

INTRODUCTION

I get a lot of funny things over the internet, some funnier than others. The other day, someone sent me a list of interesting questions. One of them really stuck out in my mind. If a man is standing out in a forest all by himself, and there are no women around, and he speaks, is he still wrong? Here is another interesting question. How is God going to deal with a person who is morally good and pure, an all-American citizen, a good person, but never really had time in their life for God? I am not talking about the murderers, the idolaters, I'm not talking about the people who sinned wickedly, I'm talking about these good people we all know. The answer to that question is right here beginning in Romans 2. Romans 1 is pretty harsh. It is an excoriating narrative against all kinds of terrible sins, and Paul is really talking in the third person. He is talking about "them" or they are without excuse. This was a letter written to a group of Christians in Rome. They were located in a pagan culture, kind of like America, and they were saying, "That's right, Paul, preach it. What about all this wickedness around us? You know, like we have been talking about the last few weeks, like murder and homosexuality and idolatry and greed. Yeah, we need that kind of preaching." But, suddenly, Paul changes direction and quits talking about them, and starts talking about us.

Romans 2:1. "You, therefore, have no excuse. You who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now, we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So, when you, a mere man pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or, do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance."

I. THE DANGER OF JUDGING OTHERS

Now, in this passage of scripture, we are going to look at three topics that Paul addresses. He's going to talk about the danger of judging others. Have you ever had someone come up to you and say, "Well, you know what the Bible says, 'Thou shalt not judge.'" Well, the Bible never says don't judge *period*. The Bible says be careful how you judge because the same judgment you use will be the standard used against you. The word here for judging is not a word that means evaluate, nor does it mean form an opinion, it's a word literally meaning to condemn someone in judgment. It's when we as Christians become the judge, the jury and the executioner, and that kind of attitude is very dangerous. I want to say again, it does not mean you stop *evaluating* people. Dr. John Stott, an eminent, viable scholar wrote about judging others:

"This verse is not a call to suspend out critical faculties or to renounce all criticism and rebuke of others as wrong. It is rather a prohibition of standing in judgment on other people and condemning them, which as human beings we have no right to do, especially when we fail to condemn ourselves."

So, never overlook someone's behavior by saying, "Well, the Bible says 'Thou shalt not judge.'" We have to make value judgments all the time. For instance, I am a father. I have two teenage daughters. Let's say some guy comes to take one of my daughters out on a date and he walks up

to the door and every part of his body visible is pierced, he has a fifth of whiskey in one hand and a marijuana cigarette in the other hand. Let's say I look out there and he has a customized van parked out in front of my house. Am I going to say, “Oh, the Bible says, ‘Don't judge’”? No, I'm going to *evaluate* that guy. I'm not going to condemn him, that's not my job, but I am going to evaluate him, and I'm going to say, “You're out of here, buddy!” We all have to make evaluations. That's not what the Bible is talking about here. It is saying, “Be careful that you do not stand in condemning judgment over someone.”

Let me give you an example. Last week I mentioned Jeffrey Dahmer. Are you familiar with Jeffrey Dahmer, the serial killer, convicted of brutally murdering 17 people? As you know he was sentenced to several concurrent life sentences (which is interesting in itself), but in prison, Dahmer was murdered by another inmate and is now dead. Let me ask you what you think about this. Do you think Jeffrey Dahmer is going to be in heaven or hell? You may not know, but after he was sentenced to prison, before he was murdered, he claimed to have been born again. He claims to have had a born-again experience, and he was attending chapel in the prison. He was baptized and claimed to be a Christian. I want you to examine your own feelings about that. Some of you are probably thinking something like this, “Well, if he's going to be in heaven, I don't want to be there.” Or, maybe you are saying, “Well, I don't know about that. I mean God's Grace is okay for normal sinners like me, but for social deviants like that, I mean, can somebody like that really be saved?”

I'm here to tell you, we can evaluate the crimes Jeffrey Dahmer committed and a jury already has, but you and I have neither right nor any authority to decide whether he's in hell or he's in heaven. That's God's decision. When we sit in judgment on anyone and condemn them in judgment, that's the kind of judgment, Paul is warning against.

1. Man's judgment is blind; God's judgment is perfect

Let me tell you why it is dangerous, because our judgment is not like God's judgment. Notice the differences. First of all, man's judgment is blind, not only to all the evidence, but we are blind to our own mistakes. We all have blind spots in our character that a lot of other people can see, but we can't see them. Paul says, “You are doing a dangerous thing when you judge other people because you may be guilty of the same thing.” God's judgment is perfect. God's judgment is perfect! He has no flaws, no character deficiencies, so His judgment is perfect because His character is perfect.

This passage talks not only about the dangers of judging others and God's judgment, it also talks about God's kindness. “Do you show contempt for the riches of God's kindness, his tolerance and his patience not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance.” (Romans 2:4) I think what Paul is doing here is contrasting again our kindness with God's kindness.

2. Man's kindness leads to abuse, God's kindness leads to repentance

Let me show you the difference. Man's kindness leads to abuse, not always, but in most cases. We all have a tendency to not judge. “Thou shall not judge” and overlook the behavior of other people to the point where they can take advantage of us. They can abuse our kindness. I know

that from observation. I have had dozens and dozens of broken-hearted Christians come to me through the years upset because someone they showed kindness to trampled all over their kindness and took advantage of them. That's man's kindness. On the other hand, God's kindness leads to repentance, the Bible says. When you are kind to someone else, it doesn't always cause them to suddenly straighten up and repent of their sin, but when you truly understand what God's kindness is, the only direction you can go is to the cross.

II. THE DAY OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

God is not some senile, grandfatherly character in a rocking chair on the back side of the universe who is uninformed or uncaring about your life. You cannot fool him. His kindness involves tolerance and it involves patience, but as we are going to see right now, it also involves his judgment. Paul not only talks about the danger of judging others, but the day of God's judgment.

Why aren't these people the recipients of God's kindness? "But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed." (Romans 2:5) Notice how many times he used the second personal pronoun "you" there. He's not talking to the pagans out there living in an immoral culture, he is talking about people within the church. "God will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality." Here's the benefit. "He will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking, and who reject the truth and follow evil there will be wrath and anger... There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil; first for the Jew, then for the Gentile, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good; first for the Jew, then for the Gentile, for God does not show favoritism."

There is going to be a day in which God will judge the hearts and intents of every person. You and I are scheduled on the docket of God's judgment day. In fact, this is not the only verse that talks about it. Look at the verse from Acts 17. The apostle Paul is preaching in Athens where all these sophisticated philosophers were gathered. They had all of these statues for gods, and they had one statue to the "unknown" god. This is what Paul said, "In the past, God overlooked such ignorance. But now, he commands all people everywhere to repent. 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 by raising him from the dead." In this passage of scripture Paul says, "There is going to be a day of judgment." everyone is going to have to face judgment. We are going to receive one of two verdicts.

1. Every person will receive God's gift of eternal life

Everyone will receive either God's gift of eternal life. That's the first alternative. Some of us in this room at the time of judgment will receive eternal life. Eternal life does not mean existing forever, pure immortality. Some of you are absolutely so miserable with your life right now that for you to have that extended for all eternity would be hell. Would you want to just keep on going like this forever and forever? Some people think that's what eternal life is, existing forever. It is not a quantity of life; it is a quality of life. Let me refer you to the passage that is the

best definition of eternal life in all the Bible. Jesus says, "This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (John 17:3) That's what eternal life is, knowing God, having a personal relationship with him. Eternal life does not start when you die. Eternal life begins the moment you meet Jesus Christ. I am enjoying eternal life right now. I have a personal relationship with him, and if you know him, you are already enjoying eternal life.

Now, you say, "Wait a minute. What about this judgment you are talking about? What about appearing on the docket of God's eternal court?" I'm going to let you in on a little secret: I'm not ever going to stand before the great white throne of judgment of God, because I settled my case out of court. I found this defense attorney whose name was Jesus Christ, and according to 1 John, chapter 2, he became my advocate. I retained him and I received him, and do you know what I said to this defense attorney, this advocate? "I am in a heap of trouble because I am guilty. There is no question about it, I am guilty. But I confess to you that I am guilty, and I need your help. Do whatever it takes, but I am yours, just help me." And my defense attorney, my advocate, Jesus said, "Well, David, that's what I wanted you to do. I wanted you to admit to me that you were wrong. I wanted you to trust me. I wanted you to cast your life upon me, and so, David because you have done that, I will take care of you." So He went to talk to the judge who just happened to be his daddy and said, "I'm here on behalf of David Dykes. I'm going to be the mediator between God and man. Now, father, David is guilty. There is no question about it. He is guilty of sin, but father, I am going to stand on his behalf, and I'm going to ask you to allow my punishment I endured on the cross to be received instead of his receiving the eternal punishment of hell forever and ever. Father, I stand on his behalf and when you look at him instead of seeing his sinfulness, I want you to see me for who I am." From that moment onward, when the judge, the eternal judge of the universe looked at me, he has seen me standing beside his son, Jesus Christ. I want you to know there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. I settled my case out of court when I was 9 years old. If you haven't done it, I recommend highly that you do.

OR

2. Every person will receive either God's wrath and anger

Here's the other option. I would be less than a preacher of the Bible if I skipped over this: Every person will receive either God's gift or eternal life or wrath and anger. It's there in black and white. Look at verse 8. "But for those who are self-seeking, and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger." When the Bible talks about the wrath and anger of God, it doesn't talk about God losing his temper, blowing his stack. He doesn't have a volatile personality. The Greek word literally means a settled, pre-determined disposition against sin. The Bible says God is angry with the wicked every day, but he loves the sinner. So, it's not like God is getting mad and losing his temper. No, it is something that is part of the nature and character of God. God hates sin!

I'll just be honest with you and tell you I do not feel really comfortable talking about the wrath, anger and judgment of God and hell, just simply because the way I was saved as a child, I was impressed a whole lot more by the love of God, the grace of God, and the forgiveness of God. In fact, I became a Christian when I was nine after I heard our pastor preach a sermon on the

crucifixion. When he talked about how Jesus had died on the cross, it drew me so close to God that I found myself saying, “If someone could love me so much that their son would die for me, I want that! And so, it was the love of God that attracted me to the cross. For that reason that’s always kind of been my approach. When I started witnessing as a teenager, I used the “four spiritual laws” by Campus Crusade for Christ. The number one spiritual law is: God loves you, and has a wonderful plan for your life. That’s the way I used to always initiate witnessing opportunities. I would usually hand them a little tract, and say, “God loves you, and has a wonderful plan for your life.” Some people responded, and others didn’t.

When I went to college at Samford University in Birmingham, I met another preacher boy named Ronnie Morgan. Ronnie used exactly the opposite approach I did. He didn’t talk much about the love of God; he liked to talk about hell. I always started a witnessing encounter, “God loves you, and he has a wonderful plan for your life.” Ronnie started by looking at somebody, and saying, “Have you ever seen bacon frying in a skillet?” I’m not kidding you. He said, “That bacon shrivels up there. If you haven’t repented, that’s going to happen to you!” That is really what he would say. His motto was, “Turn or burn. Be filled or be grilled. Be sanctified or you’ll be french-fried” That was his approach!

I was a little bit offended by that. But I discovered Ronnie was leading more people to the Lord than I was. I talked to him about it one day. I said, “Ronnie, why do you start witnessing like that? I start talking about the love of God, why do you talk about hell?” He said, “David, I’ll tell you. I grew up in a church. I must have heard a hundred, maybe a thousand sermons on the love of God and the forgiveness of God and the cross, and all of that just kind of washed over me. But, when I was a teenager, and I heard our preacher preach on the judgment that everybody is going to have to face. It scared the hell out of me!” Seriously! He said, “That was the message that caused me to turn to Jesus Christ.” So here I am, I was brought to Christ through the love of God. Here’s Ronnie brought to Christ through the judgment and the threat of God and God’s wrath. Who’s right? Well, we’re both right, because there is not just one side of God’s nature, the love of God without the wrath of God, and there is not the wrath of God without the love of God.

Here, the apostle, Paul, is saying, “Listen, if you don’t accept the love of God, you will become the target of the wrath of God. So, those are the only options. Either you will settle your case out of court and accept the Grace and pardon of Jesus, or you’ll stand before God and be the recipient of his wrath and his anger.

III. THE DEMAND OF GOD’S LAW

There’s a third thing I want you to look at in this passage. It has to do with what I am calling, “The demand of God’s law.” “All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.” (verses 12-16) Let me just explain where we are going with this before we read verse 13. Some people have the written Bible. We do. The Jews have the Torah, but there are multitudes of people out there who do not have the “written law.” He’s going to talk about both groups. That’s what he is talking about. “For it is not those who hear the law, or read the law, or know the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who *obey* the law who will be declared righteous. Indeed, when Gentiles who do

not have the law do by nature the things required by the law, they are a law unto themselves, even though they do not have the law or the written law since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts.”

1. God’s requirement is NOT hearing the word–BUT obeying the word

Here’s the summary statement: “This will take place on the day when God will judge men’s secrets through Christ Jesus as my gospel declares.” What Paul is trying to say here is whether you have a Bible or you have never read a Bible, God’s requirement, his demand is the same. What is God’s requirement? God’s requirement is not hearing the word, or knowing the word, but it is in *obeying* the word. Our churches are filled with people who *know* the word. They have *read* the word. They have *heard* it preached, they have heard it *spoken*, they are just not *doing* anything about it. You know what God says, “GUILTY!” It doesn’t matter how much of this book you know, or how much of it you read, what matters is how much of it you obey. That’s his standard.

I’ll just give you a little example. I want to quote for you an Old Testament principle from God’s word I would guess the vast majority of you already know by heart. I’m going to say the first part of it, and then I want you to follow in and say the last part of it out loud with me. Would you do that? Here it is from the book of Psalms.

“This is the day the Lord has made, (now, finish it with me)
“Let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

I think most of you in this room knew that, but how many of you have done that today? How many of you at some time prior to my talking about it right now made the decision, “This is a day God’s made. I’m going to rejoice in it.” You came to church and you have been sitting here or standing here and you have been rejoicing in Jesus. All I’m trying to say is it is one thing to know it, quote it, memorize it. It’s another thing to *do* it. You can stand before God and quote all the scripture you want, but the amount you *obeyed* is what’s pleasing to him.

2. God has written His law on every human heart

God has written his law on every human heart, and it’s called a conscience. You remember a few weeks ago when I was talking about how God has an “outer witness” to every person in the world, Creation. How any person on earth can look up at the starry sky and say, “There must be a Creator,” and if they follow that light to the Creator, he’ll lead them to Christ. Everybody also has an “inner witness” called Conscience. Every person in every culture throughout history has been born with an innate ability to decide right, wrong, good and bad. Every culture has it. That’s why we have laws. That’s why we have rules. It’s what sets us apart from the animals. We have a sense of right and wrong—a conscience. God has an “outer witness,” Creation, and he has an “inner witness,” conscience.

“JUST LET YOUR CONSCIENCE BE YOUR GUIDE?”

Throughout the years I have had people, mostly men, say they didn't really see a need for God or maybe they at one time were involved in church and dropped out for a variety of reasons, but I have heard this statement so many times, maybe you have heard it too. "Preacher, I am a lot better than most of the people who go down there to your church." Have you ever heard that? Sure. "A bunch of hypocrites, that's what they are." That used to really bug me, I want you to know. I used to always come up with what I thought were witty retorts, like: "Well, if you can hide behind a hypocrite, you must be smaller than a hypocrite yourself." Or something like that. In the past few years I have used it as an opportunity to witness because when somebody says to you, "Preacher, I'm a lot better than most of the people down there at your church," I agree. I say, "You're right! You know I know some of those folks in our church, and you are probably better than most of them." But then I say, "Have you ever thought about who gave you the ability to make that kind of value judgment? I mean, why do you have the ability to say good, better, right wrong?"

"Well, I have a conscience."

"Where did you get that conscience?"

"The Bible says God gave every person a conscience."

Well, you'd better be careful because some people say this is a common saying today. Some people say, "Well just let your conscience be your guide." Have you ever heard that? "Let your conscience be your guide." Wrong. Danger!

1. You conscience can lead you astray

Let me tell you a couple of things about the conscience. Your conscience can lead you astray. In 1 Timothy 4:2, Paul wrote about false teachers, saying, "Such teachings come through hypocritical liars whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron." You know what happens to cattle when you brand them? The hot iron on the hide actually deadens the nerve endings on the hide. Some people in this world today have had their consciences deadened or desensitized. There may be someone here today like that, living in sin at this moment. You are living in an adulterous relationship even as I speak, and yet, you put on a tie or dress and come to church. You know what, the first time you were involved in it, you felt a little guilty. You felt a pang of guilt. "Well, I really shouldn't be doing this." But over the months, maybe over the years, it doesn't bother you anymore does it? You say, "Well, what I am doing must be all right." No. I'll tell you what has happened: Your conscience has become deadened. You have reached the state of moral insensitivity. If you trust your conscience, and you trust the way you feel to determine what's right and wrong, you will be led astray. Like that old song I grew up hearing as a teenager, "If it feels good, do it. If loving you is wrong, I don't want to be right. How can it be wrong when it feels so right." That's a great way to live, isn't it? No it's not! Be careful, your conscience can be led astray.

2. Follow it ONLY if it leads you to Jesus

Follow your conscience only if it leads you to Jesus, because Jesus is the one who needs to take your conscience. Your conscience can only be a compass. A compass is not a destination. A compass is something that guides you to a destination, and so, let it guide you to Jesus.

Have you ever heard of Jonathan Edwards? He was a preacher in Colonial America. He was no intellectual midget. He graduated from Yale University at 17 and was the third president of

Princeton University. He was a Puritan preacher in Northampton, Massachusetts. He preached one particular sermon that was the catalyst of a great awakening in America. It was called the Second Great Awakening. Some of you who have studied history know the title of that sermon was “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” But, you may not know that Jonathan Edwards was a small, thin, emaciated man with a very weak, nasal voice. He read his sermons in their entirety from a manuscript with no gestures looking through thick glasses. Yet, his words were so powerful that when he read his sermon, it is reported that grown men ran to the front, falling on their knees, crying in repentance, other men jumped up and held on to the wooden timbers of the church building, lest they fall into hell. It was a great awakening in a wicked age. Let me read to part of his sermon:

“The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed up for the present. They increase more and more, and they rise higher and higher until an outlet is given, and the stream can no longer be stopped. The more rapid and mighty is its course once it is let loose. It is true that God’s judgment against your life has not been executed to this point, but your guilt in the meantime is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath. If God should only withdraw his hand from the floodgate, it would immediately fly open and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent power. If your strength were ten thousand times greater than it is, yea, ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest, sturdiest devil in hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure the wrath of God.”

I think probably some people in our world today need to hear that kind of language about God’s wrath and judgment. I’m not talking about “them, out there,” I’m talking about us, in here. We need to come to a point where we hate sin, despise it and are allergic to sin in our lives. You say, “Okay, Pastor, you have me convinced. I don’t want any of that. I want to escape God’s judgment, his wrath. I want to receive his love. Tell me how.”

Theoretically, there are three ways you can go to heaven when you die. Three? Yes, 1) if you die as an infant before you are old enough to know right and wrong. I believe all infants go to be in the arms of God as David’s son did in the Old Testament. But if you are here today, and you can understand what I am saying, chances are that option has passed. 2) I think if you live your entire life from the moment you are born until the moment that you die without committing one sin: sin of thought, sin of deed, even a sin of omitting doing something God tells you to do, then I think you probably have a pretty good chance before God. 3) The only other way is for you to go to the advocate, Jesus Christ, admit you are guilty, admit you are a sinner, put your faith and trust in him and lean upon him for salvation. If you do that, you will never stand before God in his condemning judgment. You will have settled your case out of court!

OUTLINE

I. THE DANGER OF JUDGING OTHERS (1-4)

1. Man's judgment is blind
God's judgment is perfect
2. Man's kindness leads to abuse
God's kindness leads to repentance

II. THE DAY OF GOD'S JUDGMENT (5-11)

"In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 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 all men by raising him from the dead." *Acts 17:30-31*

Every person will receive either God's:

1. Gift of eternal life
- OR
2. Wrath and anger

III. THE DEMAND OF GOD'S LAW (12-16)

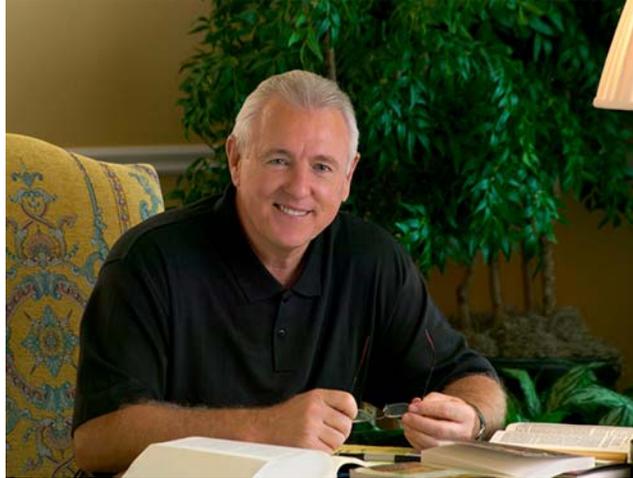
1. God's requirement is NOT hearing the word—BUT obeying the word
2. God has written His law on every human heart

"JUST LET YOUR CONSCIENCE BE YOUR GUIDE?"

1. You conscience can lead you astray

Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. *1 Timothy 4:2*

2. Follow it ONLY if it leads you to Jesus



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes