

Chapter Eighteen
Studies in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans
Four Principles of Divine Justice - Judgment According To Truth

“¹ Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. ² But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. ³ And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance” (Romans 2:1-4)?

Romans 2:1 begins the next division in the doctrine of condemnation going through 2:16. This is the God’s condemnation upon Moralism. Within this division God reveals four standards by which His justice will be meted out.

1. Judgment according to truth (2:1-4)
2. Judgment according to works (2:5-10)
3. Judgment with impartiality (2:11-15)
4. Judgment according to what is done with Jesus and the gospel (2:16).

This chapter will deal the first principle of divine justice (2:1-4). God always judges according to truth. The Moralist believes he is safe from condemnation (although not saved, he doesn’t know what being saved means) because he thinks himself morally above the drug addict, homosexual, fornicator, adulterer, murderer, and etc. (all that is described in Romans 1:24-32).

The Moralist uses salvation by *comparison* (I am not as bad as . . .). He compares his lifestyle with the dregs of society and puts himself on a higher spiritual level, therefore, closer to God. In order to honestly achieve salvation by comparison, one must compare himself to the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It would not be satisfactory even if a person’s level of achieved righteousness exceeded the highest standard among men. Salvation by comparison can only be achieved when a person is as righteous as Jesus Christ.

“¹⁷ Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. ¹⁸ For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. ¹⁹ Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:17-20).

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

Salvation by moral comparison is “inexcusable” (Romans 2:1). It is “inexcusable” to judge another person and his sin without recognizing that the same seed of corruption lies within the sin nature of each of us.

“⁶ Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. ⁷ Neither be ye idolaters, as *were* some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. ⁸ Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. ⁹ Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. ¹⁰ Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. ¹¹ Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. ¹² Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (I Corinthians 10:6-12).

The word “inexcusable” is from the Greek word *anapologetos* (an-ap-ol-og'-ay-tos), referring to an act that is indefensible. When this person stands before the Great White Throne Judgment, his self justification based on his Moralism will be an indefensible act. When the Moralist condemns the outward immorality described in Romans 1:24-32 and the person involved in these practices, he condemns himself in that inwardly he is no different. God will not compare the Moralist to the immoral person, but to Jesus Christ. God sees all mankind from the same divine perspective.

“But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isaiah 64:6).

God’s justice will be according to truth (Romans 2:2). The truth this refers to is the truth that all men are equally sinners in God eyes.

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

The truth this refers to is the truth that there is no one righteous in himself.

“¹ The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is* none that doeth good. ² The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God. ³ They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one” (Psalm 14:1-3).

“¹⁰ As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: ¹¹ There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. ¹² They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. ¹³ Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips: ¹⁴ Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness: ¹⁵ Their feet *are* swift to shed blood: ¹⁶ Destruction and misery *are* in their ways: ¹⁷ And the way of peace have they not known: ¹⁸ There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Romans 3:10-18).

The truth this refers to is the truth that no one has kept the Law. Therefore everyone is guilty of breaking all the Law. We number the commandments. God views the Law as a whole, not in parts. Break the Law by disobedience of any of God’s commandments and we break the whole Law.

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10).

The truth is that the Law as a standard of righteousness was incapable of saving anyone. It can only condemn. The Moralist can not be saved by keeping the Law. All the Law can do is pronounce the sinner guilty condemned to death.

“¹⁹ Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. ²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:19-20).

God's act of judgment according to truth is focused on the content of what is true. The idea here is that God's judgment is according to the truth He knows, not the truth mankind knows. It is based upon a complete, absolute and correct evaluation of man by comparing His righteousness (which God knows perfectly) with what man is (which God also knows perfectly).

“And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever” (I Chronicles 28:9).

⁷ Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard *it*. ⁸ Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise? ⁹ He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? ¹⁰ He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, *shall not he know?* ¹¹ The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they *are* vanity” (Psalm 94:7-11).

The words “O Man” (Romans 2:3) puts the Moralist in the same category as all sinners. In other words, the Moralist is the same as all men are. He is a sinner condemned by what he is inwardly in Adam. The question of Romans 2:3 is rhetorical. Sin is sin. Sin is not categorized by degrees. There may be many different levels of degradation, but all sin is sin and all men are sinners.

The question is directed to the Moralist, but applies to anyone who thinks himself to be spiritually or morally superior to another because of birth, social status, moral practices or that this self appointed position elevates him above anyone else in the eyes of God.

Don't you know that the goodness of God leads you to repentance (Romans 2:4)? This is another rhetorical question. Romans 2:4 might be paraphrased: “Or looking down your noses at the riches of God's goodness and His withholding of immediate judgment allowing you the time to be saved, don't you know that the reason God does this in His goodness is to allow you the time to repent of your self righteous moralism?” The idea behind this question is that the Moralist is actually showing contempt for what God is doing by his self righteous attitude.

The Moralist is ignorant of two things. He is ignorant of God's expectation of God-righteousness and he is ignorant of what that righteousness is. In his ignorance, he thinks he is safe (by comparison) from condemnation. After all, God must prefer him above the prostitute, drug addict, fornicator, adulterer and murder. The reality is that he is just as lost and just as condemned. Just like all sinners, he needs a Savior.

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1. Give an outline of Romans 2:1-16. _____

2. Discuss the difference between the Moralist believing himself to be safe and the person who believes himself to be saved. _____

3. Discuss the meaning of the phrase *salvation by comparison*. _____

4. Read Matthew 5:17-20 and Hebrews 4:15. What do these verses teach us about *salvation by comparison*? _____

5. What does the word “inexcusable” mean in Romans 2:1 and how does this relate to *salvation by comparison*? _____

6. Read Romans 3:23 and 5:12. What is the truth that all men will be judged by in these verses? _____

7. Read Psalm 14:1-3 and Romans 3:10-18. What is the truth that all men will be judged by in these verses? _____

8. Read James 2:10. What is the truth that all men will be judged by from this verse? _____

9. Read Romans 3:19-20. What is the truth that all men will be judged by in these verses? _____

10. Read 1 Chronicles 28:9 and Psalm 94:7-11. Discuss how these verses reveal God’s judgment according to truth. _____

11. Discuss the theological significance of the words “O man” in Romans 2:3 in the context of the doctrine of condemnation and justice according to truth. _____

12. Paraphrase Romans 2:4 and give the idea behind this rhetorical question. _____
