

**Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church**  
**Paul's Letter to the Romans – Chapter 2, Verses 1-11**  
**Notes from Tuesday August 3, 2010**  
**Last Revised on August 8, 2010**

**Songs**

**Opening Prayer**

**Introduction**

Last week read to the end of Chapter 1 of the Letter of Paul to the Romans.

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I think we finished discussing what we read.

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Does anyone have any questions or comments?

**Review**

Before we read on, I would like to remind you of some things.

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Please look with me at Chapter 1.

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The first 15 1/2 verses are introductory, but they tell us some very important things.

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They tell us that we are reading a letter from the Apostle Paul to Christians in Rome.

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They tell us that Rome is a place Paul has never visited before,

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but that he longs to visit Rome and proclaim the gospel there.

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We know from the very first verse of this letter, and from everything else we know of Paul from Acts and his other letters, that Paul's job was fundamentally to proclaim the gospel.

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Ordinarily Paul did this through preaching and teaching in person.

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But so far, by the time he wrote this letter before us, Paul had not been able to visit Rome in person, to preach and to teach the gospel.

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So he was obliged to write this lengthy letter instead.

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I presume that Romans is a written version of the things we would have heard Paul preaching and teaching verbally, again and again, had we been there to hear him speak in the cities which he visited.

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So if someone were to ask us, what is Romans about, we might reasonably reply that Romans

is about the gospel, meaning, of course, the gospel of Jesus Christ, according to the Apostle Paul.

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Paul's gospel, as he sometimes refers to it, is no different than the Gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. We can detect no troubling contradictions or inconsistencies.

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Yet like each of the other gospel authors, Paul has his own distinctive style and approach.

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In just the first few lines of this letter, Paul manages to say a lot about the gospel, and because these lines are said first, we might suppose them to be some of the more important things that can be said about the gospel, or at least some of the things that it is important for one to understand first of all. (Please look with me at the first several lines of Chapter 1.)

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Paul says there that he has been set apart to proclaim God's message of good news, "which he [God] promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures concerning his son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord."

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We know from reading Acts that Paul's usual approach to proclaiming the gospel, was to travel to a major city, go to the synagogue, and demonstrate from holy Scriptures that Jesus of Nazareth had fulfilled the things which God promised beforehand through his prophets.

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Those of you who were here when we studied Hebrews recently may remember the very first two lines of that letter, which read: "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." (Hebrews 1:1,2)

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So the fact that Jesus fulfilled (rather than contradicted) the ancient promises of God seems to be of first importance to Paul, as it was to the author of Hebrews and the other New Testament authors. We should bear this in mind.

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Among other things, the fact that Jesus fulfills the Old Testament means that Jesus is not "Plan B."

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We sometimes speak as if God were doing one thing and then, surprised by the way things turned out, He had to send Jesus to fix it.

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No! Jesus was the plan all along and so, while he comes at the end to fulfill God's plan, he was there at the beginning, and everything proceeds from him and towards him!

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Likewise it seems important to Paul, and to all the other apostles and New Testament authors, to notice that the manner in which Jesus fulfilled the ancient promises has something to do with his descent from David. Among other things this means that the eternal Kingdom of David becomes the eternal Kingdom of Christ, and Christ has thrown open the doors to all the nations.

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I am reminded of the passage in Galatians 3, verses 27-29 which reads: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. We are Jews in effect. And so the Jewish Bible is now the Old Testament of the Christian Bible and important to us.

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Finally it seems to be of first importance that the recognition of Jesus as the ‘son of god in power’ is associated with his resurrection from the dead. The eternal king of the eternal kingdom is a real man, like us in every way, but without sin, who was really dead but is now really alive, and alive eternally. His subjects then, if he has any, must be men who rise from the dead and live eternally.. Therein lies our hope of eternal life, if we belong to Christ, and he is truly our King.

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We know that in the early church the resurrection of Christ from the dead was the one thing of central importance to early believers. Without that, the rest of it made no sense to them at all. That Christ had been crucified and died and risen bodily from the dead was what made the gospel real to them, and powerful unto salvation, and not just some abstract philosophy. And this is still true for us today. Our faith is that we will rise from the dead bodily to live with Christ.

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We can imagine that those believers in Rome to whom Paul writes, those who, with Paul, say “Jesus Christ our Lord” already have understood enough of this gospel to be saved by it, and to recognize in the words which Paul has said, in just these first 6 lines of his letter, that Paul is indeed a servant of Christ, called to be an Apostle, and set apart for the gospel of God.

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And I think it is safe to say (especially from what we will read in the concluding paragraphs of this letter) that Paul has friends and associates in Rome who were familiar with the signs and wonders which the Lord had worked in and through the life and ministry of the apostle Paul.

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To the Church of the Thessalonians, for example, Paul wrote: “For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.” (1 Thessalonians 1:4,5) Paul is a powerful and well known figure.

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The gospel is real and powerful and alive, in Paul and in the Church. So for all or most of the readers, what is happening in this letter is not evangelism, it seems to me, not conversion, and certainly not philosophy, but catechism. Paul is teaching Christians more about their faith.

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This letter records the sort of things which Paul taught in person, to new believers, and to old believers, in the places where he could visit and stay long enough to teach them in person.

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Again we saw this same thing recently when we studied Hebrew, where the preacher said

to the church: “...let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity.”  
(Hebrews 6:1)

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In his Letter to the Romans, Paul expounds the gospel to those who are already being saved by it, and who probably already have strong experiential evidence of their salvation. But they lack a full understanding of the gospel by which they are saved, and so Paul teaches them more fully.

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Like many of us, I imagine, Paul’s readers in Rome were saved by the gospel but, at the same time, they were ashamed of the gospel, meaning that they were reluctant to proclaim it publicly.

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Paul was not ashamed, as he says in the first part of verse 16, at least in part because he understood the gospel better than most people do. And he offers a brief summary of what he understands in the later part of verse 16 and verse 17. (Please look.)

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Here he explains that God’s message of good news concerning his son (i.e. the gospel) is

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the power of God for salvation

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in which the righteousness of God is revealed,

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(And please remember that this revelation is of something prepared before the beginning of time.)

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This revelation he says is from faith for faith.

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and this salvation is for everyone who believes,

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to the Jew first and also to the Greek

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This verse and a half --- i.e. the latter part of verse 16 and verse 17 --- are theologically dense and have no simple explanation upon which everyone, not even every conservative Christian, agrees.

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These are words to contemplate and discuss, not words that anyone should rush to simplify.

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We are dealing here with the single most important thing in the universe: God’s message of good news concerning his son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is the beginning, and the basis, and the goal and purpose of all creation.

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This explains why Paul does not stop here! (at verse 17). There is so much more about the gospel to try and understand.

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The remainder of Chapter 1, from verse 18 through 32, which we studied last week, is the first step in Paul’s expanded teaching concerning the gospel.

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 It seems clear to me that this section (i.e. vv 18-32) works toward the conclusion stated in the first clause of Chapter 2: “therefore you have no excuse.”

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 Paul wants to make it plain by the end of Chapter 1, that all men are unrighteous and corrupt, and without any possible excuse for their unrighteousness, deserving only death.

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 This is a fact that men need to perceive rather fully, as they begin to understand the gospel, and are saved by it.

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 Among Paul’s readers, those who are being saved by the gospel, will not need to have this message hammered into them quite so hard maybe,

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 but part of the stubborn perversity of man, even Christian man, is that we each tend to judge others, but to excuse our self.

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 When we do that, we put ourselves at risk, back under God’s wrath, and outside the protection of Christ.

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 So Paul needs to direct some words to those of us, his readers, who are prone to being self-righteous.

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 If I may suggest we are all prone to being self-righteous, often and to a dangerous extent.

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 That is where we are going in Chapter 2.

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 What I have just given is a very superficial summary of Chapter 1, but also, I think, essentially true so far as it goes.

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 One of the deeper insights into these verses, as we discussed a bit last week, is that the gospel in which the righteousness of God is revealed (verse 17) is also where the wrath of God, directed against all the sins of man, is finally and fully revealed (verse 18).

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 Men of all ages have looked at the world around them and all the evil it contains and wondered how to reconcile what they see with the idea of a God who is good and all-powerful.

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 And men of all ages have looked within themselves and at all the evil they find there and wondered how they could ever escape death and damnation, or whether they should even try.

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 In the old Testament we read of the Fall, the Flood, the Tower of Babel, and the whole sad story of Israel and through these we begin to learn something about God’s righteousness and God’s wrath. But we remain perplexed by what we read there and so can only look forward in faith to what God has promised.

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 But on the cross, finally, and fully, God reveals his righteousness . . . . and his wrath.

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 There his wrath is poured out on Christ for every sin of every person who is being saved by the gospel.

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 And if that is how serious God is about sin, then those who would reject Christ, and the gospel, stand under the greatest possible threat, of being exposed directly to the outpouring of God's wrath.

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 Wherever the gospel is proclaimed, God's righteousness and God's wrath are being revealed, and offered to man as a choice, between death and life, hell and heaven.

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 Thus, truly, the gospel is the power of god for salvation to everyone who believes.

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 And apart from the gospel, no one can be saved.

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 With that in mind, if there are no further comments or questions, let's read on.

### **The Letter of Paul to the Romans, Chapter 2, Verse 1-11**

Will somebody please read Romans, Chapter 2, Verses 1-11 in Japanese.

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 Thank you. Now will someone please read those same verses in English.

**1 Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.**

**2 We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.**

**3 Do you suppose, O man---you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself---that you will escape the judgment of God?**

**4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?**

**5 But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.**

**6 He will render to each one according to his works:**

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

**8 but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.**

**9 There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek,**

**10 but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.**

**11 For God shows no partiality.**

Thank you.

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Now in understanding what we have just read, I think it will be helpful to remember the last thing said, in verse 11: that God shows no partiality.

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This is a general point that Paul will sharpen going forward, finally he will use it to help Jewish Christians understand that their Jewishness, in itself, does not diminish their need for the gospel.

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Most commentators believe that Paul already has his fellow Jewish Christians in mind here at the beginning of Chapter 2, although he does not call them out specifically until verse 17.

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That may be true, but it is also true that in any group of people, including any group of Christians, there will be those who consider themselves to be different and special and superior,

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whether because of the color of their skin, their national or cultural heritage, their family, their education, their profession, their money, their church tradition, their ministry, their spiritual gifts, or what have you.

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And it may often be that they consider themselves to be different and special and superior because of their superior knowledge of God and their more Godly lifestyle and tradition.

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They may think that they were, in some sense, born into a group that is privileged before God, or that they married into or worked their way into such a privileged, specially religious, group.

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In Paul's day, no doubt, most of the especially religious Christians would have been Jewish, because they would have known the Bible better than most of the other Christians,

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and they would have lived lives that were more pious than did the Gentile Christians,

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and all of this (their religious knowledge and piety) would have been real, and even good in itself,

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just as in our day, there are groups of Christians among us, who are especially knowledgeable and pious and much of their religiosity is very good in itself.

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but there is a problem, if our religion, or our wealth, our profession, our family our nationality, our culture, the color of our skin, or whatever tricks us into thinking that we ourselves are actually good,

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meaning that we come to suppose that we are better than others and in a position to look down on them.

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Paul says no! In verses 1-11 Paul wants to make it clear that, apart from Christ, no man is exempt from the charge of complete depravity as described in Chapter 1.

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And every man needs to understand this, if he is to be saved by the gospel!

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Verse 1 reads:

**(Verse 1)**

**Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.**

The word, “therefore,” strongly ties what follows to what went before,

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suggesting that what follows is a necessary conclusion or result.

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What went before was an accurate description of the universal depravity of all mankind.

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If this is true, as it is, and as Paul argues, then it is impossible that any man could stand in judgment of any other man.

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Because we all practice these very same things.

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This argument does not require that we each be guilty of all the same sins, although I dare say that, to God, who sees our hearts, we all are guilty of all the same sins.

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Most of us are saved from outward sin through lack of opportunity; if we had the good looks, fame and money of the movie stars, no doubt most of us would fall into living the life they lead which includes a whole range of sins that are simply not available to us.

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In any case, when I judge another person, I am excusing myself of the sin for which I judge him, which is impossible.

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I cannot excuse myself from sin, and in attempting to so, by judging another, I condemn myself.

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Q. How do I condemn myself?

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A. By judging another person I prove that I know what sin is.

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A. By judging another person for what I am also guilty of, I add hypocrisy to the list of charges against me.

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A. By excusing myself from the sin I recognize in someone else, I fail to repent and seek forgiveness in Christ

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A. So by judging someone else, in these several ways, I step out from under the protection of Christ and into the wrath of God.

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It is the cross of Christ that teaches me this, and reminds me of this, because it is there that I can see God's wrath and God's righteousness revealed!

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Notice in verse 1 and again in verses 3-5 and later in verse 17 and following, Paul is directly addressing his readers --- in person.

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That is, he is using the second person singular "you"

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This is a recognizable Greek literary genre, known as diatribe, in which a teacher engages the student, as it were, in personal debate.

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Here Paul is in a sense having a personal conversation or argument with each person who thinks that he has any right at all to judge another person.

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He may have the Jews especially in mind, but he identifies the "you" as "O man" and I am pretty sure he means to speak to any man or woman, Jew or Gentile who will admit that he or she sometimes judges others, especially people who are part of an ethnic, social, or religious group other than their own.

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In verse 2, Paul briefly slips into the first person plural "we"

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Verse 2 reads

**(Verse 2)**

**We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.**

This is an appeal to recognize a fact which is undisputed.

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2 + 2 = 4 We know that. Everybody knows that. Please remember what we all know.

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Here what we all know is that God judges everyone who practices evil.

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The same point is made in a different way in verse 11 where Paul says that God is impartial.

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It's like Paul is saying "wake up....do you suppose that the rather perverse fact that you feel morally superior to other people, people somehow different from yourself, will excuse you from God's judgment of the evil which you yourself practice?"

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That's almost exactly what Paul does say in Verse 3, which reads:

**(Verse 3)**

**Do you suppose, O man---you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself---that you will escape the judgment of God?**

This is a rhetorical question.

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The meaning is that one must certainly NOT suppose that he will escape the judgment of God for the wicked things he does, simply because he stands in some supposedly privileged position from which he judges others.

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It seems strange that Paul would need to point out the absurdity of this position,

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but then again it is not strange at all.

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because we all badly need to hear this message spoken to ourselves, again and again.

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Because we all do manage to identify others, on whom we look down, and whom we judge, despite being guilty of the very same sins.

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At least I do, and may God forgive me.

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Verse 4 reads

**(Verse 4)**

**Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?**

The fact is, that we become judgmental when things are going reasonably well for ourselves, and for the groups of which we are a part.

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Don't we!?

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The history of Israel as recorded in the Old Testament provides a multitude of examples and I dare say that pagan literature has something similar, in the hubris revealed in Greek tragedy.

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When things are going well for us, we tend to treat this as a reward for our goodness, or at least a sign that God is not very angry with our sin, or perhaps He doesn't think it is so bad after all.

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 And so, instead of repenting of our sin, we often sin the more when times are good!

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 And at the same time we begin to perceive (falsely) our superiority to those who are not doing so well in this world, who are perhaps suffering more visibly from their sins, not realizing that God often chastises those whom he loves!

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 God forgive us! That is how we are. And Paul know it.

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 And he warns us! Verse 5 reads:

**(Verse 5)**

**But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.**

As we have discussed, on the cross, and in the ongoing proclamation of the Gospel, God's wrath and God's righteousness are being revealed.

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 We have a choice, repent of our sins (that is stop doing them) and rely on the blood of Christ to cover the sins we have confessed and repented of.

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 Or we can keep sinning and store up God's wrath which is directed at all who do such things.

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 God is ever so patiently waiting for us to choose the former, but if we do not take that choice, the latter must finally come.

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 All who have rejected Christ and the gospel must themselves endure God's righteous judgment in the end.

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 That too is part of God's righteousness revealed on the cross.

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 Verse 6 reads:

**(Verse 6)**

**He will render to each one according to his works:**

This verse, and the several which follow, must be read carefully within the trajectory of what Paul is saying just here..

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 His starting point, remember, at the end of Chapter 1, is that every single human being is totally depraved and without excuse and, therefore, threatened by the wrath of God.

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 His ending point, at least in what we have read so far today, as expressed in Verse 11 and touched on in Verses 2, is that there are no privileged groups or classes of people which are exempted from God's wrath, which is rightly directed at every person who does such things.

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 Its not who you are (Jew or Greek, slave or free, man or woman) but what you do that counts.

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Verse 7 continues

**(Verse 7)**

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

This is a description of those to whom God will give eternal life.

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Based only on what we have read so far of Paul's letter, we may rightly infer that these are people who have believed the gospel, put their trust in it, and who are being saved by it, because the gospel is God's power unto salvation for everyone who believes.

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We may also infer that these people are not prone to judge others or to think themselves worthy but, rather, are people who have turned to the gospel because they recognize that they are accurately described in Chapter 1, as being totally depraved and without excuse.

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Finally we know that these are people who, with Paul, may truly say "Jesus Christ our Lord."

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Clearly then these are not people who suppose that they deserve the eternal life they have been promised but, rather, owe it to Christ and are therefore obedient to Christ, led the the Spirit and patient in well doing.

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And it is these deeds, which grow out of Christ which are rewarded, for Christ's sake!

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This, the rewards we expect in heaven for having been obedient to our Savior and the leading of his spirit are grace on top of grace.

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It is all his merit, and none of it ours, and so we cannot boast or judge.

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But what what of those who do not say "Jesus Christ our Lord?"

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Verse 8 says

**(Verse 8)**

**but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.**

Apart from Christ, no human being, certainly none of us in this room, is capable of doing anything to please God.

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So there can never be any question of "works righteousness" or any kind of "self righteousness"

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Apart from Christ everyone is loathsome, self-seeking, disobedient to the truth, and obedient to unrighteousness.

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Because that is simply how human beings are, apart from Christ.

Therefore apart from Christ there is finally only wrath and fury.

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To reject Christ is to die because apart from him all human works, without exception, are evil, and God's righteous wrath remains on them.

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Again, there are no exceptions. Verse 9 reads:

**(Verse 9)**

**There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek,**

Without Christ we can only do evil, be we Jew or Greek...or nominally Christian.

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there is no religion, no group, to which we can belong in order to be saved.

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Again, it is not who we are or what group we belong to that matters, it is what we do.

**(Verse 10)**

**but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.**

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We simply must repent of our sins and do good.

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There is no other way to eternal life.

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This is only possible in Christ.

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As we shall see.

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Then

**(Verse 11)**

**For God shows no partiality.**

No matter who you are, Christ will save you.

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No matter who you are, without Christ you are lost.

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That is the meaning of “God shows no partiality.”

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Some of you may be sitting there thinking: but doesn't God show partiality to Christians?

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The answer, I think, is “no “.... in the sense of Christians as a religious group in the world.

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It doesn't matter if you were born into a Christian family, raised in a Christian church, or baptized.

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It doesn't matter whether you attend Christian church services and Bible studies or whether you tithe and involve yourself in activities called Christian ministry.

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It does not even matter how well behaved you are externally. God doesn't care about any of that.

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God is not partial to Christians.

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He is partial to Christ.

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Our salvation lies in belonging to Christ.

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Only then can God's wrath be turned away from our sins.

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Only then can the Holy Spirit dwell in us and lead us into repentance and good works pleasing to God.

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It cannot be about anything else.

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In what we will read next week, Paul continues to develop his argument along these lines.

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Questions?

**Closing Prayer**