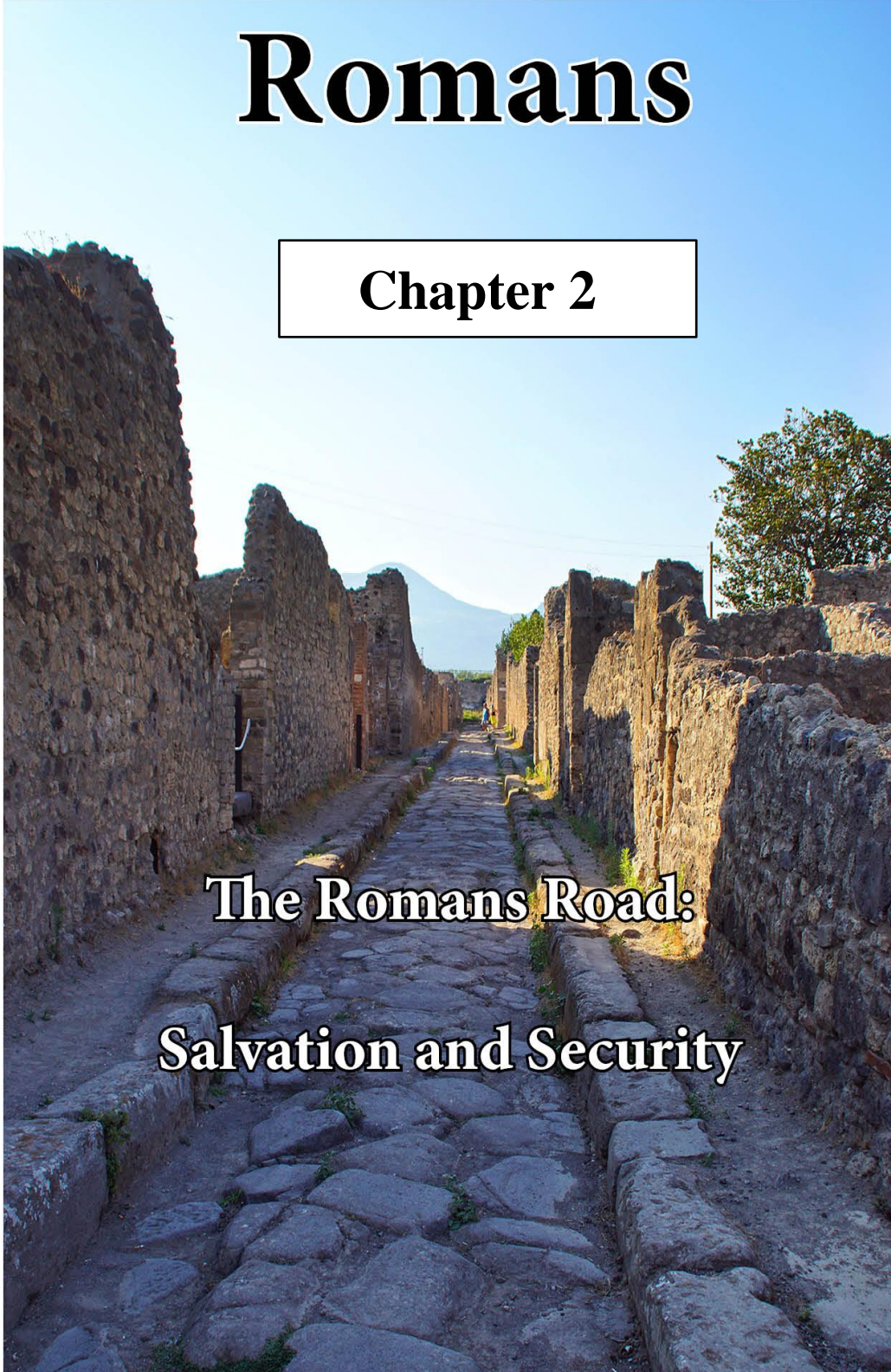


Journeys With God

Romans

Chapter 2

**The Romans Road:
Salvation and Security**



Romans

Chapter 2 Summary

Romans 2:1 - Judgmental Revelation

Therefore you are without excuse, O man, everyone who judges, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who are judging practice the same things.

Truth to Learn

Don't be judgmental of others. It reveals your own sins.

Behind the Words

The expression, “without excuse” is from the Greek *anapologētos*, which is a compound word made up of *a* meaning “not or without” and a form of *apologēomai*, which means “to apologize or to excuse.” *Anapologētos* means “without excuse or inexcusable.”

“Judges” is translated from the Greek word *krinō*, meaning “to judge between good and evil.” It can refer equally to a judgment of innocence or of guilt.

The word “condemn” is from *katakrinō*, which is made up of *kata*, meaning “against” and *krinō*, which we just looked at. This word means to judge against, that is, to judge as guilty.

Meaning Explained

Because of all that has been said up to this point, Paul says, “you are without excuse” The one who is inexcusable is the person who is judging another.

But why would Paul say that anyone who critically judges another (for that's what kind of judgment he's talking about) is inexcusable? Here's why according to Paul; when we criticize others for certain sinful practices, we are condemning ourselves because we do the same thing. Paul is exposing a fact of human nature of which we are all guilty. The things that we are the harshest in condemning others about are the very things that we are guilty of doing ourselves.

He has just rattled off a whole long list of sins that come from our sin nature. At this point he says, “Now, don't be too critical of others who do one or two of these things because they are the very things that you are guilty of.” It's sort of like that expression, “When you point a finger at someone else, there are three others pointing back at you.”

Paul is specifically talking to the (predominantly) Jewish people in Rome who have become Christians. The Jews were particularly adept at pointing out the problems with the Gentiles and the fact that the Gentiles were not of the promised seed as the Israelites were. In the previous verses the Jews of the day would have clearly recognized the Gentiles and their rejection of God. In the following two chapters of this letter, Paul will systematically explain to these Jewish Christians that being a physical descendent of Abraham means nothing, but faith means everything.

But let us not get so caught up in condemning the Jews of the first century that we fail to recognize that we, **every single one of us**, are also guilty of Paul's accusation in this verse.

Application

The next time you hear a brother or sister being judgmental of someone else, stop and realize that you are learning something about that brother or sister.

Even more importantly, the next time **you** are judgmental of someone else, stop and realize that you are telling someone else about yourself.

Ouch! That hurts, doesn't it?

Romans 2:2 - Certain Truthful Judgment

But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.

Truth to Learn

God will certainly judge sinners, and He will do so based on truth.

Behind the Words

The word translated, “we know” is *oidamen*, a form of the Greek word *idō*, meaning “to see with perception.” By implication it means “to know” or “to be aware of.” This word is used here in the perfect tense. The Greek perfect tense indicates past completed action with an ongoing effect, but the emphasis is on the ongoing effect. The best example of this is the expression, “He is risen.” Christ arose from the dead (a completed action in the past) with the ongoing effect being that He is alive today forever more. With *oidamen*, it’s like someone explaining something to you that you already know and you respond with, “I knew that!” What you really mean is that you know it and you have known it for some time because you learned it sometime in the past. That is, it’s not new knowledge to you.

Meaning Explained

Paul has just warned anyone who critically judges another regarding some sinful practice that they are guilty of doing the same thing. We noted in yesterday’s verse that the word for “judges” means “to judge between good and evil,” and that it was used in such a way as to imply condemnation. That’s how we humans tend to judge other people, and it’s not always based on fact but on emotion.

In today’s verse Paul says “we know that the judgment of God is according to truth.” The word translated “judgment” in this verse is from the same root as the word “judges” in the previous verse. It’s another of Paul’s frequent play on words. What he is saying is that God’s condemning judgment (unlike man’s condemning judgment) is according to truth. Those who sin against God will be judged someday, and their judgment and subsequent condemnation will not be based on God’s emotion, it will be based on the truth of their sins.

Because these Jewish Roman Christians were brought up in the Jewish tradition, they have always known that the judgment of God is according to truth. Throughout the Old Testament we see examples of God judging sinners for their sins, and we see that such judgment is always according to truth. This is portrayed so strongly that it became a fundamental doctrine of the Jewish faith.

But, to the Jewish mind, there is a secondary meaning of the expression “according to truth.” Not only is His judgment based on truth, He will truly judge. There is a certainty of His judgment and no one who sins against God will get away with it. He will truly judge everyone’s sin, if not in this life then certainly at the Great White Throne where all sinners will appear at the end of life. Thanks be to Jesus Christ whose blood paid the penalty of that judgment on our behalf! Through His sacrifice we are saved from that judgment.

Application

Let's not wait until later to pray about our own condemning judgments of others. Let's commit to each other that we will pay close attention to what Paul is teaching us and ask God to forgive us when we are judgmental of others. While we're at it let us thank God that Jesus paid the penalty of our judgment!

Romans 2:3 - The Universal Judge

And, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, do you think that you will escape the judgment of God?

Truth to Learn

God will judge us all.

Behind the Words

The word “practicing” is from *prassō*. As we learned a few verses back this means, “to perform an action continually, repeatedly, or habitually.” It is a picture of a musician practicing his or her instrument over and over. It is expressed here as a present participle indicating current, on-going action.

“Doing” is translated from the Greek verb *poieō*, meaning “to make or do.” It is different from *prassō* in that it implies an occasional action rather than a habitual one. This word, however, is also expressed as a present participle indicating a current, ongoing condition. Hence, it refers to ongoing occasional action.

Meaning Explained

Paul is talking about the tendency for the Roman Christians to be judgmental of the pagan Romans who constantly engage in sinful practices while these mostly Jewish Christians are guilty of committing many of these same sins. He is warning them that God will judge sin and sinfulness no matter whether it is an occasional sin or a habitual sin. To God, sin is sin!

Paul is teaching these Roman Christians (and us as well) about another condition of the human mind. He just showed us that finger pointing is self-condemning because we tend to see in others what we do ourselves. But also, we all have a tendency to excuse our own actions. After all, we know why we do these things, and we can easily excuse them in our own minds. Besides, we don't do these things very often, and yet we see others doing these things over and over again.

Let's not miss the point here. It would be easy to read this passage and say, “We shouldn't care how others live and we certainly shouldn't be judgmental.” But that's not what Paul is saying. He's saying that before we condemn others for their sinful actions, we need to look inwardly and deal with our own sin. Clearly the sin of harlotry is one which is easily condemnable, but when Jesus was confronted by those who wanted to stone a woman (the legal penalty for adultery) caught committing this sin, He responded:

He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her. (John 8:7b)

In other words, our tendency to judge others does not absolve us from guilt and the consequences of our own sin; in fact, it increases our own condemnation.

Paul is going to teach these Christians that it is not important to prove who you are descended from; rather, it is important to demonstrate who has adopted you. That is to say, faith, not heredity nor legal obedience, is the key to salvation and a fulfilled Christian walk with God. We do not, nor did we ever, earn this salvation, either by action or inheritance. It is a gift that flows from the kindness of God. That's what makes it so precious!

Application

The next time you see someone acting in a way that you know is wrong, remember that God is the Judge of all mankind, and He will execute His judgment according to truth, not according to appearance.

Romans 2:4 - God's Goodness, Not Ours

Or do you despise the riches of His kindness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

Truth to Learn

Our salvation is a result of God's goodness, not ours.

Behind the Words

The word translated "despise" is *kataphroneō*, which is made up of *kata*, meaning "against" or denoting evil and *phroneō*, meaning "to think." Hence, *kataphroneō* means "to think evil of."

"Riches" is translated from *ploutos*, based on a root meaning "fullness." It refers to the fullness of possessions.

The word "kindness" is from *krēstotēs*, meaning "moral excellence, kindness, or goodness."

"Forbearance" is from *anochēs*, which is based on the word *anechō*, made up of *ana*, meaning "up" and *echō*, meaning "to have or hold." *Anochēs* means "forbearance, self-restraint, or patience."

The word "longsuffering" is from *macrothumia*, which is composed of *macros*, meaning "long" and *thumos*, which refers to "anger, fierceness or wrath." This word refers to God's ability to hold back His fierce wrath for a long time.

"Repentance" is translated from a form of *metanoēō*, made up of *meta* indicating "a change of place or condition" and *noeō*, meaning "to think or comprehend." Hence we see that this word refers to a change in the way we think about something.

Meaning Explained

Now, putting this all together we find that Paul is asking, "Do you think evil of the great value of God's moral excellence, His self-restraint, and His holding back His wrath, ignoring the fact that God's moral excellence is what leads you to repentance?" What Paul is saying is, "God is very patient and suffers the pain of our sin against Him. And because He is so good, instead of squashing us like ants, He actually takes us by the hand and leads us to an attitude of repentance!"

The picture is like that of a loving father who, when his son or daughter has done something wrong, takes the time and effort to lovingly explain the effect of their wrongful action so that they realize they have done wrong and tell their father they're sorry, asking for forgiveness. The real beauty of this is the fact that without God's longsuffering and patience and His loving, leading way, we would not repent. For, as Paul says, "the kindness of God leads you to repentance."

Our sin nature is ever present and it is powerful. Without the greater power of God through His kindness and without His willingness to hold back His righteous anger against our sins, we would not repent of our sinfulness. And without this repentance we would not be saved from our sins.

Praise be to God for His kindness!

Application

If this doesn't cause you to fall to your knees with a prayer of thankfulness to God for His kindness, then you don't underestimate the effect of your sinfulness in the presence of a holy God. God must judge sin, but He loves you as His precious child.

Romans 2:5 - A Storehouse of Wrath

But in accordance with your hardness and your unrepentant heart you treasure up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

Truth to Learn

On the Day of Judgment God will show His wrath rather than His mercy.

Behind the Words

The word translated “hardness” is *skleroteta*, from which we get our medical term sclerosis, meaning hardening. It literally means “hardness like a stone” but in reference to our heart, as it is here, it refers to “stubbornness or obstinacy.”

The word translated “unrepentant” is from the Greek *ametanoeton*, which is a compound word made up of the privative *a*, meaning “not” and a form of *metanoēō*, which means “to have a change of heart, to change one’s thinking, to repent.”

The word translated “treasure up” is a form of *thesauridzō*, from which we get our word thesaurus, meaning “a treasury.” The notion is of storing up or hoarding things simply for the purpose of having them. This word is in the present active indicative form, implying present action. Paul is saying, “you are continually hoarding up wrath for yourself.”

Meaning Explained

Paul has just informed his readers that it is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance without which we would never respond properly to the result of our sin. All sin is abhorrent to God, and He must exact the payment for sin, which is death. Through His own goodness, however, he draws us to repentance, which is necessary in order to receive the forgiveness of our sins through the blood of His own Son. So we see that not only does God provide the payment for our sins (for which we have no one to blame but ourselves), but He also draws us to that payment by leading us to repentance.

Unfortunately there are many who will refuse to be drawn to repentance because they are too proud and will not submit to the sovereignty of God. For these, Paul now explains what will ultimately happen.

He says, “because of your stubbornness and refusal to repent you are hoarding up wrath for yourself.” This wrath will come, “in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” If you read through the book of Revelation you will see that our loving God will one day pour out His wrath upon the sinful, unrepentant inhabitants of this earth. And, the ultimate result of that wrath will be the casting of unrepentant souls into the lake of fire.

Those who refuse to submit to God’s authority will be given over to all kinds of sinfulness, as we learned in the previous chapter. They will also receive the judgment for that sinfulness in the Day of Judgment. Only when it is too late will they realize that they were wrong and that they were fighting against the all-powerful Judge of the universe.

Application

Let us not be that way! Instead, let us voluntarily submit to Almighty God and repent of our sinfulness, claiming the blood of Christ as the payment for our sins.

So, what will it be; Pride and Punishment or Submission and Mercy? The choice is yours to make today! Don't wait!

Romans 2:6 - Judgment of Works

who "will render to each one according to his deeds":

Truth to Learn

Everyone's works will be judged by God.

Behind the Words

The word translated "render" is *apodidōmi*, which is made up of *apo*, meaning "from" and *didōmi*, meaning "to give." Hence, it means "to give away" or "to hand out."

Meaning Explained

By itself, today's verse makes little sense, but when tied in with the previous verse it makes a lot of sense.

⁵But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶who "will render to each one according to his deeds":

Today's verse is actually a quotation taken from the Psalms (**Psalms 24:12** and **Psalms 62:12**). The day of wrath and judgment that is talked about in verse 5 is the judgment of the unrighteous (the unsaved.) This will occur at the Great White Throne Judgment spoken of in **Revelation 20:12-15**:

And I saw the dead, the great and the small, stand before the throne. And books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead in it. And death and hell delivered up the dead in them. And each one of them was judged according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death. And if anyone was not found having been written in the Book of Life, he was cast into the Lake of Fire.

The "if" clause in the last verse (**Rev 20:15**) is expressed as a first class condition in the Greek, implying that it is true. So this could be paraphrased as: And no one was found having been written in the Book of Life, each was cast into the Lake of Fire. This is part of the evidence that believers will not be at this judgment; only the condemned unsaved will be there.

Paul, in **Romans 2:6**, is expressing what will happen at this judgment as well. Notice in the Revelation passage that the dead are judged according to their works. That's exactly what Paul is saying in today's verse: God will render His judgment to each person according to his (or her) works.

Those of us who have accepted Jesus Christ as our personal savior and Lord will not appear at the Great White Throne Judgment. Our names are written in the Book of Life, not because of our works, but because of belief in His work (on the Cross). That is not to say that our works won't be judged. They will be judged at the Bema Seat (the judgment seat of Christ) mentioned in **Romans 14:12** and **2Corinthians 5:10**, where we will be rewarded for our good works.

Application

Just because you have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior doesn't mean that you don't have to be actively doing godly works. We all need to be busy building up the body of Christ, doing the deeds He has called us to do. Get to work for Him!

Romans 2:7 - Continual Good Works

eternal life to those who with patience in doing good seeking glory, honor, and immortality;

Truth to Learn

We are to be continually doing good works for God.

Behind the Words

There are two Greek words, *men* and *de*, which are not often translated. They are used together to indicate a comparative contrast between two things. When used in this manner they can be roughly translated as *men* = “on the one hand” and *de* = “on the other hand.” The word *men* appears in this verse and the word *de* appears in the next verse. Hence, Paul is contrasting these two groups of people.

The word translated “patience” is *hupomonē*, which is made up of *hupo*, meaning “under” and a form of *menō*, meaning “to remain.” Hence, it literally means “to remain under.” It is a picture of a beast of burden which chooses to remain under a heavy load rather than rebelling and shaking off the heavy load.

Meaning Explained

Abraham, though not righteous in himself, was declared righteous when he believed God (see **Genesis 15:6**). Paul will talk more about Abraham’s faith in the coming chapters of Romans. The important thing to note is that Abraham did not earn his righteousness, it was declared so by God when Abraham believed. It is the same with us. When we believed the message that we are sinners deserving of death and that Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay for our sins, God declared us righteous. The second chapter of Ephesians declares that as a result of this salvation by grace, through faith, we will produce good works which God before ordained for us to do.

This is all necessary background to understanding today’s verse. You see, today’s verse does not refer to the same judgment event as the previous verse (or the following verse). This verse is referring to the Bema Seat Judgment at which all believers will appear. It is a judgment where we will receive rewards for the righteous works we have done since salvation. These works did not earn us our salvation, they are the evidence of our salvation.

In the previous verse Paul told us that the Great Judge “**will render to each one according to his deeds.**” Now he tells us what will be handed out to these two contrasting groups of people. In today’s verse he talks about those who patiently continue to do good, who are seeking glory, honor and immortality. That pretty much describes a committed Christian, and today’s verse tells us what they will get - **eternal life**. In the next verse he will tell us what the other group of people will get.

Remember that Paul is contrasting the wicked and the righteous. He is not giving a treatise on faith versus works (he will get into that later in the letter.) The point he is making is that the saved will get eternal life, while the wicked unrighteous ones will get something entirely different.

Application

As born-again Christians, God expects us to be doing good works that will build up the body of Christ. At the end of this life He will reward us for these faithful works. Will your works for the body of Christ be worthy of reward?

Romans 2:8 - Self-serving Fools

but to those who are self-seeking and do not believe the truth, but obey unrighteousness—
indignation and wrath,

Truth to Learn

Those who selfishly reject God will experience His wrath.

Behind the Words

The word translated “self-seeking” is *eritheia*. It is based on a noun that means “to work for hire” or “to work for a wage.” The verb form is usually in the middle voice meaning that it is something that is done to (and by) oneself. When used as a noun in a negative sense, as it is in today’s verse, it refers to “someone who is seeking his own good.” It is sometimes translated as “contentious.” Clearly, it is used here in reference to someone who is only looking out for himself or herself.

The word translated “do not believe” is the Greek word *apeitheō*, which is made up of the privative *a*, meaning “not” or “without” and a form of *peithō*, meaning “to convince or persuade.” Hence, *apeitheō* refers to “one who is not allowing himself or herself to be persuaded or to believe.”

The word “obey” is also translated from the root *peithō*. It is expressed here as a participle in the middle voice, so it could be translated here as “convincing themselves.”

Meaning Explained

We talked in the previous verse about the judgment of the righteous ones who will receive everlasting life because of their belief in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Today’s verse gives a contrasting picture of the unrighteous unbelievers (all unbelievers are unrighteous in God’s eyes).

We could translate the opening part of this verse as, “but to those who are self-seeking and not being persuaded by the truth but persuading themselves by unrighteousness ...”

Whereas we, through our patient endurance, will receive eternal life, those who are self-seeking and not persuaded by the truth will receive the anger and wrath of God. We see here another example of Paul’s frequent play on words. They are not persuaded (*apeitheō*) by the truth, so they persuade themselves (*peithō*) by unrighteousness.

Do you see the attitude of the unbeliever in this verse? Those who reject the good news of Christ’s death on the cross in payment for their sins, refuse to believe. They refuse to be persuaded that they are sinners and need salvation. Why? Because they are self seeking and unwilling to submit themselves to the truth and to the God of truth. Remember what Paul said in the previous chapter of this letter?

because, having known God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were *they* thankful, but their reasonings became futile, and their foolish hearts were darkened Professing to be wise, they became fools, (**Romans 1:21, 22**)

And what will these self-serving fools receive when they stand before the God of creation? The wrath and anger of the Almighty, Holy, Righteous GOD whom they deny!

Application

We have the antidote for this wrath; it's called the gospel message, and we need to proclaim it to everyone who will listen. It's not up to us to force anyone to believe, but it is up to us to proclaim the truth, whether they believe it or not.

Romans 2:9 - Payment for Worthless Deeds

tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who accomplishes evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;

Truth to Learn

Tribulation and anguish are coming to those who reject God.

Behind the Words

The words “tribulation and anguish” are interesting in that, for three of the four times they are mentioned in the Bible they are mentioned together. The word “tribulation” is from the Greek word *thlipsis*, which literally means “pressure.” However, by application it means “that malevolent external force that is applied to a man.” In other words, those bad things that happen to us that cause us extreme stress.

“Anguish” is translated from *stenochōria*, which literally means “a narrow place,” but symbolically it means “great distress.” Though tribulation and anguish may seem to be the same, *thlipsis* is the external force and *stenochōria* is the resultant internalization of the stress.

The word, “accomplishes” is from the Greek *katergodzomai*, which means “to continually carry out a task until it is complete.”

“Evil” is from *kakos*, which means “bad” or “worthless.” It refers to those deeds which God considers of no value.

Meaning Explained

Paul has just told us that those who have been declared righteous and who are seeking God’s glory and honor will receive eternal life. Meanwhile, those who reject the truth of Christ, those who are more concerned with self than doing what is right, will receive the anger and wrath of God. He now reiterates these points, as if to make a clear statement that there is a distinct difference between what will happen to the unrighteous and what will happen to the righteous.

Tribulation and anguish, according to Paul, are what comes to him who, “accomplishes evil” during his life here on earth. The implication is that the worthless actions of the unrighteous were not just occasional during their lives; rather the selfish acts of unrighteousness were continual until their lives were ended. It may seem harshly judgmental to think of the unsaved as never doing anything good. However, from God’s perspective “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” That is to say, the deeds of the unsaved are worthless.

Paul now makes a very clear point to the Roman Christians, who were mostly converted Jews. They had a tendency to be proud of their Jewish heritage and of their faith. He tells them that this condemnation will come on (the unsaved) Jews and Gentiles alike. In fact the judgment will come on the Jews first (or primarily) then on the Gentiles as well. This is a strong condemnation regarding their pride, which is not a godly trait.

Application

We Christians need to be very careful that we don't get prideful in our salvation. After all, we're not saved because of anything that we did. Our salvation is because of what God has done for us and to us. After all, without His gift of grace, none of us would be saved. When we become prideful in our salvation we are taking the credit away from Him, and it is credit that only He deserves!

Let's humble ourselves and praise **Him** for what **He** has done!

Romans 2:10 - Peaceful Reward

but glory, honor, and peace to everyone working what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Truth to Learn

If we are working for God now, He will reward us later.

Behind the Words

The word translated “working” is the Greek verb *ergodzomai*, based on the noun *ergon*, meaning “work.” *Ergodzomai* means “to work or labor at something.” It implies putting effort into doing something. It is expressed here as a participle (working) which implies ongoing action.

The word translated “good” is *to agathon*, which literally means, “the good.”

Meaning Explained

Paul has just declared that the unrighteous will receive tribulation and anguish at the Judgment. In contrast, like in verses 7 and 8, he now declares what the righteous will receive.

Paul says, “to everyone working the good,” The implication is that this is someone who is continually laboring to do good. Doing what is right is not something that comes naturally to any of us because of the sin nature that we all inherited from Adam. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that we are even capable of doing anything truly good. And, as we all know, it takes work to continue to do good, especially when it seems that we only get taken advantage of when we do.

There is a beautiful promise to all Christians, however, in this verse. Paul tells us that those of us who continue to labor at doing good, in spite of what the world does to us, will receive **glory, honor and peace** from the great Judge when we stand face to face with Him.

We are not to go through this life seeking to gain glory for ourselves, and we are not to be seeking our own honor. But, if we are seeking to bring honor and glory to God through our good works, God will one day give us both honor and glory. And, on top of it all, He will give us peace. The unrighteous will not have peace. They will have tribulation and anguish, and they will be separated from the presence of God for all of eternity.

This is one of those verses that I think we all should have committed to memory for those times when we get tired of trying to do what God wants us to do; when we feel like it’s just no use; when life seems to be going downhill with no end in sight. Remember, this promise is not to just anyone! It only applies to those who have been declared righteous by God. That is, it only applies to those who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. And, according to Paul in the book of Ephesians, the whole reason for us being saved is so we can do good works for God:

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (**Ephesians 2:10**)

Application

We are not saved by our good works; we are saved only by the grace of God. But we are saved and commanded to **do** good works while we are here on this earth. And when we continuously labor to do those good works, He will reward us for it with glory, honor, and peace!

Do you want glory, honor, and peace? Then, get to work!

Romans 2:11 - The Impartial Judge

For there is no partiality with God.

Truth to Learn

God judges based on truth, not on appearance.

Behind the Words

“**Partiality**” comes from the Greek word *prosōpolepsia*, which is made up of *prosōpon*, meaning “face” or literally, “that part of the face at or around the eyes,” and a form of *lambanō*, meaning “to receive.” So, literally it means that God is not a receiver of faces. By implication it means that He does not treat people differently simply based on personal characteristics.

Meaning Explained

Paul ended each of the previous two verses with the phrase, “**to the Jew first and also to the Greek.**” The reason for this expression is to remind the Christians in Rome, who are mostly converted Jews, that their heritage is not something to boast about. God will judge all people alike with one exception: those who rejected His offer of salvation will receive condemnation, and those who accepted His offer of salvation will receive mercy.

Why does He treat Jews and Gentiles alike? Paul tells us in today’s verse, “**for there is no partiality with God.**” Samuel the prophet was sent by God to anoint the next king of Israel. When he first saw the eldest son of Jesse, he was sure that this was the one God had chosen. God told him otherwise:

But Jehovah said to Samuel, Do not look on his appearance, nor to the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For man does not see as He sees. For man looks on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looks on the heart. (**1 Samuel 16:7**)

That’s exactly what Paul is saying in today’s verse. God will judge us all based on the righteousness that we possess no matter how hard we try to impress Him with our good works. We can go to Church every Sunday, read our Bibles, and pray daily. We can give to the poor and even work for a poor Christian organization and look at our low wage as “a ministry for God.” But if we are not declared as righteous in God’s Book of Life then we will be judged with all the other unrighteous ones at the Great White Throne judgment. If, on the other hand, we have recognized our sinfulness and we have humbled ourselves before God, accepting the blood of Christ as payment for our sins, then God declares us as righteous and we will not appear at the Great White Throne judgment. Instead, we will appear at the Bema Seat judgment where we will receive rewards for the good works we have done.

One final note: the works that we get rewarded for may not be the works that we expect to get rewarded for. Only those things which are done for Him, that is, to give Him glory, will be rewarded. These things that we do for ourselves (even if we claim that they are for Him) will not result in rewards. It’s sort of a catch-22. If we do any deed for the purpose of getting rewarded for it, we won’t get a reward for it. On the other hand, the selfless things that we do in obedience to God, strictly for His glory, because He is deserving, these are what will result in rewards.

Application

If you want to bless God, then serve Him humbly and faithfully. If you want God to bless you, then serve Him humbly and faithfully.

Romans 2:12 - With or Without the Law

For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned within law will be judged by law

Truth to Learn

We have all sinned and are unrighteous, deserving of God's condemnation.

Behind the Words

The expression “without law” is from the Greek word *anomōs*, which is a compound word made up of the privative *a*, implying negation and a form of *nomos*, meaning “law.” Although it can refer to any law in general, in the Biblical text it is almost always a reference to God's revealed law as contained in the writings of Moses and the prophets.

“Perish” is translated from the Greek word *apolountai*, which is made up of *apo* meaning “away from” or “completely” and a form of *ollumi*, meaning “to destroy.” Hence, “utterly perish” would be a good translation of this word.

Meaning Explained

Paul is now giving further explanation to what he said in the previous verse (**Romans 2:11**), the fact that God is not a respecter of persons. And, we saw that verse 11 was an explanation of the repeated phrase, “to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” God will not take into account who our parents or other ancestors are when He judges us. All He will be concerned about is whether we are righteous or not. Also, keep in mind what Paul will tell us later in Romans:

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. (**Romans 3:10**)

Righteousness, in God's view, is the characteristic of always doing what is right. Since we don't always do what is right, we are unrighteous, whether we are Jewish or Gentile. As Paul is talking to the Jewish Christians in Rome, he is telling them that those who have sinned without law will perish without law (because they are unrighteous). He is saying that those who do not have the Law as laid out in the Old Testament will perish (into the lake of fire) without the law.

At this point the Jewish believers are likely to get a bit prideful knowing that they do, indeed, have the Law. So Paul drops the other shoe. He tells them that those who have the Law and transgress the Law will be judged through the precepts laid out in the Law. Since there is only one who satisfied all the Law (Jesus Christ, the righteous one), Paul is telling these Jews that they are just as condemned (and unrighteous) as the Gentiles who commit sin apart from the Law.

This particular treatise of Paul's is going to show that obeying rules and statutes is impossible for sinful man to do whether he is a Jew or a Gentile. He will, in fact, eventually demonstrate to these Roman Christians that all of us are sinners and worthy of death apart from the grace of God. In other words, if God does not get involved in our lives and save us through His grace, we will all justly be sentenced to the lake of fire.

Application

Deep down inside we all know that we are unrighteous in and of ourselves. Thanks be to God that He declares us righteous when we believe the good news about His Son.

Romans 2:13 - Walk the Walk!

(for not the hearers of the law *are* just with God, but the doers of the law will be justified;

Truth to Learn

God wants us to be doers, not just hearers.

Behind the Words

The word translated “hearers” is *akroatēs*. There is another Greek word, *akouō*, which means “to hear with attention,” that is, “to listen.” But the word that we have in the current verse, *akroatēs*, means “to listen to something for pleasure, such as a piece recited or sung.”

“Just” is from the Greek word *dikaios*, an adjective that means “righteous, just, or one who conforms to all the rules.”

Meaning Explained

In the past seven verses Paul has described the judgment that will be meted out to the just and the unjust, the righteous and the unrighteous, independent of who their ancestors were and independent of what they look like because God is not a respecter of outward appearance. He also told us that those who have sinned without the law will perish without the law and those who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law.

Now he makes his next great statement: it’s not the hearers that will be saved (justified before God) but the doers of the Law. These Roman Christians apparently took delight in hearing the Scriptures being read to them. But, it doesn’t matter if you hear the law being read every weekend as these Roman Jews have for years. And it’s not the ones who have been reading their Bibles every day for years who will be justified before God. We are not commanded to read our Bibles or even to listen to good sound doctrinal teaching. We are told to put the teaching into practice.

If you love Me, keep My commandments. (John 14:15)

We are admonished in a number of passages in the Bible regarding the importance of doing rather than simply hearing. Here are some of them:

But become doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (James 1:22)

Not everyone who says to Me, Lord! Lord! will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven. (Matthew 7:21)

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on a rock. (Matthew 7:24)

Whoever comes to Me and hears My Words, and does them, I will show you to whom he is like. (Luke 6:47)

And you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live in them. I am Jehovah. (Leviticus 18:5)

Application

It's amazing how many times we are admonished to put action to our faith. Clearly, it is important for us to be reading and studying our Bibles every day in order to learn the truths that God has for us. But reading and studying alone are not good enough.

We're not commanded to read the words and talk the talk.

We're commanded to read the words and walk the walk!

Romans 2:14 - Moses' Law vs. Natural Law

for when Gentiles, not having the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law unto themselves,

Truth to Learn

Even those who don't know the Law can do some good.

Behind the Words

“Gentiles” is translated from the Greek word *ethnos*, which generally refers to “a tribe” or “a nation.” In Jewish writing it nearly always refers to “non-Jewish people” or “Gentiles,” though it is sometimes translated as “nations.”

The word translated “by nature” is the Greek word *phusis*, derived from the verb *phuō*, meaning “to produce from seed.” *Phusis* refers specifically to “natural birth” and has come to mean “that which is part of a person’s nature.”

Meaning Explained

Paul is now showing the Jewish Christians in Rome that having the Law and living by it is not sufficient reason to feel confident. As he said in the previous verse, simply hearing the Law is not good enough to demonstrate a person’s righteousness; instead one must be a doer of the Law.

Lest we get confused here, Paul is not claiming that any of us can be justified by obeying the Law of Moses or the Ten Commandments. As he will point out later, there is no one who keeps the whole Law, and if we break one of the commandments, then we are guilty of all of them. The only one to keep the whole Law is Jesus Christ. For that reason, he is righteous. In the next chapter of this letter Paul will quote from Psalms 14 as he informs his readers:

As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one;" (**Romans 3:10**)

Yet, somehow the Jews believed that it was possible to keep the Law. This is precisely the notion that Paul is in the process of systematically proving false. To the Jew, and therefore to most of the early Christians, the Law was supreme and keeping the letter of the Law was paramount. That’s how they gauged how good they were.

What Paul is saying in today’s verse is, even though the Gentiles do not have the Law (the Old Testament), they still do some good things. And by doing so they demonstrate that there is a natural law that governs man independent of the revealed Law in the Old Testament. In the next couple of verses Paul will proclaim that the Great Judge will judge the Gentiles according to that natural law, and their consciences.

But salvation (being righteous) can only come by faith. Man is capable of doing good things, but not enough to satisfy a perfect, righteous, holy God. Whether it is the Law of Moses or the natural law, man is incapable of satisfying it completely. And Christians today sometimes develop a mindset that we are good Christians if we keep all the rules of the church. That really is no different from the early Christians believing that they could be saved by keeping the Law.

Application

Obeying God is good. It's what He wants us to do. It's what we ought to do, but it won't save us because we can never be good enough. That's why we need the grace of God, and that's why salvation can only come through faith. As Paul will tell us later in this letter, God does not look favorably on the Christian who lives by all the rules; He looks favorably on the Christian who lives by faith.

Romans 2:15 - Conscience Conviction

who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also giving witness, and *their* thoughts between themselves accusing or even excusing)

Truth to Learn

Our conscience is more effective at controlling our actions than any set of rules.

Behind the Words

The word translated “conscience” is *suneidēsis*, which is made up of *sun*, meaning “together” and a form of *eidō*, meaning “to know.” It is that part of our mind that knows, along with our heart, whether something is right or wrong.

“Bearing witness” is from *summartureō*, which is made up of *sun*, meaning “together” and *martureō*, meaning “to witness.” In this verse Paul says the conscience is witnessing together with the heart, where the natural law is written.

Meaning Explained

Paul is continuing on from the previous verse where he said that even though the Gentiles don’t have the Law of Moses, they still do things that are good. In today’s verse he is saying that when they do good things their conscience is clean because they know that they have done good. Likewise when they do not do what is right, their conscience witnesses to their heart that what they have done is not right.

This is a significant statement from Paul because, as he said in the first chapter of this epistle, the natural man knows and understands the nature and power of God simply from the creation around him. Now he is saying that the natural man knows, instinctively, the difference between right and wrong. He even goes one step further saying that those without the Law recognize when another person does good or bad and as a result they either accuse or excuse one another. There is a law written in our hearts, to which our conscience bears witness, and it teaches us the difference between good and bad.

Do you remember when the Scribes and Pharisees brought to Jesus a woman who was caught in the act of adultery? The Law demanded that in such a case the woman was to be stoned to death. Jesus initially responded by bending down and writing in the dirt with his finger, pretending not to hear them. As they continued to press him about it he responded by saying:

He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first. (John 8:7b)

Do you remember what happened next?

Then those who heard *it*, **being convicted by *their* conscience**, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest *even* to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. **(John 8:9)**

Do you see that? They were **not** convicted by the Law, they were convicted by their own consciences.

Application

We all know when we have done right and when we have done wrong, even if we don't know everything taught in the Bible. It's true that there are some people who don't seem to have a conscience. They actually have one, but they have denied it for so long that it has become ineffective at directing their actions. But they are not free of their conscience, they are trapped by their sin nature and their conscience has become ineffective.

Is your conscience still working effectively?

Romans 2:16 - No More Secrets

¹⁴for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*) ¹⁶in the day when God judges the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

Truth to Learn

Even the hidden thoughts and actions of the unsaved will be judged by our Savior.

Behind the Words

The word translated “accusing” in verse fifteen is translated from the Greek word *katēgoreō*, which is a legal term that means “to speak openly against, that is, to condemn or accuse.” It is what the plaintiff does in a court of law.

“Excusing” in verse fifteen is from the Greek *apologeomai*, which is also a legal term. This word means “to defend or speak or plead on behalf of oneself or another before a tribunal.”

The word “secrets” in today’s verse is the Greek word *kruptos*, meaning “something that is hidden or concealed.”

Meaning Explained

We’ve included the previous two verses with today’s so that you will see the context of today’s verse. Remember, we are talking about the fact that even the unsaved (Gentiles) do some good things, and they know the difference between good and bad as evidenced by their consciences. Yesterday’s verse indicated that the Gentiles will be accusing and excusing one another, and today’s verse tells us when that accusing and excusing will be going on.

Paul is clearly talking about a legal setting where judgment will take place. In today’s verse he tells us when that will be. It is “in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.” This may be a reference to a verse in Ecclesiastes. At the end of Solomon’s search for the meaning of life he concluded:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this applies to all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil. (**Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14**)

And in his first letter to the Christians at Corinth the Apostle Paul warned them not to be judgmental, because our Lord is coming who will judge even the hidden things of the heart:

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. (**1Corinthians 4:5**)

Paul is talking about those who deny that God exists even though there is ample proof of His existence and His power. These will stand before the One they have denied and they will have to explain their actions as well as their thoughts. And on that day even their own consciences will condemn them. They will be without excuse! And ... they will be without a savior!

Application

We too will stand before the Judge, but it will not be for condemnation. We will stand before the Bema Seat of Christ where our works will be judged to determine our rewards. The fire will destroy all that was not done for His glory, and what is left is all we will have to show for this life.

Romans 2:17 - No Place for Pride

Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest upon the law, and make your boast in God,

Truth to Learn

Relying on heritage and obedience to the Law is futile.

Behind the Words

“**Indeed**” is translated from the two Greek words *ei de*. Some translations use the English word “behold” as if this was the Greek word *ide*, but there is no evidence for this in the most reliable manuscripts. The Greek words *ei de* literally mean “and if,” indicating a conjunction with the previous thoughts and implying a first class conditional clause which means the statements are assumed to be true.

The words “**you are called**” are translated from a single Greek word, *eponomadzō*. This is made up of *epi*, meaning “upon” and *onomadzō*, meaning “to name.” So, it literally means “to name upon.” It refers to the name upon which other names are added, like a surname that an entire family shares. The word is expressed here in the passive voice indicating that it is a name that others call them.

“**Rest upon**” is a translation of the word *epanapauō*, which is made up of *epi*, meaning “upon” and a form of *anapauomai*, meaning “to give rest.” Paul indicates that Jews have a blind, mechanical reliance on the Law to produce righteousness.

Meaning Explained

The early Christian believers in Rome, to whom this letter was written, took pride in being descended from Abraham. Many of them believed, similar to the Galatian Christians, that one had to be a Jew and obey the Law before one could become a Christian. Paul has spent the last 5 verses explaining why obeying the Law of Moses does not lead one to righteousness. He now will show these Roman Christians why being a Jew may, in fact, be a hindrance to becoming a Christian.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul made a very bold statement regarding righteousness:

We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ (we also believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified). (**Galatians 2:15, 16**)

This justification (righteousness) does not come from resting on the Law, it comes by faith. Notice what he says in today’s verse, “**you are called a Jew, and rest on the Law, and make your boast in God.**” Do you see the condemnation of pride implied in this verse? In the coming verses Paul will deal directly with that pride and will show how it is not external appearances which are important to God, but internal attitudes.

Application

As we have said before, there is no place for pride in a Christian. Pride focuses on self instead of on God. Pride is, in a sense, the very definition of sin. God wants us humbled before Him,

relying on Him. Pride does not humble, it lifts self up. Pride does not rely on God, it relies on self. We have a big God, one who will judge the whole world. Let us humble ourselves before the Judge and plead for His mercy through the blood of Jesus Christ. Pride can't do that. Can you?

Romans 2:18 - Biblical Indoctrination

and know *His* will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law,

Truth to Learn

Every Christian needs to study the Bible to learn its truths.

Behind the Words

“Will” is translated from *thelēma*, which denotes “that which has been determined.” The word “His” is not in the Greek text, although it can properly be inferred since “that which has been determined” certainly refers to what God has determined.

The word translated “approve” is the Greek word *dokimadzō*, which means “to test something with the intent of finding good.” It is the word used with regard to a precious metal like gold when it is tested in fire to determine its value. In this sense it could be translated as “determine.”

“Things that are excellent” is translated from the Greek word *diapheronta*, which means “those things which are different.” Since the intent of the verb *dokimadzō* is to find goodness or excellence, it is clear that Paul means that those who have been instructed from the Law are able to discern the things which are good or excellent as opposed to those which are not.

The word translated “instructed” is *katēcheō* (from which we get our English word catechism). It refers to “formalized instruction in religious doctrine” or indoctrination.

Meaning Explained

In the previous verse Paul began a message condemning pride. The early Christians, who were primarily converted Jews, were still hung-up by pride, believing that they were the chosen people of God. He has just said that the Jews “rest in the Law, and boast in God.” He now implies that the Jews know the will of God. By this, what he means is that they have the ability to know what God has determined through the Jewish scriptures (the Old Testament).

As we just saw in Behind the Words, Paul is saying that the Jews (because they have the Old Testament) have been able to test or to distinguish those things which are different. That is, they are able to discern which things are good or spiritual from those things which are evil or carnal. Why are they able to make this distinction? It is because they have been instructed from the Law of Moses and the Prophets. They have had the Holy Scriptures to teach them doctrinal truths.

This verse and those that follow are ones that we as Christians need to give special heed to. Just as the Jews became arrogant because they had the Holy Scriptures, the Law and the Prophets, we need to be careful that we don’t get just as arrogant because we have an even more complete form of God’s word in the Bible. Remember what Paul said back in verse 13? “It’s not the hearers of the Law who will be justified, but the doers of the Law.” But in order to be a doer of what is taught in the Bible, you first have to know what the Bible teaches, don’t you? That means reading and studying. We need to be instructed in the doctrinal truths from the Scriptures!

Application

There are many Christians who claim that they don't like doctrine and they don't like studying the Bible. However, if we haven't learned the doctrinal truths of the Bible, we won't know God very well, and we won't understand His will for us.

How much do you study God's Word?

Romans 2:19 - Shine the Light

and are convinced that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,

Truth to Learn

Biblical truth is a light to those in darkness. We must share it.

Behind the Words

The word translated “convinced” is *peithō*, meaning “to convince.” It is expressed here in the perfect tense, implying past completed action with an ongoing effect with the emphasis on the effect. Hence, these Christians are convinced themselves that they are guides to the (spiritually) blind and a light to those who are in darkness.

“Guide” is from the Greek word *hodēgos*, which is made up of *hodos*, meaning “a way or a path” and a form of *hēgeomai*, meaning “to lead.” Therefore, you can see that this word refers to one who leads the way.

The word “blind” is translated from the noun form of the verb *tuphloō*, meaning “to envelop with smoke” or “to be unable to see clearly.” This word is used to describe someone who cannot see but it is also used metaphorically to refer to someone who does not understand some truth.

Meaning Explained

Not only were these Christians in Rome proud of their Jewish heritage and the fact that they had the Law as their guide into spiritual truths, they also believed themselves to be the only ones possessing God’s truth. Because of this, they believed that they were better informed with regard to spiritual truths and, therefore, were the only ones truly able to provide spiritual insight to the Gentiles.

Boy, talk about arrogance! Unfortunately, there are a number of people in Bible believing churches today that have that same attitude. Just because we have the truth in the Bible and have been instructed by great Biblical teachers does not mean that we are any better than anyone else. Let us guard against this sinful arrogance. An interesting thing to note is that the message of salvation was first given to the Jews, according to Jesus. Here’s what He said to a Samaritan woman:

You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. (John 4:22)

However, the Jews forgot that their purpose was to share the good news of salvation, not hoard it to themselves.

The apostle Paul realized that he had a precious message (the truth of the gospel) and that he needed to share it with everyone. However he did not consider himself as better than others or even as more important. On the contrary, he felt that he had an obligation to preach the gospel and that he would be judged if he did not preach it. Here’s what he said in his first letter to the Christians at Corinth:

For if I preach the gospel, no glory is to me, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! (**1 Corinthians 9:16**)

He knew that the truth he had learned about God was precious, but he did not let himself get arrogant about it. Instead, he shared the gospel message to anyone who would listen.

Application

Don't hoard the truth. Let's all share the gospel and other truths in the Bible, but let's do it with a humble heart, submitted to the God of the Bible and giving Him the glory.

It's what we all have been commanded to do!

Romans 2:20 - Giving Truth Away

an instructor of foolish ones, a teacher of infants, having the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

Truth to Learn

We have the truth and we are to freely give it away.

Behind the Words

The word translated “instructor” is the Greek word *paidētēs*, which is the verb form of *paidagogos*, from which we get our English word “pedagogue” meaning “an instructor.”

“Foolish ones” is translated from the Greek word *aphronos*, which is made up of the privative *a*, meaning “without” and a form of *phrēn*, which metaphorically refers to “the mind” or “intellect.” Hence, *aphronos* means “someone without intelligence.”

The word translated “infants” is the Greek word *nēpios*, which literally means, “someone without words” or “someone who can’t speak.” In Biblical Greek it refers to “a baby.”

“Form” is a translation of *morphōsis*, which means “an appearance or an impression.” Today, when we see a computer simulation of an image changing gradually into another we say that one image has been “morphed” into the other. The **appearance** of the first has been changed into the **appearance** of the other.

Meaning Explained

Paul has been describing the arrogance of the Jewish Christians who believed themselves to be justified in that arrogance since they were Jews, descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; since they had the Law, the Holy Scriptures; and since they could know the will of God and could distinguish the good from the bad through the instruction they had from the Law. Because of all these things, they believed themselves to be spiritual guides to the spiritually blind Gentiles, and they believed themselves to have the light of the truth for the world.

In today’s verse Paul is saying that the Jewish Christians in Rome also believed themselves to be instructors and teachers of the unintelligent and the immature. Several verses back Paul said that the Jewish Christians in Rome were arrogant, and he implied that he was going to deal with that pride. Paul is now setting them up for a rude awakening. You see, any devout Jew or Jewish Christian would be nodding in agreement with Paul in these verses because they knew what Paul has been saying is the truth.

Paul now starts to turn the tables on them. In the last part of today’s verse he says that they “**have the form of knowledge and of the truth in the Law.**” It would be clear to Paul’s readers that he was not saying that they possessed knowledge and truth from the Law but that they simply appeared to have them, while in reality they didn’t have them at all.

In the next verse Paul will begin to do a little toe stompin’ as he points out the problem with this Jewish arrogance.

Application

As we have said before, there is no place for arrogance among Christians. We are servants of His Majesty, the King of Kings. Our responsibility is to humbly proclaim His truth to the world. He has entrusted His truth to us, and we are not to hoard it but to freely give it away.

How much of His truth have you given away lately?

Romans 2:21 - Preaching by Example

You, therefore, who teach another, don't you teach yourself? You *who are* preaching not to steal, do you steal?

Truth to Learn

Obedying God's Word is more important than teaching it.

Behind the Words

The word translated "teach" is *didaskō*, which is a prolonged form of a primary verb *daō*, meaning "to know" or "to teach." *Didaskō* specifically means "to teach or instruct by word of mouth."

"Preach" is translated from the Greek word *kērussō*, meaning "to herald, announce, or proclaim publicly." It is especially applied to "preaching, publishing, or proclaiming a religious truth or doctrine."

The word "steal" is translated from *kleptō*, meaning "to steal." It is the root of our English word kleptomaniac, which refers to someone who has an overwhelming compulsion to steal.

Meaning Explained

As we said yesterday, this is the verse where Paul starts his toe stompin'. Previously, he has been showing the Jewish Christians in Rome how privileged they were to have had the sacred Scriptures and how proud they were because of it. Now he points out that having and teaching the Law are not the same thing as obeying the Law.

He starts off with, "you, therefore, who teach another, don't you teach yourself?" The implication is very clear. They were in need of the teaching just as much as those to whom they were giving the teaching. Likewise, he says, "You *who are* preaching not to steal, do you steal?" Again, the obvious answer is that they were guilty of doing the thing they were preaching against.

When we were looking at verse thirteen of this chapter of Romans, we noted the similarity between what Paul was saying and what James said in his letter:

But become doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (James 1:22)

But now let me take a little bit of liberty with verse thirteen and express it as Paul might have after having given today's verse,

For not the teachers of the Law *are* just with God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

It's bad enough that these Jewish converts to Christianity were more focused on listening to the reading of God's word than on doing it. It is even worse that they were teaching others the truths of God's word without practicing them themselves.

Christians have been entrusted with the sacred Word of God. By God's grace our eyes have been opened and we know that the Bible is truth. Our commission is to share this truth with the world

around us. But, we must be careful that we don't simply preach and teach the truth without living it as well.

Application

Let's continue to proclaim God's gospel message to the entire world, but let's also commit to redoubling our efforts to being totally obedient to God's Word. May our obedience to God's Word be our witness to the rest of the world!

Romans 2:22 - A Living Example

You who are saying not to commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who detest idols, do you rob temples?

Truth to Learn

Practice what you preach (or teach).

Behind the Words

The word translated “adultery” is *moicheuō*, which is based on *moichos*, referring to a man who seeks out a female for sex. This is distinctly different from *pornē* which refers to a woman who sells herself to a man for sexual pleasure.

“Detest” is translated from *bdelussō*, which comes from the root *bdeō*, meaning “to stink.” The word *bdelussō* means “to turn away from something that stinks” or “to detest something.”

The words, “do you rob temples” come from a single Greek word *hierosuleō*. This is a compound word made up of *hieron*, which means “temple” and a form of *sulaō*, meaning “to rob, to spoil, or to steal.” So, although a literal translation of this word means “you rob temples” it is used to denote someone who uses something that is consecrated to God for his or her own private use.

Meaning Explained

In the previous verse Paul chastened the Jewish Christians in Rome for needing the teaching of the Scriptures just as much as those to whom they were teaching it. In this verse he gets even more personal saying, “You who are saying not to commit adultery, do you commit adultery?”

Though many of the readers of this letter would have said, “No, I don’t commit adultery,” as Christ pointed out in His sermon on the mount,

You have heard that it was said to the ancients, “Do not commit adultery.” But I say to you, everyone looking at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matthew 5:27, 28)

So, even though they may not have committed an act of adultery, in God’s book they were guilty of it even if they had thought lustfully about someone of the opposite sex other than the one they are married to.

The second part of today’s verse is a little more difficult. It says, “You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?” According to the Jewish historian Josephus, it was not uncommon for Jews (and Christians) to destroy or desecrate temples of idolatry and then to plunder some of the riches which had been brought by idol worshippers. Even in Acts, when a couple of Paul’s traveling companions were brought before a crowd in Ephesus, it was said in their defense,

For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess. (Acts 19:37)

Paul’s message, continued from the previous verse, is that the Roman Christians were quick to tell others what was wrong, but they were just as quick to do that which they told others not to do. Recall what he said about judging, back in verse one? He is saying essentially the same thing here about teaching.

Application

These Roman Christians were apparently fond of saying, “Do as I say, not as I do.” However, the proper Christian attitude is, “Learn what is right and wrong by watching me!” I wonder how many of us could say that.

Romans 2:23 - Walk the Walk!

You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?

Truth to Learn

Christianity is faith in action, not just good sounding words.

Behind the Words

The Greek word translated “boast” is *kauchaomai*. Some Greek Lexicons indicate that this is derived from *auchen*, meaning “a neck,” which boastful people hold in a proud manner. The verb *kauchaomai* means “to boast” used both in a good or bad sense.

“Dishonor” is from *atimadzō*, which is a compound word made up of the privative *a*, implying negation or “without” and a form of *timē*, which means “honor.” Hence, the verb *atimadzō* means “to dishonor” or “to cause a loss of dignity.”

The word “breaking” is translated from *parabasis*. This is another compound word which is made up of *para*, meaning “beside” or “beyond” and a form of *bainō*, meaning “to go.” Hence, *parabasis* literally means “to go beyond” or “to transgress.” It expresses the sense of going beyond a limit that has been established by the law. This is different from the word *hamartia*, typically translated “sin,” which means “to miss the mark.” The difference is that a person can sin without being under an express command or law, but he or she can only transgress (or break) a specific law or set of commands.

Meaning Explained

Today’s verse is very clear and very simple. The Jewish Christians in Rome believed strongly in the Law and even boasted about having received it from God and of knowing it through God’s revelation. This was God honoring ... in word! At the same time, by their disobedience of the Law they caused dishonor to God ... in deed.

Even today it’s fairly easy to learn the language of the Christian faith and to talk the talk. I’m sure we have all met people who know all the right things to say at all the appropriate times. They can quote Scripture with ease and recite Biblical stories in excruciating detail. They are quick to demonstrate their knowledge with relevant facts and figures. In some cases they may even be teaching a Sunday school class, helping others learn the facts. The problem comes when these people do not demonstrate their knowledge by their actions. They don’t walk the walk. As a result, instead of being a shining example of Christianity in action, they are an embarrassment to those of us who know and love the Savior, and they dishonor the God they claim to serve.

The Apostle John, in teaching what true love is all about, warned us to love in deed, not just in word:

My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. (1John 3:18)

It’s important to know what the Bible teaches, and it’s particularly refreshing when we meet someone who can make Biblical truths easily understandable. It’s even more important to be a living example of Christianity.

Application

We who have been washed clean by the blood of Christ and who have the entire Bible at our disposal, give worship, praise, and honor to God ... in word!

But, do we at the same time by our sinfulness, selfishness, and lack of faith dishonor the God we love ... in deed?

Romans 2:24 - Visible Evidence

For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you," as it is written.

Truth to Learn

The actions of some Christians bring shame to our God.

Behind the Words

The word "blasphemed" is transliterated from the Greek. That is, the Greek word is brought directly over into English. The Greek word is *blasphēmēō*, which is made up of a form of *blax*, meaning "slow" or "stupid" and *phēmē*, meaning "rumor" or "fame." It refers to "abusive or reviling words, especially an attack on someone's name or reputation."

"Gentiles" is translated from *ethnos*, meaning "a race" or "a tribe." It is used by Jews to refer to anyone who is not a Jew, implying idolatry and ignorance of God. It was used by early Christians in a similar way in reference to those who are ignorant of God.

Meaning Explained

For the past few verses Paul has been telling the Roman Christians (and us) that talking about faith and a relationship with God means nothing unless that faith is put into practice. It doesn't matter how much we know about God and about what He expects of us if we aren't putting it into action. Now he takes it one step further. He says that not only did the Christians in Rome dishonor God by not keeping the Law, he says that they are the reason that the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles. In this case, the term Gentiles is a reference to those who are not Christians. It's one thing to be known as the people of God. It's quite another thing to be known as the people of God but live such a life that God is disparaged because of you.

In this verse Paul says "as it is written" but he does not specifically mention where it is written. The implication is that he was quoting scripture but he recognized that these people knew the scriptures well enough that he didn't have to quote it. He may have been talking about one of the following passages:

And now what have I here," says the LORD, "For My people are taken away for nothing? Those who rule over them Make them wail," says the LORD, "And My name *is* blasphemed continually every day. (**Isaiah 52:5**)

Therefore say to the house of Israel, "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'I do not do *this* for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name, which you profane among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I *am* Jehovah,' says the Lord Jehovah, 'when I am hallowed in you before their eyes.'" (**Ezekiel 36:22, 23**)

Keep in mind that to those who are unsaved and know that we are Christians, we are God's representatives. The way we behave reflects directly on our God. What they see in us may be all they know of God. What kind of a God do we portray?

Application

I'm once again reminded of a saying I heard as a young Christian, "If you were convicted for being a Christian would there be enough evidence to convict you?"

Well, would there?

Romans 2:25 - Appearance or Submission

For indeed circumcision profits you if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision.

Truth to Learn

The external features of Christianity mean nothing without the complete submission of our will to Almighty God.

Behind the Words

“Circumcision” is translated from the Greek word *peritomē*, which is made up of *peri*, meaning “around” (like the word perimeter) and a form of *temnō*, meaning “to cut off.” Hence, it refers to cutting around the entire male foreskin to remove it.

The word “uncircumcision” is from a completely different word. It is *akrobestia*, which is made up of *akron*, meaning “the extreme” and *buo*, meaning “to cover.” Hence, it refers to the extreme covering, that is, the male foreskin.

Meaning Explained

Paul now seems to take a turn in his teaching. He has been talking about the Law for the past few verses, but now he starts talking about circumcision. As we have said earlier, the Jews took great pride in the fact that they were the people of God and that they possessed His very Words in their scriptures. They bragged about having the Law, and they bragged about being direct descendants of Abraham. The symbol of their heritage was indicated in their circumcision. That’s what marked them as sons of Abraham, so they took great pride in their circumcision.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, more than twenty years after Abram (meaning exalted father) believed God and was declared righteous, God made a covenant with Him. God promised to give Abram and his descendants the entire land of Canaan as an everlasting possession, and He changed his name to Abraham (father of a multitude). As a sign of the covenant, Abraham was to circumcise himself and all of his male descendants:

This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall circumcise in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant between Me and you. (Genesis 17:10, 11)

Since that time all Jews have circumcised their male children as a sign of the covenant between them and God.

Paul now cautions them, however, that circumcision means nothing if they don’t keep the Law. From other scripture we know that no one perfectly keeps the Law, so he was telling these Jewish Christians in Rome that their circumcision had no meaning to them whatsoever.

That must have been a tough pill to swallow for them, because they put great stock in their heritage. Unfortunately, that was precisely the problem. They put their confidence in their heritage instead of in their faith. Paul will deal directly with this issue later in this letter.

Application

Are you proud to be a Christian? Do you possess all the external features and characteristics of a Christian? But... are you completely submitted to His will?

Maybe it's time for all of us to fall to our knees before God!

Romans 2:26 - Faith, Not Surgery

Therefore, if the uncircumcision keeps the righteousness of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?

Truth to Learn

We keep the righteous requirements of the Law through faith.

Behind the Words

The word translated “righteousness” is the Greek word *dikaionomata*, which comes from the noun *dikaioo*, meaning “the product or result of being justified, or declared righteous, by God.” The word *dikaionomata*, therefore, refers to the righteousness declared by God.

Meaning Explained

In the previous verse we learned that the Christians in Rome were very proud of their Jewish heritage and the fact that they possessed the mark of a Jew in their circumcision. But Paul also told them that if they don’t keep the Law then their circumcision is meaningless. Now he points out further that the advantage of circumcision is not in the outward appearance, but by the inward faith and action.

The translation of the word *dikaionomata* is a key in understanding this verse. At least one translation says:

“If then the uncircumcision keeps the ordinances of the Law ...”

This makes it appear that it is possible to keep the ordinances of the Law. However, as we read further in this letter we will discover that Paul tells us that no one is justified by keeping the deeds of the Law. We will also learn that the only way to fulfill the righteousness of the law is through faith:

Therefore by the works of the law not one of all flesh will be justified before Him, for through law is the full knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God apart from the law has been revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe; for there is no difference; (**Romans 3:20-22**)

This righteousness does not come from keeping the ordinances of the Law, it comes by keeping the righteous requirements of the Law and those righteous requirements are only kept as a result of faith. This is what the entire first part of Paul’s letter to the Romans is about. Paul will clearly declare this fact later in his letter, taking it all the way back to Abraham:

For the promise that he should be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. (**Romans 4:13**)

What Paul is saying in today’s verse is, if a Gentile keeps the righteousness of the Law by faith, then he or she becomes one of God’s children. This does not happen because he or she went through some bloody ceremonial surgery, but because he or she believed God and it was imputed to him or her as righteousness. The Jews’ confidence was in their flesh; our confidence is in our faith in the blood of Christ!

Application

Are you confident of your salvation? You should be! Is it because you regularly attend church? Is it because you have gone through the doctrinal teachings of your church and have become a full member? Is it because you obey all the rules of your church? Or are you confident in your salvation because you have submitted your will to God through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ and have committed yourself to serving God through faith?

Romans 2:27 - Judges by Faith

And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, who through letter and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law?

Truth to Learn

We will not be judge by how well we keep the Law. In fact, we who are saved by faith will judge those who try to keep the Law.

Behind the Words

The words translated “physically” are *ek physeōs*, which literally mean “by nature.” The point is that a man is born uncircumcised. The Jewish man is also born uncircumcised but becomes circumcised by an act of mankind.

“Fulfills” is translated from the Greek word *teleō*, which means “to complete or to accomplish.” To complete the Law would require fulfilling every single requirement of it.

Meaning Explained

Today’s verse may appear to be saying the same thing as yesterday’s verse, but it is actually carrying it a little bit further. Here’s what a literal translation of this verse says:

And the uncircumcision by nature, completing the law, shall judge you who with letter and circumcision (are) a transgressor of law?

Since it is marked as a question we need to modify it a bit to make sense in English. Thus:

And the uncircumcision, which is by nature fulfilling the law, shall it not judge you who with the letter (of the Law) and circumcision (in the flesh) are a transgressor of the Law?”

We Gentiles, who satisfy the righteousness of the Law through faith, will one day judge those who, though they are circumcised, try to obtain righteousness by obeying a set of rules. Paul is telling us that we who fulfill the Law by faith will judge the Jews who try to keep the Law. And, there is another passage in the New Testament that talks about us (the saved ones) judging. We will judge the world and the angels:

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? (1Corinthians 6:2, 3)

We can never be justified in God’s sight by obeying all the commandments because no one can obey them all. The point Paul is building up to (which he will get to in the next chapter) is this:

As it is written: There is none righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who is seeking after God. (Romans 3:10-11)

The Christians in Rome, like their counterparts in Galatia, thought that salvation was obtained by being circumcised and keeping the Law. Paul says that isn’t so.

Application

Are you still trying to be “good enough” for God? If so, it is a futile effort. The only way to satisfy God is by faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. And the only way to live a satisfying Christian life is by staying humbled before God. We can’t do either by works; we must do both by faith.

Romans 2:28 - Not Visibly Apparent

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that *which is outward in the flesh*;

Truth to Learn

Christianity is not based on appearance or membership.

Behind the Words

The word translated “outwardly” is *phaneros*, which is derived from *phainō*, meaning “to illuminate.” *Phaneros* refers to, “that which is in the light” or “that which is visibly apparent.” So, a more literal translation could be,

For he is not a Jew who is one in appearance, nor is circumcision that which is visibly apparent in the flesh;

“Flesh” is translated from the Greek word *sarx*, which refers to “the meat of an animal.” By extension it refers to the human body or the material part of man.

Meaning Explained

In the previous few verses Paul has been pointing out that being Jewish, having the Law, and being circumcised are worthless if you don’t keep the Law. He then pointed out that the Gentiles who keep the righteousness of the Law (through faith) will, in fact, judge the Jews who are trying to be justified by keeping the Law.

Keep in mind that much of the early Christian church was composed of people who were converts from Judaism and who had been convinced, and now believed, that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the Living God. But, they were so heavily steeped in the rules and traditions of Judaism that it was hard for them to separate the legal requirements of the Jewish belief system from the basic tenet of Christianity: faith. It was equally hard for a Jewish Christian to let go of the fact that they didn’t have to be a Jew before they could become a Christian. As Paul has pointed out in the previous verses, being a direct descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob doesn’t guarantee anything with regard to salvation.

He now gets to one of his main points. Being Jewish and having been circumcised are only external and fleshly. They are things that can be proven and can be seen, but they carry no weight in God’s record book. Paul tells us that the evidence of a real Jew (a chosen one of God) is not in the appearance of fleshly external things like circumcision.

There are many people who call themselves Christians today because they belong to a particular church. They think that church membership, being baptized in the church, and having learned the basics of the doctrines of the church mean that they are Christians. There is more to Christianity than church membership, or even calling oneself a Christian. Interestingly enough, there was a national survey in the United States recently in which nearly 80% of the respondents claimed to be Christian, yet less than half of them indicated that they attend church regularly. But then, regular church attendance doesn’t make someone a Christian either.

Only those who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He died on the cross to pay for their sins, and that He rose from the dead are really Christians.

Application

Is your salvation based on the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross as payment for your sins?
If not, then you are not really a Christian, even though you may call yourself one.

Romans 2:29 - He's Watching and Listening

but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, in spirit, not in letter; whose praise is not from men, but from God.

Truth to Learn

True Christianity is an attitude produced by humble faith.

Behind the Words

The word translated “inwardly” is the Greek word *kruptos*, which means “hidden, concealed, kept in secret, or private.”

“Letter” is translated from *gramma*, from which we get our English word grammar. It is derived from the word *graphō*, which means “to write.” *Gramma* refers to “that which is written.” Hence, it could refer to a letter of the alphabet, a book, a note, or anything else that is written.

Meaning Explained

Paul has just told us that the true spirit of Judaism is not in outward appearance or actions. And we cannot please God by being born into the right family, by having had the correct surgery, or by obeying a set of rules. Rather, he says, it is an inward attitude. We can only please God if we have the right inward attitude.

Paul says here that the true Jew is the one who is a Jew inwardly. Remember how the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the Jews, acted? They did everything for show so that people could see how spiritual they were. There are many Christians today whose faith is just the same way. They are the ones who are always parading their Christianity around for all to see, making a show of their good works so that everyone can see what a good Christian they are. And people are probably saying of them, “Wow, he (or she) sure is a good Christian!” How sad that is.

Paul says that circumcision is of the heart, not in the flesh. It's an inward attitude, not an outward action. It is in the spirit of the Law that we need to act, not the letter. If we exhibit our Christianity in order to impress the people around us then we will have what we are looking for, the praise of men. But Paul tells us that our goal is not to receive praise from men, but praise from God.

Praise from God will only come as a result of a heart that is submitted to Him and committed to doing His will. That may mean that in this life we never receive the recognition that we deserve. If we truly deserve the praise, then we will get it someday, not from men, but from God.

Here's how Paul said it to the Galatians:

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow faint hearted while doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not lose heart. (**Galatians 6:7-9**)

If we do not lose heart we may one day hear:

“Well done, you good and faithful servant!”

Application

Previously we noted that it's easy to learn the "rules" of Christianity. It's also easy to learn all the right things to say and do so that you appear to be a Christian. Real Christianity is walking by faith with a humble attitude. It's living your life daily as if God was watching everything you do