

THE GOOD NEWS OF
ROMANS
A STUDY THROUGH THE BOOK OF ROMANS

Romans: Good News for You Series

Kevin Berry | March 3, 2019

Romans is a book that repeatedly changes the world by changing people. This study together is all about transformation for you, our church, and our community.

Fortune Cookies... why do they give them out? Perhaps because everybody wants to be told that they are going to be okay, that things will work out; they want to hear some good news in their world that's so full of bad news. Of course, we can't and shouldn't take fortune cookie seriously. But, Christians can and must take the Bible seriously. When you see a promise in God's Word, your heart should leap for joy.

- For example: Hannah's deep grief and private prayer to the Lord found in 1 Sam 1 teaches us that *God prepares to display publically, what you have prayed for privately*. He starts making arrangements in response to what you prayed (1 Sam 1:19 MSG). We should take hold of a verse like that and allow our faith to rise as we expect the Lord to answer, as we keep on asking, seeking, and knocking (Matt. 7:7-8).

However, we can't make the mistake of reading our Bibles like some read fortune cookies – just looking for the encouraging word. Here's the thing... ***Messages in the cookies tell you want you want to hear; the Bible tells you want you need to hear!***

A.W. Tozer said, "Nothing less than the whole Bible can make a whole Christian."

Today in Romans 2, we come across one of those passages that we need to hear:

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. ²We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. ³Do 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? Romans 2:1-3 ESV

In last week's passage, Paul uses the word "they," "them," or "their" 20 times and all the moral people in the church would have agreed: Yep – THEY are sinners; THEY do horrible things; You can almost hear them saying a loud "amen!" as the letter from Paul is read. But then Paul gets personal; he moves from saying THEY to YOU!

You Have to Hear This:

#1 You Are Without Excuse, So Stop Judging and Start Repenting.

To play the judge is to believe that others are worthy of God's judgment while you are not. Jesus blows apart the finger pointing when he said, "Refuse to be a critic full of bias toward others, and judgment will not be passed on you. For you'll be judged by the same standard that you've used to judge others. The measurement you use on them will be used on you. Why would you focus on the flaw in someone else's life and yet fail to notice the glaring flaws of your own?" (Matt 7:1-3 TPT)

If you don't understand that you are guilty of sin too, you never stop pointing the finger at others.

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment" (Matthew 5: 21-22). For most of us, it is not too hard to get to the end of the day and say, "Well, I haven't murdered anyone." But can we honestly say, "I have not been angry with anyone? Have I treated everyone like they are worthy of the extravagant love of God?"

The greatest danger to our lives is never what's on the outside, but rather what's on the inside. The greatest danger to the church is not the immorality that gets spewed into homes on a television, nor is it the corruption that can be found in the political arena. The church will never implode from the sin that surrounds it. No, the greatest danger to you is the sin on the inside of you – the self-righteous attitude that looks down at others, but looks up to self. Remember from last week: When you demote God and promote self, everything gets turned upside down.

- What are the sins you are tempted to excuse in yourself while condemning them in others?

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? Romans 1:4

Today we must know that apart from Christ we are without excuse and **we must also know that:**

#2 God is Kind.

Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that His kindness is intended to turn you from your sin? 1:4 NLT

For most of us we get our idea of what God is like by watching our dads. That can be good for some, and a challenge for others. If your view of what God is really like has been tainted, hear me closely today. Allow me to paint a picture in your heart of who God really is, the way He really responds to you. I would like to tell you about who I know God to be, not what I have read about Him, but about the person I have experienced. As a young boy, I was rejected, and marked like there was something horribly wrong with me. Oh, it's not that I didn't have parents... great parents. It's not like I was thrown out of the house, I just didn't feel like I fit in the house... I didn't feel like I fit anywhere. Why was I different? What was wrong with me? Seizures dominated my life during elementary school. But then I met God and He believed in me! He knew that my past was not going to dictate my future. He took all my hurt, rejection, shame, fear ... and He gave me wholeness, acceptance, love, and faith. Somehow, He took all the pieces of my life – the good, the bad, the ugly, and He mixed them all together to make something wonderful. He took the scared little boy that I used to be and as a man put me in front of people and gave me a story to tell. God is good, He is kind, He is full of compassion toward you, His love for you is unending and intentional. It is His kindness that pursued you, that came running after you. In His kindness toward you, He knocks on the door of your heart and waits for you.

Forbearance – to cease hostility. We are living in a season of grace, but it won't be forever. He doesn't treat us as our sins deserve. God will judge sin; that day is coming. Now is the time to repent, to turn to Him while there is still time. The intention of God's kindness is to lead you to repentance. The problem with the self-righteous person is that they think others need to repent... but they do not.

- What does it mean to repent?
- How has the Lord shown you His kindness?

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. Romans 1:5

#3 You Are Responsible for Your Heart.

Our culture tends to want to make everyone the victim, where everything bad is somebody's fault other than our own. Yet Paul shows something different: humanity has had an active role in their tragic downward spiral. We see it in Romans 1:18-32 – THEY refused to honor God or to give Him thanks; THEY exchanged God's glory that is incorruptible for what is corruptible, and THEY said, I don't care what God has to say, I don't want His input in my life. THEY thought God was worthless and they were given over to worthless minds. And now getting more personal, Paul moves from "They" to "You" – and says, look what you are doing to yourself! You are responsible for the condition of your heart.

Everybody is in motion today: your heart is getting harder or softer; you are moving toward judgment or life. When somebody does not respond to God's kindness, their heart gets hard.

- What does a hard heart look like?
- What have you allowed in your life that has hardened your heart?

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^[a] 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. Romans 2:6-11

#4 God Will Judge People Based on Their Actions.

Paul is not telling people how to get saved. We are not saved by works; we are saved by grace, through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). Good works show we have saving faith; they do not add to our faith in saving us.

Romans 2:6 tells us that God will judge those who did not receive salvation through Jesus, and they will give an account with what they have done.

I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up its dead, and death and the grave^[a] gave up their dead. And all were judged according to their deeds. ¹⁴ Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire. Rev. 20:12-15

Romans 2:7 tells us that for the saved there is eternal life.

- How do you know if you are saved?

- Your life is all about Him... about HIS GLORY!

Test yourselves to make sure you are solid in the faith. Don't drift along taking everything for granted. Give yourselves regular checkups. You need firsthand evidence, not mere hearsay, that Jesus Christ is in you. Test it out. If you fail the test, do something about it (2 Cor 13:5 MSG).

Romans 2:8-9 – BUT for those who are not followers of Jesus... for you there will be wrath and fury. Paul is talking about hell, a topic nobody wants to talk about, yet clear biblical reality. **You are free to reject God, but you are not free from the consequences.**

- Tribulation in Greek means: a severe crushing, pressing, beating – this fits the description of hell that we see throughout the Scriptures

For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³ For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ¹⁴ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. Romans 2:12-16

#5 We Are Without Excuse, But Not Without Hope.

“We” are without excuse. Paul leaves the “You” he was talking with and now includes “All” who have sinned, and that would be all of us! Those who sinned without the law, and those who sinned with the law. Everyone will be judged based on what they know. We all are without excuse, but not without hope.

Romans 2:13 Paul is again making a point: you can't be justified by keeping the law, because nobody can keep the law perfectly. Remember, Paul, like a great lawyer, is building a case that everybody has sinned. Sin void of repentance will be judged.

What about those who have never heard the gospel? Paul said, those who sinned without the law will perish without the law. They are all without excuse and will be judged based on:

- Creation (Rom. 1:18-32)
- Their own conduct – because the law is written on their hearts (Rom. 2:14)
- Their conscience – We all have an in-built sense that there is right and wrong (Rom. 2:15)

Paul closes this thought with these words, “According to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men.” For Paul, the gospel included the GOOD NEWS of being made right with God through faith in Jesus Christ – specifically faith in what He accomplished on the cross for you!

- If there was no sin problem... there would be no cross.
- This is where hope comes into the picture for you.

Why does Paul add the words, “as my gospel declares?” Because God's just judgment is fundamental to his declaration about God's Son. Without judgment, salvation has no meaning. Without the reality of God's present and future wrath, the cross is emptied of its glory.

We are made right in God's sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, no matter who we are or what we have done. For we all have sinned; all fall short of God's righteous standard. Yet now God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins. (Rom. 3:22-24 NLT)