

Chapter Twenty-one
Studies in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans
Four Principles of Divine Justice
Judgment According To What Is Done With Jesus and the Gospel

“In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (Romans 2:16).

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).

The Moralist thinks he has favor with God simply because he does not practice the things listed in Romans 1:21-32. He thinks God will not condemn him because he lives a moral lifestyle. The basis of his logic is purely externalism. The Moralist does not even consider the matter of sins of the heart. He does not even consider the matter of the fallen nature and the matters of a corrupted spirit.

“¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (I John 2:15-17).

Because the Moralist does not consider the matter of the corruption of his body, soul and spirit by *the fall*, he does not consider his true position before God. Therefore, his thinking is as corrupt as he is corrupt. He does not understand that the only thing a corrupt person can produce from himself is corruption. Job understood this about himself and Christ taught it on numerous occasions.

“¹ My breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves *are ready* for me . . . ¹⁴ I have said to corruption, Thou *art* my father: to the worm, *Thou art* my mother, and my sister” (Job 17:1 and 14).

“¹⁷ Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit” (Matthew 7:17-18).

God will not judge just according to the external practices, but according to the “secrets” of the heart (Romans 2:16). The Moralist judges himself by comparing himself to immoral people. God will judge a person by what a person thinks and feels.

“⁶ Eat thou not the bread of *him that hath* an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: ⁷ For as he thinketh in his heart, so *is* he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart *is* not with thee” (Proverbs 23:6-7).

All of mankind tends to judge according to the external appearance. God condemns even the practice of judging people according to their external moral appearance.

“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God” (I Corinthians 4:5).

Christ condemned the practice of judging people according to external practices on numerous occasions. That does not mean that Christ or Christians should condone sin. Neither does it mean that societies ought to allow practices to go on that are harmful and dangerous to that society. Most moral laws are imposed in a society because governments understand that certain practices are harmful to the people that practice them and to order within a society. Without moral laws any society is destined for anarchy and its own self-destruction. However, passing judgment is judicial and carries with it the right of punishment. That right is restricted to governments, not individuals.

³ And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, ⁴ They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. ⁵ Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? ⁶ This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with *his* finger wrote on the ground, *as though he heard them not.* ⁷ So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. ⁸ And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. ⁹ And they which heard *it*, being convicted by *their own* conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, *even* unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. ¹⁰ When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? ¹¹ She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (John 8:3-11).

¹ Judge not, that ye be not judged. ² For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. ³ And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? ⁴ Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam *is* in thine own eye? ⁵ Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:1-5).

¹⁹ Did not Moses give you the law, and *yet* none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me? ²⁰ The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee? ²¹ Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel. ²² Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. ²³ If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day? ²⁴ Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:19-24).

“Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;” (Romans 2:15). God is recording the inner struggle of the conscience (or lack thereof) constantly going on within the heart of every person. Every lust, every prideful, unforgiving, bitter, hateful thought is recorded for the final day of judgment. God will even judge the motives behind every act.

¹¹ And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Revelation 20:11-12).

In judging the secrets of men, God will also judge the idols of the heart.

“¹ Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me. ² And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, ³ Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them? ⁴ Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; ⁵ That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols. ⁶ Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn *yourselves* from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations” (Ezekiel 14:1-6).

An idol of the heart refers to anyone or anything a person puts before God. God knows and records each of the idols of the heart and will judge these secrets as well.

God will judge the secrets of men according to the gospel. The gospel details the judgment on sin and the payment of that judgment in the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ. Every judgment (judicial sentence) of God on sin is met head-on in the gospel (adjudicated). The issue of salvation is not a question of sin or the degree of sin. The issue of salvation is if the wages of those sins (public, private or of the heart) have been paid and has God’s righteous justice been satisfied (adjudicated).

Salvation is not based upon how a person lives, but by understanding and believing the gospel and calling on Jesus in faith to save, trusting in what the gospel details about what He did to satisfy God’s justice (that does not mean a saved person can live in sin). The gospel details how a person gets out of the condemned family of Adam and is “born again” into the family of God. Without the work of Christ (as detailed by the gospel) all people (even the Moralists and Religionists) are hell-bound, condemned sinners regardless of what they appear to be externally.

Apostasy takes the reformed Moralists and puts him on a pedestal as testimony to what man can do. Apostasy puts reformation in the place of redemption. If any person could save himself there would be no need of a Savior. Christ was not incarnate to save moral people. The reason Christ became incarnate is because all men are hopelessly lost sinners.

“⁹ And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him. ¹⁰ And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. ¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? ¹² But when Jesus heard *that*, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. ¹³ But go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matthew 9:9-13).

The dividing line between salvation and condemnation is what has a person done with Jesus Christ according to the gospel.

“¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. ¹⁸ He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God . . . ³⁶ He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:16-18 and 36).

The ultimate decision of God's judgment is determined by the answer to the question, have you believed and obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ? If you believe the gospel, you believe you are hopelessly lost in your sin and condemned to an eternal hell. If you believe the gospel, you believe you deserve to go to hell, because your very nature is corrupt and an offense against the righteousness of God. If you believe the gospel, you believe Jesus came into this world to be executed in your place to pay your wages of sin.

If you believe the gospel, you believe that every sin you have ever committed and ever will commit, has been paid for and God's justice has been satisfied through the substitutionary work of the Cross and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. If you have believed the gospel, you have called out to Christ Jesus from a broken heart of repentance of sin and dead works, I believe! I believe! Save my wretched soul from its deserved condemnation. There is no good thing in me.

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1. Why does the Moralist think he has favor with God and will not be condemned? _____

2. Read 1 John 2:15-17. Discuss the matters of the “lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” and why the Moralist does not even consider these things as condemning. _____

3. Read Job 17:1 and Matthew 7:17-18 together. Why is the thinking of the Moralist corrupt? _____

4. Read Proverbs 23:6 and 1 Corinthians 4:5 together. Discuss all the things involved when God says He will “judge the secrets of men”? _____

5. Read John 8:3-11. Discuss the principle of judgment regarding the “secrets of men” and why these men did not stone this woman caught in adultery. _____

6. Read Matthew 7:1-5. Discuss the balance of making spiritual judgments by using the principles of judgment established in this text. _____

7. Read John 7:19-24. Discuss what is involved in the command, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.” _____

8. Read Ezekiel 14:1-6. Discuss the idols of the heart and how this relates to God’s judgment of the “secrets of men.” _____

9. Fully discuss what is meant by the statement that God will judge “the secrets of men according to the gospel.” _____

10. Detail what is involved with believing the gospel. What must you believe about yourself and what must you believe about the work of Christ? _____
