemning that kind of behavior. There were noble pagans then. Just as there are moral men today, men who are good citizens, who advocate law and ethics, good politics, even attend church, talk about God and the importance of prayer. They're moral men, before men. But they are not righteous before God, not outside of Jesus Christ. They don't fully live up to their standard, their code of ethics. No one does. All men are hypocrites because what Paul promises now is that people will be judged by the same standard that they set for others. Therein is the problem for man. He has a standard.

We all have a standard, and Paul develops that in the passage. Whether you be a Jew or a Gentile, whether you have been given the law of Moses or not. All men have a standard. But where there is inconsistency in that standard, there will be condemnation. This is the indictment that Paul brings against the Jews. They believe they were morally superior to the Gentiles and outwardly, they were. The Jew was a superior individual in terms of behavior and conduct to the Gentile in his moral abandonment. Paul said that they practiced the very things that they condemned. They were hypocritical. That only exposed them to God's judgment. Where there is

guilt, there's no escape from judgment. That's the first point that he makes here. There is no escape from God's judgment. God sees the inside of the cup as clearly as He sees the outside, and He judges, and judges justly. It's what Paul states in verse 2. "And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things."

Literally what Paul wrote there is: the judgment of God is according to truth. Meaning, it is according to the facts. He makes His decision on the merits of the case. Now, the Jew would have agreed with that. The Jew would've given a hardy Amen to what Paul has written there in verse 2. God is just. He certainly would agree with that. But in verse 3, Paul applies that principle of God's fairness in judgment to the self-righteous, the self-contented, the self-satisfied Jew. He asks: if he really supposes that he could get away with hypocrisy, that is of setting himself up as the judge of others, doing the very thing that he condemns, and then escape God's judgment. Question is rhetorical. Of course, no one can escape that. And if pressed, the Jew would have to admit that he cannot escape the judgment of God for a hypocritical, law-breaking life. To think that one can do that, to think that one will do that, to think that one is spiritually okay and merits God's spiritual favor is, itself, spiritual delusion. More than that, it is presumption. Paul brings that out in verse 4 with another question to show that the self-righteous man's confidence is an attitude of ingratitude. Contempt for the kindness of God.

Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? What self-righteous people don't understand is that God is patient with them, not pleased with them. He uses great restraint in holding back His wrath. Again, the Jew has a long history that bears witness to that. We can see that from the very beginning. God had every right to destroy Israel when it worshipped the golden calf. He had every right to do what He told Moses He planned on doing, and that was destroying the nation and starting all over again with Moses. He had every right to do that. They had sinned. They had broken all of the commandments before the commandments had ever been brought down from Mount Sinai. They had broken the covenant. God could have rightly destroyed that nation, wiped it off the face of the earth, but He didn't. He was patient with them. He extended kindness to them. Generation after generation tested Him with its idolatry and sin, but He was patient with the nation,

sending prophets to warn the nation. They stoned the prophets, but He sent more prophets before finally sending the Babylonians.

And in Paul's day, God was exercising great restraint against the nation that had rejected its own Messiah and His own Son. The purpose of God's patience was to give opportunity for repentance, to lead them to repentance, or induce repentance, which is very simply, a change of mind. And the change that was needed was a change in regard to their self-vindication, their self-satisfaction, their self-righteousness. What the Jew needed to see was that they were not okay, and that really, they were just as unrighteous as the Gentiles. The idea here is: melting the heart with kindness. It is the idea of bringing men, inducing men to see themselves as what they are, responding to that in repentance, melting the heart with kindness.

But it didn't melt. The heart didn't soften. Their hearts became actually even harder. Paul writes: "You think lightly of the riches of His kindness." They mistook it for God's favor rather than His patience. They didn't learn the lesson of God's endurance, His long suffering.

Now, that's true of the Jew, and that's true of Jewish history, and Paul explains that a little more fully, in fact, much more fully in chapter 11. But can't we pause here and can't we see that all of this applies to ourselves as well? To our own nation, to our own people? The 20th century was called the "American Century." God blessed us with victories in war. He has given us peace. He has given us material prosperity. We have entered into the 21st century with unprecedented peace and prosperity.

What has been the nation's response? Has it been one of thanksgiving? Has it been one of praise to God? Has it been one of repentance? No. Not at all. It has been indifference to God, indifference to His truth, and a pursuit of more material prosperity. And that's true of the church as well. As we examine the evangelical church today, we see a people that have become materialistic. Christians have the same standards and aspirations of the world. In fact, the goals of the Christians are very much set by the goals of the world. We want the same things they do. We pursue the same things that the world pursues. Paul is indicting the Jew here, but there is application in this to us as well. To presume on God's patience and kindness is proof of what Paul calls in verse 5, "A stubborn and unrepentant heart." It takes a very hard heart to neglect the kindness of God.

And there can be only one outcome to that: God's patience will run out, and His wrath will result. You are storing up wrath for yourself, he writes, in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. It is deserved. That wrath is deserved. Paul calls it righteous judgment. This is his second point. The second point that he develops in his explanation of the judgment of God. And in verses 5 through 11, he demonstrates it, that God's wrath is always righteous, is always fair. Men want fair play. They will always get that from God. God's wrath is always proportionate with man's sin. It's always in proportion with man's guilt. God never overreacts. In fact, Paul describes the unrepentant man here as "Storing up wrath." It's not God who is described as storing up wrath against man; it's the man himself, the person who is in this self-righteous, self-contented state who is storing up the wrath for himself. He brings it on himself.

Now, those are very descriptive words that Paul gives us here. We could translate this: "treasuring up wrath," because the word is used of storing up riches, gold and silver, these kinds of things. And those whom Paul is considering here think of themselves as doing that. They think of themselves as doing good for themselves. They're a self-righteous people. They think they're okay with God. They think that the course they're pursuing is actually gaining merit with God, storing up good things with God when, in reality, what they are treasuring up is God's wrath. Like the proverb says, there is a way which seems right to the man but the end of it is the way of death. That's true of the self-righteous person who follows a path contrary to the gospel. Wrath is gathering like water behind a dam. Eventually it will break.

But not unjustly. God's judgment is righteous, Paul said. And in the next verses he develops that. In verse 6, Paul states, the principle of God's judgment, why it is righteous, He will render to each person according to his deeds." In other words, His retribution will be exact. It will be perfect.

Now, this statement of judging men according to their deeds is not a contradiction of the great theme of the Book of Romans, which is: the just shall live by faith, that salvation is a free gift for all who trust in Christ. What Paul is doing is stating the foundation of God's judgment. Justification is by faith. Judgment is according to works. It is a principle that runs throughout Scripture. It is a principle that is true for the just and the unjust alike. For the saved person and the unsaved alike. The saved individual, those who have believed in Christ are not judged by their

works for salvation, but within the life of salvation, our deeds, our lives are evaluated according to that standard. It's the same standard that is applied to the just and the unjust alike.

We have an example of that in a couple of passages in 2 Corinthians. Second Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 10, Paul wrote that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. He's speaking of us. He's speaking of the church. He's speaking of Christians. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds, whether good or bad. Your good deeds, your bad deeds will be evaluated by Christ at the judgment seat. What you think and what you do will be examined.

Later, in 2 Corinthians 11 and verse 15, he writes of the unbeliever. Specifically, of false teachers, and he states that their end will be according to their deeds. The Lord will judge the righteous and the unrighteous, the just and the unjust, and His judgment will be fair. The same principle will be applied.

In verses 7 through 10, Paul develops the principle of God's judgment according to works as it is applied to these two paths of life, to the righteous and the unrighteous. First, he speaks of the righteous, the person that Paul describes in verse 7 as doing good. "To those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life." Then again, in verse 10, he writes that God gives glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

The person described here is described here as persevering in doing good, and the reward for that is great blessing. Paul doesn't say that those people earn salvation, earn eternal life by doing good, that doing good is the cause of salvation. The subject of the passage is not salvation. It's not how we obtain salvation. It's important to keep in mind the context of this text. Paul will not take up that subject of salvation and how we receive salvation until chapter 3. This is about the principle of God's judgment, how it works.

Paul is showing that it is just. First he shows that with the justified person, the person who has believed. His or her life is characterized by doing good. The Christian life is to be characterized in that way because saving faith is living faith. It's an active faith. So, the believer perseveres in doing good by seeking glory, and honor, and immortality. Believers want the glory of a transformed life, to be like

Christ, to think like Him, to act like Him, the glory of a transformed life. They want to honor God in their behavior, and they have the hope, and they look forward with hope to the immortality of the resurrection to come. These are the aspirations of the righteous, and God rewards those who seek them by giving them in eternal life.

On the other hand, the unrighteous, those whom Paul describes in verse 8 as selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, they do not do good. They obey unrighteousness, he says, and receive wrath and indignation. Reward or retribution is according to works. And that is true for the Jew first, and also for the Greek. God's judgment is fair. God's judgment is impartial. As Paul explains in verse 11, "For there is no partiality with God."

The Jew has great advantages. Paul will explain that in chapter 3. He writes that their advantages are great in every respect, great because they receive the blessing of God's word. They have the oracles of God. That is a great blessing and a great advantage. But those advantages do not give them a claim on God, or influence His judgment in any way. In terms of merit, in terms of spiritual worth, they are in the same position as the Gentile.

And this brings Paul to the third point. He has demonstrated that no one can escape God's judgment. Neither Gentile nor Jew, divine judgment is inevitable, but it is just. God's judgment is righteous. It is always in proportion to the sin committed and to the guilt. People want fair play, and God will give that.

Now, in verses 12 through 16, Paul develops this third point. He develops God's impartial judgment. Jews and Gentiles differ in regard to the law of Moses. The Jew has it; the Gentile did not have it. But God deals with both in the same way. According to the standard that each one has and obedience to that standard. The Jew had the law. Had the law of Moses. The Gentile though, had conscience. Paul illustrates this and he illustrates God's method in dealing with both beginning with verse 11. There, he gives the illustration. All who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law. Meaning, God won't hold accountable people for a law that they don't possess. He won't hold the Gentile accountable for obedience to the law of Moses when the Gentile did not have that law. But those who do have that law, those who do have the Scriptures, the oracles of God, and have sinned against it, the Jew, He says, will be judged by the law.

So, God judges people according to their works, and He judges their works according to their knowledge, according to the light that they possess. Then, in verse 13, Paul explains why God will judge the Jew as He does, by the law, and it is because having the law itself is not enough.

Now, the Jew felt that it was. The Jew believed that because he was of the Mosaic covenant, a member of that covenant, a member of that race, he possessed the law, that he was privileged. That he had a separated position. Paul says that's not the case, that the law requires more than just the possession of it. The law requires obedience. That's the very nature of it. It is not hearers of the law who are just before God, but the doers of the law will be justified.

Paul doesn't mean by that that people can actually be saved by law keeping. As we go on in our studies in the Book of Romans, we come to the end of this section in chapter 3 and verse 20, and there Paul makes it very plain that no one can keep the law, not fully. The only exception to that is the Lord Jesus Christ. He lived it fully. He fulfilled all righteousness. But other than that, other than Him, no one can do that. No one will fulfill the law. In fact, the law was not given to be fulfilled; it was given in order to show us that we can't fulfill it.

But, if a person thinks that they can, if a person relies upon the law for salvation, as the Jew did, then he must keep it fully, because God judges works and the law requires works. It requires obedience. Now, that is true for the Jew, and God applies the same principle of judgment according to knowledge and performance to the Gentile as well. We read in verses 14 and 15, "For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending themselves."

Gentiles were not given the law of Moses, but God did not leave them without law altogether because what they do not have externally, they do have internally with their conscience. They do the basic things of the law instinctively, Paul says, meaning: people have a sense naturally of right and wrong. And because of that, all Gentile societies have drawn up law codes and codes of ethics all through history. All of them have done that. So while they don't have the law in their hands, they do have its meaning in their hearts. Everyone has a conscience. It is a vestige of the image of

God in which we were created. It is a wrecked and ruined image, to be sure, but there is enough of it there to have a conscience that awakens us to a sense of right and wrong.

As a result, man's heart is like a law court. Everywhere we go, we have a law court inside of us where a constant debate is going on like that between a prosecutor and an advocate. The conscience is either accusing or defending, usually accusing us. The Gentiles, in other words, had enough light to stand condemned. The Gentiles' history and conduct proves that point.

Where did the ancient Greeks get their rules for the Olympic Games? They had very strict rules for the athletes. The athletes took oaths before the contest. They would swear to Zeus that they would play fair. And if they didn't, they were disqualified and the names of their cities which they represented were inscribed on a column to publically disgrace them as oath breakers.

Now, they had a high standard in terms of being honest, and being fair, and playing according to the rules. And others did as well. Tacitus censored Rome for its vice. His judgments were right, but they are the standard that he set for himself, and will be judged by. The Gentiles didn't have the law of Moses, but they certainly had a sense of right and wrong, of rewards and penalties, and they will be held accountable to their standard, as you and I will be.

Does the person who complains about a lack of fair play, about the "old boy" network, does he or she play fair? Does he or she ever reject someone, exclude someone? The very complaint about not being treated fairly, not being judged on merit, is evidence of the knowledge of right and wrong. Everyone has a sense in it, and everyone will be judged by that standard. No one can plead complete ignorance of the law. We all have light, and all have sinned against the light that we have. Everyone everywhere has the knowledge of God. Paul has demonstrated that in chapter 1. Everyone from creation, from general revelation, from nature itself, knows that there is a God, and many, multitudes, know that from special revelation, from the Scripture. Everyone has experienced His goodness and suppressed the truth of God in unrighteousness. Someday, all of these things will be brought before God in His law court, the great assize where they will be examined thoroughly. The judgment will be impartial between both Jews and Gentiles, and it will be of everything, not just overt acts. God, Paul writes in verse 16, will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

Nothing will escape the Lord's examination. Everything that was done in the dark will be brought out into the light. Every secret will be made known. God sees and knows everything. He forgets nothing. The Bible very plainly teaches that. Old Testament and New Testament alike.

Perhaps the greatest example of that in the Old Testament is Psalm 139 where David praises God for His omniscience. God knows everything. He writes, "You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up. You understand my thoughts from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down and are intimately acquainted with all my ways, even before there is a word on my tongue. Behold, O Lord, You know it all." Before I do anything, before I say anything, before I think anything, God, You know it. In fact, You've known it from all eternity. He knows everything. And so, God can judge all that we have done, all that we have thought our actions and our motives, thoroughly, justly, and impartially.

The author of Hebrews says much the same thing. There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 13. Now, there was a time when all things were laid bare to the eyes of Him and all was good. Man was innocent. The end of Genesis 2, we read that the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Then, sin entered the world. And when God found them out, they were naked and ashamed. Sin laid them bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

But an amazing thing happened. God didn't respond in wrath, but in love, in grace. Instead of slaying those two, He slew two animals instead, and clothed Adam and Eve with their skins. He covered their nakedness, and that is a picture of what He has done for sinners through His Son, the very one through whom He will judge the world. Our sin deserves God's justice, His judgment. But He judged His Son in our place, and clothes every believer in Christ, in His righteousness so that we are fully accepted by Him. And every human being needs that righteousness.

What Paul is making clear in this text, in this section of the Book of Romans is that all are guilty and all need the righteousness of Christ. We want justice for all, and that is a proper thing to desire, a proper principle to champion. We want justice for all, but do we really want justice for ourselves? God's justice? No one can stand before the pure justice of God. Not even the Jew can do that. And to use some

Pauline logic, if the Jews cannot stand before God's justice, certainly the rest of mankind cannot. All stand guilty and doomed by their own deeds.

Still, He is the one with whom we have to do. There's no escaping His justice. He has appointed a day for Christ to judge the world. His justice is fair. It is righteous, and it is impartial. Are you prepared to accept it? Are you prepared to receive it? If not, then look to Christ. Everyone will either experience God's justice and wrath directly, or in the substitute. Christ died for sinners. He bore the penalty of sin in their place, and all who believe in Him are saved. So, if you're not a believer in Jesus Christ, trust in Him. If you think that you're righteous, and you're okay before God, read the Scriptures, and turn from that. See this time of patience by God as a time that's leading you to repentance, and turn from your sense of self-satisfaction, your sense of self-righteousness, realize that all of our righteousness, as Isaiah said, are as filthy rags, and look to the one who can clothe you in His righteousness, which is perfect and pure. Turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. The moment you do, you receive forgiveness, now and forever more. You receive life. You receive Christ's righteousness and an inheritance that is eternal and cannot fade away. May God help you to do that. And you who have believed, rejoice in the provision that God has made for you. Praise Him for the salvation that He has made and accomplished. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for Your grace, and we have not been considering a text about grace, but one about justice and judgment. And we understand the argument that Paul is making, and that is that all men and women, Young and old alike, everyone, is under that judgment in and of ourselves. By nature, we are children of wrath. We're guilty, inexcusably guilty. But as believers in Jesus Christ, we understand grace in light of that justice and wrath, and we praise You and thank You. And rather than pour out Your wrath upon us, You have poured it on our substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You for Him, for the gift of life in Him. We pray that our lives would be lived in a way that brings honor to You.