

November 6, 2016 by Steve Brandon



God Shows No Partiality

Romans 2:6-11

1. The Judgment (verse 6)
2. To Those Who Do Good (verses 7, 10)
3. To Those Who Do Evil (verses 8-9)
4. The Affirmation (verse 11)

Nothing is more discouraging to people than wayward justice. That's true from the domestic level to the national level. When things aren't fair, the people aren't happy.

Proverbs 14:34

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.

When parents show favoritism toward one child, the other children hate it. Think of Joseph's brothers. When people are wronged, deep seated bitterness is often the result. Over the years I have come to hear of more and more people who were wronged in church, and they leave, never to return again. When the courts fail to administer justice, the people are outraged.

It's not difficult to think of illustrations of this. When Ethan Couch was sixteen years old, he killed four people when driving intoxicated. In the trial, his attorney argued that he suffered from "affluenza"--being too rich. When he was sentenced to 10 years probation (and no jail time), the nation was outraged. Only after breaking probation was he sentenced to two years in prison. Still, many believe that justice wasn't served.

When Brock Turner, a Stanford swimmer, from a family of means, was sentenced to only six months in prison after sexually assaulting an unconscious woman behind a dumpster after a frat party, the nation was outraged. The outrage was intensified when he walked free after serving only three months in prison. Justice doesn't seem to have been served.

We even see it in this year's presidential election. The election has brought out quite a divide in our country. It seems as if very few Americans are really happy with either of the two major party candidates. The major rap on Donald Trump is his immorality, his exploitation of women, his vulgar language, his instability, and radical views. The major rap on Hillary Clinton is her connection to American politics for the past 40 years--she is an insider with privilege. My aim this morning isn't to justify either of them or to recommend that you vote for either of these candidates.

But by way of illustration people are outraged that a US Navy sailor, Kristian Saucier, is facing a year in prison for taking six photographs of classified areas of a nuclear submarine, while Hillary Clinton has played fast and loose with classified information, and runs for president. And there is such outrage over this that people are willing to vote for Donald Trump, as problematic as that may be for them. Proverbs 24:23-24 sums it up well.

Proverbs 24:23

... Partiality in judging is not good.

Whoever says to the wicked, "You are in the right,"

Will be cursed by peoples, abhorred by nations.

Well, the good news that I have for you this morning is this: God shows no partiality. In other words, he judges with perfection. As Daniel 4:37 says, "All his ways are just."

The title of my message this morning is this: "God shows no partiality." It comes straight from our text: Romans 2:6-11. Let's read the text:

Romans 2:6-11

He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality.

The title of my message comes right there in verse 11. It simply reads, "God shows no partiality." The reason why God shows no partiality is that he deals with the Jew in the same way that he deals with the Gentile, or as our text says, "Greeks."

Verse 6 says, "He will render to each one according to his works." Now, to understand Paul's intent with these words, it is helpful to catch the context. Since chapter 1 and verse 18, Paul has been on a quest to demonstrate that the whole world is under the condemnation of sin. He began with the godless nations, and demonstrated that they were guilty of their sin because they refused to honor the Lord or give him thanks (Romans 1:21). They refused, even though God had clearly made himself known to them through the creation (Romans 1:20). They have no excuse. "So they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).

At the beginning of chapter 2, Paul turns his attention to those who would have some sense of external morality, unlike those of chapter 1. Most likely, Paul's has in mind the Jews who know the Scriptures and the righteous requirements of God.

But Paul's words are general enough to apply to any who would have an understanding of moral living, enough to judge between right and wrong. And his message is the same: You have no excuse. You have no excuse, because when you judge another for their sin, you are actually condemning yourself, because you do the same things (verses 1-3). Rather than turning from your sin, you are storing up for yourself wrath when "God's righteous judgment will be revealed" (Romans 2:5).

And verse 6 tells us how it is that God's righteous judgment will work. We all will be judged by our works (verse 6). Every single one of us. Paul emphasizes this fact.

Romans 2:6

He will render to each one according to his works:

Romans 2:9-10

There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.

God's judgment will reach all of us. It won't skip any of us. That includes you. That includes me.

Now, the reason why Paul writes this way is because the Jews thought themselves to be a privileged people. They thought that simply bearing the name, "Jew," would hold its privileges before the Lord, despite how they lived. And they thought that the final judgment would escape them because they were "on the in" with God, being his chosen people. He brings this attitude out in verse 17. Let's look down a bit, ...

Romans 2:17-24

If you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed by the law; and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

And God will hold the self-righteous, hypocritical Jews to account. And God will judge them, not on the basis of their privilege, but, as Paul says here in verse 6, on the basis of their deeds.

Romans 2:6

He will render to each one according to his works:

The only privilege that the Jew will receive on judgment day is that he (or she) will go first into judgment. That's the point of verses 9 and 10.

Romans 2:9-10

There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.

And by way of application, this text easily applies to the professing Christian, who thinks himself to hold a position of privilege simply because he is counted among the number of the people of God! "I'm in the church! I have prayed the sinners prayer. I have been baptized! I sing the songs. I'm a member. I'm here every Sunday. I give to the church. I come to prayer meeting. I go to a small group. I read my Bible. I stay away from the big sins like drugs or drunkenness or immorality. Surely, God will look upon me with favor!"

And to such a one, Paul says, ...

Romans 2:6

He will render to each one according to his works:

The only privilege that the Christian receives in judgment is the he (or she) will go first into judgment. "It is time for judgment to begin at the

household of God;" (1 Peter 4:17). So, let's look at my first point this morning:

1. The Judgment (verse 6)

Romans 2:6

He will render to each one according to his works:

Now, if you are here this morning and you know and believe and love the gospel, these words will sound very strange to you. In fact, they may well feel wrong to you. Because you know that we are "justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). Because you know that salvation comes not to the one who works, but to the one who believes. Because you know that salvation comes as a free gift of God, not by works. Because you now know that "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

And you hear this, that God, "will render to each one according to his works:" (Romans 2:6), and you say, "Paul, that's not right. We aren't saved by our works. We are saved by grace."

But may I remind you that Paul knows the gospel. In fact, let's just take a brief tour of Romans.

Romans 1:16-17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

Paul knows that the salvation comes to everyone who believes, not to everyone who works. Paul knows that the righteous live by faith, and not trusting in their works.

Romans 3:23-24

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Paul knows that we are all sinners, and that we will never stand before God in our works. Paul knows that our justification comes by grace, not by our works. Paul knows that Christ has paid the redemption price for our sins, and that we don't pay it ourselves.

Romans 4:3-5

For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,

Paul knows that it is our faith that God counts as righteousness, that we don't work for our righteousness. Paul knows that we gain righteousness through faith, and not by our works.

Romans 5:1

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul knows that our justification comes by faith alone, and not by works.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul knows that eternal life is a free gift of God, and not by any deed that we might have done. Need I continue? I can, ...

Romans 9:15-16

For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

Paul knows that our salvation is dependent upon the mercy of God, and not by our own efforts.

Romans 10:9

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Paul knows that our salvation comes through a confession of faith, not through living out the law. Paul knows that our salvation comes

through believing in Jesus, not through working to obtain salvation. So, here's the million dollar question. "Why does Paul say that God will render to each one according to his works, when he knows that we are saved by grace and not by works?"

- A. He was wrong
- B. He was mistaken.
- C. He was neo-orthodox.
- D. He was right.

Now, of course, we believe in the inspiration of the Scripture, so we know that "D" is the correct answer. But more than that, we believe that Paul is coherent, and wouldn't contradict himself within the same document. So, what does he mean in verse 6,

Romans 2:6
... will render to each one according to his works:

Let me make a few observations, and then we will let Paul speak for himself in the next few verses. Remember the context. Paul is trying to show us all how we are all under sin. Remember, he is leading us to chapter 3 and verse 19, ...

Romans 3:19
Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

In other words, the context here in chapter 3 is judgment, not salvation. Paul is saying that we will be judged by our works. He does not say that we are saved by our works. Verse 6 isn't talking about salvation. It is talking about judgment. It is talking about condemnation.

Next observation: works are important. You can't read verse 6 and say that works don't matter in our lives. They do. They determine our eternal destination. But, be careful. They don't earn our eternal destination. In other words, let me just borrow from James.

James 2:14-17
What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

I believe that this gives us a direction of what Paul is getting at. In other words, our works don't save us, but they do show the reality of our faith. If we have no works, our faith is dead. But, if we have works, it might well demonstrate that we have faith.

This concept is not foreign to Paul. He speaks of the "Obedience of faith" in Romans 1:5.

Romans 1:5
through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,

Turn over to Romans 6.

Romans 6:20-21
For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

That is, before you came to Christ, you were enslaved. You were enslaved to your sin. You had no regard for righteousness. What was the fruit of your life? shame and death. But everything changed when you came to Christ.

Romans 6:22
But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

After coming to Christ, you were set free. You were no longer bound to your sin. Rather, you now became "slaves of God." And this led you to sanctification. And the end of sanctification is eternal life.

Now, again, it's not the sanctification that merits eternal life. The sanctification gives testimony that life has been imparted! Jesus said, "You will know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:20). And that's exactly what Paul is talking about here. He's talking about our judgment. We will be judged by the fruit of our lives, which will give testimony to our faith (or lack of it).

So, getting back to the original context, you had these Jews who were looking to their privilege as the chosen people of God. They thought that they would survive the judgment because they were God's people. But, Paul says, "Not so fast. Privilege won't help you in the final

judgment. God won't look to your privilege on that final day. He will look for your practice--whether you demonstrated your faith in your works."

See, when it comes to God, it's not profession of faith that matters, it is possession of faith that matters. It's not association with the church that matters, it is experience of faith that matters. And I fear that there are many in the professing Christian church today who are in for a wake-up call at the day of judgment. They think that their external involvement in the church is sufficient for their salvation, not realizing that it's about faith. It's about their beliefs changing them. It's about their beliefs setting a new life's direction.

And that's exactly what Paul says in my next point.

2. To Those Who Do Good (verses 7, 10)

Romans 2:7-11

to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality.

I trust that you can see here how Paul says the same thing in verses 7 and 10. These verses speak about those who will pass the test on judgment day. Verse 7 says, "He will give eternal life" to them. And verse 10, "glory and honor and peace" will be upon them.

I trust that you can see how verses 8 and 9 are parallel. These verses speak about those who fail in the judgment. For them, "there will be wrath and fury" (verse 8). They will experience "tribulation and distress" (verse 9). But let's focus our attention upon verses 7 and 10.

Romans 2:7

to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life;

Here Paul describes the one who is seeking the Lord. He is seeking things beyond this life. He is seeking glorious things. He is seeking honorable things. He is seeking incorruptible things.

This is practically a definition of a believer in Christ. He sets his minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth (Colossians 3:2). Because, God has changed him. "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:1-2).

He is seeking glory. He is seeking honor. He is seeking immortality.

On to my third point, ...

3. To Those Who Do Evil (verses 8-9)

Romans 2:8-9

but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek,

He is self-seeking. He is disobedient. He is unrighteous.

They can expect wrath. They can expect fury. They can expect tribulation. They can expect distress.

4. The Affirmation (verse 11)

One of the clearest affirmations in Scripture is the reality of an ultimate judgment. The Bible is clear that we all will stand before the LORD and give an account for our lives.

Consider the following verses of Scripture.

Psalms 7:8

The LORD judges the peoples. ... God is a righteous judge.

Psalms 96:13

He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness.

Psalms 98:9

He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

Ecclesiastes 3:17

God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every work.

Isaiah 2:4

He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples

"But those are from the Old Testament," you say. Well, as I researched this, I found that it is far easier to find verses in the New Testament that speak of the final judgment than can be found in the Old Testament. Consider the following. Listen to Jesus:

Matthew 7:2

With the judgment you pronounce you will be judged.

Here, Jesus was speaking about those who rejected him, ...

Matthew 11:2

"I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you."

John 5:22

The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son.

Listen to Peter: "he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42). Listen to Paul: "he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31).

And so, the natural question comes: at the judgment, what is the issue? I mean, how will God judge the world? How will he judge people? The overwhelming consensus of the Scripture is this: by their works.

Psalm 62:11-12

Once God has spoken;
twice have I heard this:
that power belongs to God
and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love.
For you will render to a man according to his work.

Proverbs 24:12

If you say, "Behold, we did not know this,"
does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?
Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it?
And will he not repay man according to his work?

In Matthew 25, Jesus described that day ...

Matthew 25:31-46

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

In other words, Jesus said that at the judgment, some will enter into eternal life and others into eternal punishment because of what they did to hungry and thirsty and naked and poor. In other words, Jesus will judge them on the basis of their deeds.

This is the same picture that John gives us in Revelation 20.

Revelation 20:11-15

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Where will you be? It will be one of two places. Let us not dismiss verse 6! Let us embrace it and pursue the Lord! Our works are important.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on November 6, 2016 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.
