**GOD’S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT**

Romans 2:1-16

Key Verse: 2:5

“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.”

Last week we learned how God’s wrath was revealed to the godless and the wicked who intentionally suppressed the truth of God. Apart from God, men are in serious problems, sin and death. While many regarded that era as one of cultural, political, economic, social, and even scientific progress, how many might recognize the deeper issues beneath the surface and who actually took action? Paul exposed the sinful reality of life without God and proclaimed the gospel of Jesus because this gospel is the power of God that brings salvation for everyone who believes.

When we reflect on our times, do we truly recognize the seriousness of the problem as Paul did? On the surface, it may seem that we are living in a well-developed age. Yet even now, apart from God, mankind remains in a deep spiritual crisis. Though written 2000 years ago, Romans 1:18-32 unveils the sinful reality of life without God, exposing the depravity of this present generation - like X-ray or MRI revealing what lies beneath the skin and deep within bones. Though many people may feel that they are fine, since they don’t see themselves as wretched sinners and in our times such sins are no longer even considered sins. Why do you think people are like this? It is because they do not know about God’s righteous judgment! Sinners live in the delusions of pride, self-righteousness, and self-justification.

In today’s passage, Paul proclaims that God’s righteous judgment will be revealed. This judgement is based on truth; It is according to what each person has done; it shows no favoritism; it will judge even the secrets of the heart. Therefore, no one escapes from God’s righteous judgment. This teaching is not meant to judge or condemn us; but to lead us to salvation that comes through repentance as we acknowledge our sins before God. Through this bible study, let us learn God’s righteous judgement and find ourselves before God. We may experience the power of the gospel that brings salvation through faith in Jesus. Only faith in Jesus makes us righteous before God.

**First, God’s righteous judgment will be revealed (2:1-5).**

Look at verse 1. “You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.” Paul made a sudden shift in Ch2 from “they” to “you.” It means what he writes here is something that each of us must personally reflect on, apply, and take to heart. He trunks his attention to other types of man who uphold high ethical standards, lived moral lives, and were respected by society such as religious Jews and Stoic philosophers. They judged others according to their own standards and did not see themselves as sinners.

Why do they(we) “pass judgment”? Because we want to feel superior to others and take pride in certain worldly standards - whether ethical, religious or social. Such people think they are excused from God’s judgment. Passing Judgments is really dangerous. It is not just discerning what is right or wrong. Passing judgment is to declare condemnation and pronounce a sentence. In the bible, the religious leaders were experts of passing judgment. They judged Jesus, as a prince of demons; they judged tax collectors as the “sinners.” They judged anybody who had not been disciplined and trained as they did. Judging others, they fell into the self-righteousness-trap. Judging others, they could not see their own guilt, but felt better about themselves. They became heartless people who condemned and rejected the poor and the lost. Sadly we are not much different from them. We all judge one another. We are all in danger of being like the religious leaders, being hypocrites; being self-righteous.

But Paul makes it very clear that No one has an excuse or can escape God’s judgment. Rather, by judging others they are in fact bringing condemnation on themselves. It is because they do the same things that they are judging others for. Look at verse 2. “Now we know that God’s judgment against those who do such things is based on truth.” No one escapes God’s judgment because it is based on truth. Human judgment can be situational, relative and even emotional. However, God’s judgment is based on truth which is absolute, fundamental and universal.

According to the standards of the world, we might be good enough to receive recognition and honor. However, according to the fundamental truth, the word of truth in MT 5, we are murderers who kill our brothers out of hatred and envy. We are lustful sinners who commit adultery with our eyes and minds. Though we judge others as terrible sinners, we are doing the same things. We cannot escape God’s judgment for it is based on truth.

According to the absolute truth, we are sinners who break the laws of God. One missionary once complained about an officer who gave him a speeding ticket for driving 26 mph in a 25 mph zone. If you were in his shoes, how would you plead before a judge? “Guilty” or “Not Guilty” Of course “Guilty.” There is no excuse. Even if others drive 10 or even 20 mph over the limit, that does not justify his own actions. The bottom line is, he was speeding even if it was only a little. If we do not commit adultery but steal a dollar, we have become a lawbreaker who is guilty. The Pharisees brought before Jesus a woman they had caught in the very act of adultery. They had already passed judgment, declaring that she should be stoned to death according to the law. Then, they urged Jesus to do the same. Then, Jesus said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone?” Everyone went away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left. Jesus’ words exposed their hidden sins under the light of truth - their terrible sins of spiritual adultery, hypocrisy, self-righteousness and murder even. Even such religious Pharisees cannot escape from God’s judgement. So, before passing judgment on others, we should first examine ourselves by the same standard; we should first reflect on ourselves in the light of the truth.

What would you respond when you come to recognize yourself - or others - as terrible sinners? Let’s see how God dealt with such terrible sinners. Look at verse 4. “Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?” Why didn’t God punish the godlessness and the wicked sinners right away? How would you deal with someone who are rebellious, self-righteous, unthankful, proud, selfish and demanding? I do not want to even know such a person nor be with them. I will punish them right away if I can. Of course, God with his mighty power and wisdom could punish every sin immediately and thoroughly. However, God instead shows them His kindness, forbearance and patience. Especially forbearance means enduring, persevering, or restraining in the face of provocation. God does not merely postpone the day of judgment. He patiently endures our wickedness and sinfulness, bearing with us in great long-suffering. Many parents and teachers experience “Hwabyung” in korean - a psychosomatic illness caused by repressed anger while caring for their teenage children during puberty. In serving one stubborn sheep, many shepherds suffer from stress and anxiety and even physical illness. In this, we can understand, just a little, God’s long-suffering love for sinners.

Then, why didn’t God bring judgment immediately? Why did God let the wicked to prosper and succeed? Because God does not desire judgement or condemnation, but rather seek to lead sinners to repentance. To do so, God sent his son into the world not to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. God’s desire is to restore sinners into a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. So, His kindness, forbearance, and patience are the expression of God’s love for sinners. It gives the hopeless sinners the hope of salvation through repentance. Our God is God of grace and mercy. Ezekiel 33:11 says, “As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Will you die, people of Israel?” God is like the father who is waiting for his prodigal son to come back (Lk15). Because God had endured my stubbornness and lust rooted deeply in my heart, I had a chance to repent of my sins and receive forgiveness. Because of His kindness, sinners still have this amazing grace to repent of their sins and receive the grace of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.

Then, how should we sinners respond to God’s kindness? Instead of giving thanks, many take it as approval of their sinful lives. Many people think, “Since nothing has happened despite my sins, it must be okay to continue sinning.” In reality, this is a display of contempt for God’s kindness. The godless and the wicked mock God, saying “Where is God?” It seems as if God is not doing anything against them. But look at verse 5.“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.” They are actually piling up God’s wrath upon themselves. Right now someone may reject the truth, dishonor their parents, serve idols, chase after money, seek power, hurt others, steal something, or lie, and yet nothing seems to happen. But what they are really doing is storing up God’s wrath upon themselves. Saving money in the bank is wise. but storing up wrath is foolish. Sinners are often forgetful and assume that God will also forget their sins. However, sin cannot be forgotten. It requires payment. Look at verse 5 again. “There will be a day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.” What will happen that day? On that day, all sinners will stand before God and the wrath that has been accumulating will be poured out in full - fully satisfying divine justice. It will be a final reckoning, a day of settling accounts completely - not even the smallest sin will be overlooked or forgotten. Sinners have to pay all the prices of their sins with their own blood.

Out of delusion, we may not mock God’s kindness. We must not despise God’s kindness, forbearance, and patience. If God had not been patient with this sinner, no one would have no chance to receive this wonderful grace of salvation. in his kindness, forbearance, and patience, he is holding back judgment for a little longer. Therefore, let us come to God with repentance. We may stop making excuses, but turn from our sin and turn our lives over to God. We may listen to God’s words of mercy, “Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Will you die, people of Israel?” Let us turn to God with repentance.

**Second, each according to what he has done (6-16)**

When God’s righteous judgment is revealed, what will be the standard of his judgment? Look at verse 11. “For he does not show favoritism.” His judgment is righteous and impartial. It does not matter if we are Jew or Greeks, Asians or Americans, tall or short, men or women, rich or poor. He does not count the number of “Likes” on our Facebook. He does not concern with what the surveys are saying about us. Look at verse 6. “God will repay each person according to what they have done.” God gives reward or punishment according to what each person has done. This means that God sees the facts, especially the deeds - What we have done. We know many good words from the Bible. We have made many wonderful decisions of faith - to study hard; not to play games too much; to love God most; to love our enemies. We have made numerous plans to feed sheep; to lose weight; to prepare bible materials. However, God does not judge according to our plans or decisions; but according to what we have done.

In the parable of the sheep and goats (Mt25), the master blesses those who offered a cup of water; who served the poor with a piece of blead; and who clothed the naked with what they had. They did not perform great deeds to impress the Master. Simply, they acted on the Word of God - love your neighbors. The Master blessed those who put the words of God into practice. God judges according to what we have done. So, it is righteous and impartial.

God also sees the motives of the heart. Look at verses 7-8. “To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, 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.” In these verses, we can see that there are two kinds of people; those who seek to please God and those who seek to gratify themselves. Those who seek God will persistently seek glory, honor and immortality in God. This is living a life of faith in God; living in obedience of one word of God. It is “doing good” by doing what God wants them to do. God will reward them with eternal life in the kingdom of God. He will give them glory, honor and peace. However, those who seek to gratify themselves will “do evil.” It is self-seeking, rejecting God’s word and following their sinful nature. For them, there will be wrath and anger on the Day of God’s righteous Judgment. God will judge according to what we have done and according to what we seek.

When I went out-reach in the campus, several times Muslims and atheists asked about salvation for those who never heard about Jesus. In a way the Jews received God’s grace to become a source of blessing. God gave them the law to make them to be God’s people for the sake of all nations. Still God does not show favoritism. Look at verse 12. “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.” Salvation is not a matter of simply having the law, but it’s about obeying the law. Jews are chosen people given the law. That does not mean that they get a free ticket. In fact knowing the law does not save them from God’s judgment. It is only those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. Jews are called to obey the law.

In the same way those who don’t have the law (the Gentiles), they also by nature have the requirements of the law written on their hearts. It is a conscience. It is the desire to be righteous and to be holy. Yet sinners fail to live up to their own conscience or moral standard. So they are also guilty and deserve God’s judgment. Both Gentile and Jew alike are under the power of sin regardless if they have the law or not. God’s righteous judgment against both is absolutely fair and just.

Here Paul points out that what we do is very important. It does not mean that we are saved by work. We are saved only by the grace of God when we have faith in Jesus. That is what Paul teaches us again in verse 16. “This will take place on the day when God judges people’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.” At the end of days, each of us will stand before God as the judge - Not only everything that we have ever done, but also all our secrets are going to be revealed. Most secrets are something bad done in secret or it could be a good deed done without anyone knowing. To be Honest, I have more bad secrets than good ones. God’s judgement is righteous because God sees everything, knows everything, understands everything. So, we have No excuse to escape from God’s judgement.

Thank God that Jesus Christ is our judge. Jesus christ is the ultimate standard of God’s judgment for only Jesus satisfied God’s righteousness. Sinners can be righteous by faith in Jesus for Jesus is the righteousness from God. This reminds us of the key verse of Romans again. “The gospel is the power of God that brings salvation for everyone who believes.”

Paul teaches this God’s judgement not to discourage us, but lead us to repentance of our sins.. The only name given to sinners is Jesus who came down, who became the prefect sacrifice for our sins; and who was raised from the dead. Through putting our faith in Jesus, we receive His righteousness. His blood wash away all our sins and clothe us with His righteousness. So, we live by faith in Jesus. Because Jesus is our righteousness from God. Let us come to God with sincere repentance, so that we may receive His grace of forgiveness of sins and the righteousness of God.