

# God's Kindness and God's Judgment

Thomas Robinson, *Gospel of God's Grace for All of Us* 5, October 26, 2014

## Romans 1:28 - 2:11 (ESV adapted)

<sup>28</sup> And just as they **did not think fit** to hold **God in their knowledge**, **God handed them over** to an **unfit mind** to do what ought not to be done: <sup>29</sup> filled with all **unrighteousness**, evil, desire for more, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness; gossips, <sup>30</sup> slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup> senseless, promise-breakers, unfeeling, merciless.

<sup>32</sup> Though **they know God's righteous decree** that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only **do them** but **give approval** to those who practice them.

**2:**<sup>1</sup> Therefore **you have no excuse**, Human (*anthropos*), every one of you who **judges**. For in passing judgment on another you **condemn yourself**, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. <sup>2</sup> We know that **the judgment of God** is according to **truth** upon those who practice such things.

<sup>3</sup> Do you suppose, Human – you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself – that you will **escape the judgment of God**? <sup>4</sup> Or do you disdain **the riches of his kindness** and **forbearance** and **patience**, not knowing that **God's kindness leads you to repentance**? <sup>5</sup> But because of your hardness and **unrepentant heart** you are storing up for yourself **wrath in a day of wrath** and **revelation of God's just judgment**.

<sup>6</sup> *He will render to each one according to his works*: [Psa 62:12, Prov 24:12]

[A] <sup>7</sup> to those who by endurance in **good work seek for glory** and **honor** and **immortality**,  
**life of the age to come**;

[B] <sup>8</sup> but for those who are **self-centered** and **do not obey the truth**, but **obey injustice**,  
**wrath and fury**;

[B] <sup>9</sup> **Tribulation** and **distress** for every human life who **works evil**,  
the **Jew** first and also the **Greek**,

[A] <sup>10</sup> but **glory** and **honor** and **peace** for everyone who **works good**,  
the **Jew** first and also the **Greek**.

<sup>11</sup> For **God shows no partiality**.

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## Psalm 62:11-12

<sup>11</sup> Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God, <sup>12</sup> and that to you, Lord, belongs steadfast love. For **you will render to each one according to his works**.

## 2 Corinthians 5:10

<sup>10</sup> For we must all **appear before the judgment seat of the Messiah**, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

## Philippians 1:6

<sup>6</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who **began in you a good work** will thoroughly **complete it by the day of Messiah Jesus**.

## Romans 8:1-4

<sup>1</sup> There is therefore now **no condemnation for those who are in Messiah Jesus**. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit who gives life in Messiah Jesus has set you free from the law used by sin to bring death. <sup>3</sup> For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, **he condemned sin in the flesh**, <sup>4</sup> in order that **the righteous decree of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit**.

## The Inescapable Indictment of Sin

Paul is expressing the Gospel – what God has done in Jesus – power for salvation, God’s faithful righteousness in action. We respond with faith, live by faith. But the reality that we trust – Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection – points to the deep universal problem.

Paul started with the fundamental problem – replacing the real God who makes us in his image with images of ourselves, our desires. The outcome is self-delusion, a distortion of human life (1:28-31). We recognize a moral law, know we break it, and accept the wrong.

## Kindness, Patience and the Changed Heart

Paul turns to address anyone who agrees with his indictment: ‘You,’ ‘Human’ (*anthropos*).

Very general: Jew, Gentile. Many have expressed indictments of the evils of human life (including Paul). But can I stand outside the indictment as a judge? Can I, even as a ‘better’ person than others, avoid condemnation. Devout Jews (like Paul) often felt superior to Gentiles. Greek/Roman moralists felt superior to the masses. We can all be judgmental, but that is part of our self-delusion. In truth we condemn ourselves (2:1).

The long story of humanity – from promises to Abraham to Paul – was not God approving the corruption of human life. Paul describes it as God’s patience showing the profound need for a fundamentally new way of thinking (repentance). God will ultimately judge all human life according to truth, with just judgment, setting things right, as only the creator can. That is God’s faithful righteousness, keeping promises, impartial, just to all.

## Impartial Judgment According to Works

God’s judgment will be a verdict on the reality, the ‘works’ of each life, as scripture says.

Paul emphasizes this by repeating ‘work’ and ‘obey.’ Not theory, not claims – reality!

Paul uses two pairs of statements to drive home the point that God’s judgment will justly fit the reality of each life and fulfill God’s promise to restore all humanity that he has created through what he has done in Israel’s Messiah: Jew first, also Greek.

Negative: Self-centered, self-deluded. Not persuaded by/obedient to truth, but following injustice, unrighteousness: The result is wrath that falls on all that destroys human life; tribulation, distress that corresponds to the evil that has been done, by Jew or Gentile.

Positive: Seek glory, honor, immortality by patient good work (Mt 25): God gives the life of the age to come (*zoe aionios*), resurrection, eternal life. This is God’s verdict on Jesus as God’s Son by the resurrection from the dead. That’s for all who ‘work the good,’ Jew or Gentile.

This passage is really surprising/difficult to many taught to think that ‘work’ is a bad word for Paul and for the Gospel. Isn’t the Gospel about faith, not works? Is Paul just setting up a hypothetical scenario that no one can really fulfill? No! Paul is too emphatic. The just character of God’s judgment by works is given in scripture. In fact, it’s our only hope.

## How Can Anyone Survive that Judgment?

Still, the question remains. If the indictment for sin is as universal as Paul affirms, and the judgment by works on human life is as true and just as Paul emphasizes, how can any of us stand in that judgment? Won’t there be wrath and fury for all? Impartial condemnation?

That is one fundamental question of Romans. How can I actually do what is good? How can I have a real change of thinking and action (repentance)? How can God’s just verdict on my life be not condemnation but eternal life? Paul sets out to unfold the answer.

The key is in the event, what God has done in Jesus, his death and resurrection. This radical, unexpected crucifixion of God and creation of new life, opens a new world of hope.