

Rom 2:1-5 Therefore, every one of you who judges is without excuse. For when you judge another, you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the same things. <sup>2</sup> Now we know that God's judgment on those who do such things is based on the truth. <sup>3</sup> Do you think—anyone of you who judges those who do such things yet do the same—that you will escape God's judgment? <sup>4</sup> Or do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? <sup>5</sup> Because of your hardened and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment is revealed.

Introduction: Since the shooting at Columbine highschool—which was admittedly nothing less than a massacre—since that time over **550 children** or teachers have lost their lives due to these kinds of shootings. The morning after last week's school shooting in Uvalde, I was surprised the morning to find that on my news app that the shooting was number 12 down the list of other issues that have surfaced to crowd it out of the news cycle.

Why would a story like this get buried the very next morning? That's probably due to the seeming regularity and frequency of reporting.

**Maybe we're less interested in these events due to the overuse of the term "outrage."** The overuse of any word can turn that word into nothing but a meaningless noise—robbing us of appropriate language to describe it. And if any term in our modern vernacular seems to have lost a bit of its "oomph"—it's the term "outrage" or "moral outrage." The advent of social media has given rise to a never-ending display of selective and manufactured scandal. The appeal of these outrage mobs is that to join one and successfully cancel a celebrity or a politician confers a kind of social power that can be intoxicating and difficult to resist. Today people become triggered (socially activated) over celebrities slapping each other at award shows. Or edgy comedians telling transgender jokes on Netflix specials. It's an age of extremes—gone is civil discourse and a toleration of dissenting opinions and in its place an intolerant demand for conformity and uniformity for every idea no more how trivial or trifling. Gone are constituencies—affinity groups—there are only tribes and ceaseless tribal wars. When every opinion that I hold is orthodoxy, a non-negotiable article of faith—then I can really have fellowship with no one.

Despite all this, there are still plenty of issues that should leave us floored and aghast. Paul spent the bulk of Romans 1 spelling out the natural consequences of denying the existence of God as the Supreme and gracious father of creation; denying that human beings have certain objective moral obligations that he's issued to us; and then finding ourselves in a moral death spiral—as individuals and societies.

**Transition:** Paul changes his pronouns from "they" in Chapter 1 (referring primarily to Gentile idolaters who's belief system results in moral insanity) to "you" and "we" in Chapter 2.

**Background:** He turns to the Gentile and Jewish moralists who would be equally horrified at the immorality and depravity caused by an idolatrous world—denying God, having no foundation for the definition of a human being—and spiraling into moral insanity.

Greco-Roman moralists followed the practical wisdom of Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus and others who prescribed moral uprightness to a Roman Empire that at times seemed out of control and decadent.

Jewish moralists grounded their ethical teachings in their theology of God who is the ultimate anchor for objective moral values; and a biblical anthropology—people are image-bearers and have been issued moral obligations and duties that lead to the blessed life, and human flourishing. Paul is here addressing both groups and will turn his attention more sharply to the Jews in verse 17, addressing the issue of circumcision and its importance.

But he begins this section by telling us in no uncertain terms...

**1. Judging others is inexcusable.** Here's a little secret that everyone ought to know—hypercritical people are annoying.

2:1 “Therefore, every one of you who judges is without excuse. For when you judge another, you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the same things.”

What Paul is not saying:

There are two possible uses of this term *krino* “judge”: The word judge is used in a variety of ways in Scripture so let's identify what Paul *doesn't mean* first...

- Good judgment: discerning and wise decision-making.

Prov 31:9 “Speak up, judge righteously, and defend the cause of the oppressed and needy.” God has given human beings the ability to judge or discriminate between a righteous act and an unrighteous act. To discern between fairness and injustice.

In 1 Corinthians Paul has to address the issue of Christians suing each other in open court—which is bringing great harm to the body. He tells them to handle these matters in the community of faith. Assuring them that they can in fact do this...

1 Cor 6:2-3 “Or don't you know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the trivial cases? Don't you know that we will judge angels—how much more matters of this life?” We reflect the character of God when we make right judgments—and in the future, in the new creation, we will be involved in a kind of jurisdictional responsibility in the coming world.

1 Cor 11:31-32 “If we were properly judging ourselves, we would not be judged but when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined, so that we may not be condemned with the world.” The believer needs to start with themselves—practicing discipline and turning the spotlight inwardly to condition ourselves for righteousness.

The essence of this type of judgment is discrimination—the ability to discriminate between the good and evil, the wise and the foolish—truth and error. The wise person has a bias for truth, able to discern between right and wrong. Paul is not saying that Christians, or even non-Christians for that matter, don't and shouldn't exercise good judgment.

**But the second use of the word *krino* meaning “to judge” is forbidden.**

- Hypocritical condemnation of others. “For when you judge another, you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the same things.” Now, how do we know that Paul is using the term *krino* “judge” in this second way—because look at his explanation of the term “For when you judge another, you *condemn* yourself—since you, the ‘judge’ do the same things.”

He's overtly calling back to Jesus' own teachings on this...

Matt 7:1-5 “Do not judge, so that you won’t be judged. <sup>2</sup> For you will be judged by the same standard with which you judge others, and you will be measured by the same measure you use. <sup>3</sup> Why do you look at the splinter in your brother’s eye but don’t notice the beam of wood in your own eye? <sup>4</sup> Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the splinter out of your eye,’ and look, there’s a beam of wood in your own eye? <sup>5</sup> Hypocrite! First take the beam of wood out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take the splinter out of your brother’s eye”  
Hypocritical, self-righteous condemnation of other people.

**Illus. Night at the Post Falls Driving School.** I joined the fellowship of the forgiven post falls traffic violators.

At what point am I really a hypocrite though?

Hypocrisy is when I demand of others behavior that I do not demand of myself—but then outwardly and publicly portray myself as if I am complying.

Judging others is inexcusable because...

**2. God is the judge of every person's destiny.** As individuals, as societies, as corporate entities—we can, indeed we must practice wise discrimination between righteousness and unrighteousness, good and evil, the truth and error. We must have a bias for truth, for the good, for justice. And we must avoid hypocritical condemnation of others when in reality all of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glorious, righteous and perfect standard.

**Why is God alone qualified to condemn someone and to determine their individual destiny?**

- God's judgment is infallible 2:2 "Now we know that God's judgment on those who do such things is based on the truth."

**God's judgments are impeccable—they are beyond scrutiny.**

**Illus. Let's say for the sake of argument that the US has the fairest justice system in the world**—and it is estimate that wrongful convictions are between 2-10% on any given year. 2600 people have been exonerated since 1989. That's a lot of innocent people going to the slammer every year. **Wrongful convictions statistics show** that the main reasons many end up behind bars are misidentification, official misconduct, false testimony, perjury, false accusation, and coerced confessions. Now, we pray for a more perfect union in this regard—**but we never have to fear or worry that the God of creation will make the human mistakes that we do.** God has no gaps in his knowledge because he's omniscient; God has no flaws in his character because he is holy; God has no tolerance for false accusations because he is fair and unbiased. We are dealing with a judge who perfectly renders his verdicts.

- God's judgment is inescapable 2:3 "Do you think...that you will escape God's judgment?" Now, the Bible teaches that all the nations—every person who has ever lived will stand before him on the last day to face sentencing for how they have believed the light of revelation they had access to—that day is unavoidable. Here's what Paul said to the ignorant Greek philosophers who worshiped things made by human hands... Acts 17:31 "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. <sup>30</sup> In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. <sup>31</sup> For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."

Jesus himself taught that he would be the final arbiter of our eternal destinies...

Matt 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' <sup>23</sup> Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

Notice the contrast here—people will boast in their works, their good deeds—they will appeal to their relative goodness or even religious fervor—and Jesus will count all of that as evil doing apart from knowing him by faith.

**We live in a culture today of evildoers who think that they're doing good. One of the evil things they do is scapegoating anyone who appears remotely worse than they are.** The fact is that we have a guilt problem that must be discharged. The weight is too heavy. So we look for sacrificial lambs to transfer the weight of that personal guilt we feel and the goats on whom we lay that burden are not fit to bear it.

We live in the most judgmental society in our history and it's because we've dethroned God and declared ourselves the new "gods"—and now we go around shifting our guilt to a bunch of sinful, defiled lambs.

**And because God has been dethroned, and his one and only Son who is worthy to expiate—to discharge that weight of guilt has been rejected**—we just live in the social hell of custom-morality wars.

### **3. God judges hypocritical moralism as a rejection of his grace and kindness. I want you to take a second and think about something you really despise.**

Rom 2:4 "Or do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?"

Paul is here stressing the goodness expressed in his kind intention to call out to us, wait patiently for us to repent.

**Illus. I took my older two boys, Tyler (21) and Hayden (18) back to Virginia to attend my graduation** in Lynchburg at Liberty University. I did that for several reasons: **(1) Finishing Well:** I wanted to give them a vision for their own lives—this is what it looks like to finish well. I wanted to model the value of completing something not just starting—it's the biblical value of faithfulness. We follow through on our commitments, to finish the race that God has marked out for us. **(2) Context:** I needed my boys to see the world from which I came, to see the house that built me. To see the family that shaped my values and my personality. But there was unintended consequence, something I did not anticipate confronting. I did not foresee that I would confront something buried deep in my psyche—my contempt for my homeland.

I have unconsciously hated all that Civil War era stuff—as a kid, I couldn't stand not even one more field trip to Jamestown, or the Smithsonian, or Appomattox where Lee surrendered to Grant. The rural county where I spent my childhood—the place that toughened my skin, the roads where I lost—a sister and a Father to horrific car accidents. I never wanted to see any of it every again.

But as I drove them around all of these things I began see all of it through their eyes—and my scorn gradually morphed into an appreciation for it. I didn't realize all these years that my disdain for it had held me captive in a way.

And just like that I fell in love with the old brick houses, and rolling green hills, and the thick, overgrown trees bent over those winding country roads. Just like that, all my contempt evaporated, and transformed into new memories. What a gift it was to grow up there, to play there—to burn down the forest there.

Even the pain has shaped me—it gave me an uncommon empathy for others.

**It reminds me of a timeless story about a man who experienced utter contempt for his heritage and with it, lifelong regret.** After hunting all day and coming home empty, Esau, found Jacob cooking a delicious pot of stew. He asked for some and Jacob replied, “I’ll give you a bowl in exchange for your birthright—your inheritance.” Led by his growling stomach, Esau made the deal—he would cash out his birthright—all the land, the tents, livestock, the servants—all of it would now be Jacob’s.

Gen 25:34 captures the moment: “Then Jacob gave bread and lentil stew to Esau; he ate, drank, got up, and went away. So Esau despised his birthright.”

How did he despise it? ***What form did his withering contempt for his heritage take?*** He exchanged it for the immediate gratification of satisfying his hunger in the moment. He threw the riches of his inheritance away for a bowl of pottage.

You know, at the end of the day, the self-righteous, sanctimonious moralist who routinely condemns others for not measuring up—is really just standing in the place of God where he doesn’t belong, and damning others when he himself is guilty as sin.

And Paul says, “but that kind of thinking is to reject the kind offer of God and his patient invitation bidding sinners to come to the cross.”

***And we despise the gift of his grace when we exchange it, that inheritance, for a fleeting moment of being the judge—the one who condemns.***

Rom 2:5 “Because of your hardened and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath, when God’s righteous judgment is revealed.” Folks this passage is alarming. I must understand how desperately wicked it is to presume to sit in the place of God damning my fellow man and not turning the high beams of truth in on myself—I must recognize that I am sinner who is need of his saving grace. I am guilty if I sin and flaunt it, and I am guilty if I sin and hide it. But either way—I am guilty. And I cannot go around in life trying to transfer and discharge my impossible weight of shame onto the people around me.

This is truly a startling realization.

### **Worship Team Returns to Stage**

And this is really why we celebrate this symbolic meal—not because we believe we are somehow ingesting the blood and body of Christ—because it symbolically reminds us of the extent of Jesus’ love for us. It reminds us that the best of us—God’s spotless lamb—stepped up to take upon himself the punishment that was due our sins and in exchange to make us the righteousness of God.

Luke 22:17-20

Then Jesus took a cup, and after giving thanks, he said, “Take this and share it among yourselves. <sup>18</sup> For I tell you, from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

<sup>19</sup> And he took bread, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to them, and said, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

<sup>20</sup> In the same way he also took the cup after supper and said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

This meal is a picture reminding us of a covenant that has been made with us—his body which was broken for our sake, and the new covenant of his blood shed to atone for our sins.