

## Paul's Letter to the Romans:



THE PINNACLE OF  
CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

### Let All the Poisons That Lurk in the Mud...Pt. 3, Come-upance & the Moralism in the Middle Romans 2:1-16

There is wonderful novel, written by Booth Tarkington at the turn of the last century, entitled *The Magnificent Ambersons*. On the one hand, *The Magnificent Ambersons* is a story about the transition that occurred in our American culture as industrial manufacturing began to replace farming as the principal means of creating wealth in our culture. The novel describes how that older, established, somewhat snobbish agrarian upper class in small New England town lost its sway over the town's social life as new wealth was created and new standards were set for what determined who was in step socially and who was not. On the other hand and at a much more glandular, more superficial level, *The Magnificent Ambersons* is about a rich little brat, named Georgie Minafer and how justice and fair play finally caught up to him and gave him the caning he so richly deserved. Listen to how Booth Tarkington describes the town's attitude toward the rich, little snot Georgie Minafer.

There were people—grown people they were—who expressed themselves longingly...*that they did hope to live to see the day, they said, when **that** boy would get his come-upance!* (They used *this* honest word, so much better than “deserts,” and not *until many years later did they change it to “hope he gets what’s comin to him.”*) No, *they were quite clear about what they wanted...they wanted him to get his come-upance!* Something was bound, *they*

*said*, to take him down some day, and *their hope*, their aspiration was that they might live just long enough to *be there, to see it happen with their own eyes!* But Georgie *Minafer* heard nothing of this, and those that yearned for his taking down went unsatisfied, while their yearning grew the greater *and greater* as the happy day of fulfillment was longer and longer postponed.<sup>1</sup>

I love that. In fact, I just love the idea of a whole town longing desperately to see its least favorite son get his come-upance. I love the idea of that and I love the word **“come-upance”** itself. There is something so American about it. You see our culture has always exulted in the humiliation of the haughty and the magnification of the meek. We have felt that way since our founding fathers struggled against King George and we still feel that way today even though the rest of the world today numbers us among the **“haughty”** and as the target most ripe to receive our own **“come-upance.”** Still, on the whole, we are unaffected by the opinion of the rest of the world and part of that stems from our enduring pride and part of it stems from the lingering remnant of our own past naïve goodness, or at least our own *past* naïve good intentions.

But of course, I am not here today to talk about American goodness or even American naiveté. I am here to exposit, as best I can, Paul’s wonderful epistle to the Romans. But I wanted to bring up the story of the *Magnificent Ambersons* and the story of **“rotten little Georgie”** and the idea or concept of **“come-upance”** because there is a sense in which that idea lies at the heart of what is going on here in Romans 2:1-16. You see, in Romans 2:1-16, Paul is going to address himself to the **“high-minded moralist”** standing over on the side. He is going to turn and speak a scalding rebuke to someone who has been nearby nodding enthusiastically to everything he has said so far. All the time Paul has been

blistering the sinful, pagan Gentile world, this **“high-minded moralist”** has been standing over on the side rubbing his hands and grunting gleefully,

**“That’s right Paul, let them have it. Never heard truer. That’s how they are all right...Let them have with both barrels...get em’...hammer em’ for what they are... depraved, deluded infidels...smut-faced gutter rags. Let em’ have it Paul. Come-upance...give them their come-upance.”**

It is almost as if Paul becomes sidetracked by the man’s rabid affirmations. It is almost as if Paul senses a need to redirect his bombardment of the Gentiles directly toward this enthusiastically supportive **“moralist.”** When Paul does that he doesn’t do it gently. He doesn’t soft-soap or mollicoddle him. Instead, he turns the blazing, scorching searchlight of God’s Word directly at his heart, the sinful heart of the moralist himself. Paul’s frustration that this man has somehow managed to still see himself to be blameless is evident, I think, right from the start of chapter 2. Look what he says:

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 2:1**...You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else...

Still, before we get to what Paul has to say to this **“high-minded moralist”** I think it might be wise to take a minute to make sure you understand how Paul’s redirected argument fits into the overall scheme of the opening chapters of Romans and what its ultimate implications are. So let me take a few minutes to review what we have covered thus far.

**THE PURPOSE OF ROMANS**  
PAUL WROTE THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS  
...TO PREPARE A CHURCH HE DID NOT  
KNOW FOR AN INTENDED VISIT  
...BY EXPLAINING THE GOSPEL HE  
PREACHED IN ORDER THAT THEY  
...MIGHT BE EDIFIED,  
...BE AT PEACE WITH ONE ANOTHER,  
...HELP HIM ON HIS WAY TO SPAIN

You will remember that we have been working under the premise that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans for a very specific reason. He wrote it to...**prepare a church he did not know for an intended visit. He did that by comprehensively explaining the gospel he preached and he did that in order that they might...**

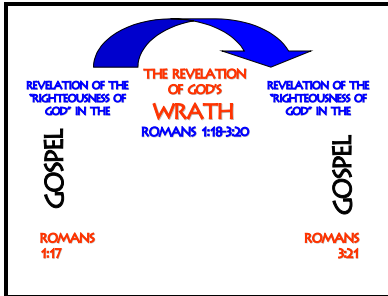
...**be edified,**  
...**be at peace with one another**  
...**help him on his way to Spain**

In the first fifteen verses of Romans, Paul really just introduced himself to the Romans. He explained who he was, where he got his authority, a bit of the nature of the gospel he preached (it is about Christ and it is was revealed in the Old Testament), and why he was so ready to visit the Romans and preach the gospel to them. In verses 16 and 17, however, Paul shifted to the overall theme or **“big idea”** of his letter and that **“big idea”** concerned the **“righteousness of God”** that is revealed in the gospel. Do you remember that? Let me read it to you again.

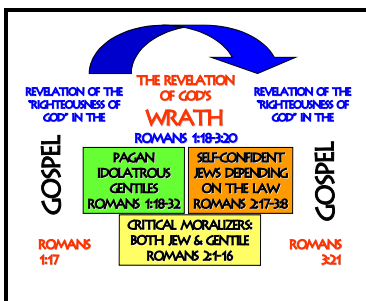
<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 1:16**...I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. <sup>17</sup>For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Now, what Paul does next in Romans 1:18 through 3:20 is to explain why men need the **“righteousness”** that is revealed in the gospel. You see, he first poses the idea that there really is **“righteousness from God”** provided in the gospel. Then he stops to take the time to explain why such a **“righteousness”** was needed. I think it is important for you to remember that there is a sense in which the whole discussion of God’s wrath in Romans 1:18-3:20 is really just one big

parenthesis put there to provide to explain that need.<sup>2</sup> As a parenthesis, it is sort of sandwiched in between Paul's initial reference to the **"righteousness of God revealed in the gospel"** in 1:16-17 and his actual discussion of that **"righteousness"** starting in 3:21. I think it may be helpful if you think of it like this:



Do you see what I mean? It is as if Paul is saying, **"I want to talk about the 'righteousness of God' revealed in the gospel but first I have to talk about the revelation of the 'wrath of God' so you will see why the 'righteousness of God' revealed in the gospel matters."**



Now what we saw last week was that the pagan idolatrous Gentiles needed a **"righteousness from God"** because they were wholly given over by God in retributive judgment to enjoy the bitter fruit of their own idolatrous lusts. We saw that they were degraded in their lusts, perverted in their relationships and depraved in their thinking.

What we are going to see this week is that the **“high-minded moralists”** are really no better off morally than the idolatrous Gentiles they so desperately despise. In fact, they may even be worse off simply because they think they are so morally superior. Listen to how C.H. Dodd puts it:

So far, Paul has been castigating the vices of paganism. We seem to overhear the tones of his preaching style, when he argued about morality, self-mastery, and the future judgment (Acts xxiv. 25). He must have delivered many such sermons to mixed audiences up and down Greece and Asia Minor; and down to this point he no doubt won the enthusiastic applause of his Jewish hearers. Now he turns upon them — **‘Yes; you agree with all that I say about the pagans; but — are you any better?’** ...Long experience had taught Paul what an effective approach this was to the conclusion he wished to drive home: No distinctions are drawn: all have sinned (Rom. iii. 22—23).<sup>3</sup>

Now, two final things before we dig into the verses this morning. There are really only two issues of controversy in this section. This first controversy involves whether the group to whom Paul is speaking is Jewish, Gentile or some third group, or perhaps even a combination of both. I have taken it to be a combination of both simply because it is unclear enough to be certain one way or another. On the whole, older commentators see the man is addressing as a **“high-minded moralist”** while newer commentators tend to see him as critical, judgmental Jew.

Now, let me discuss why newer commentators prefer to see the man in question as a Jew. First, they argue that Paul consistently argues that the whole world is divided into only two classes of people, Jews and Gentiles. They argue that Paul maintains that two-fold division of society throughout his epistle. They say you can see Paul referring to that two-fold division in 1:16, when he says...**“to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”** They say you can see it in 2:9 and 2:10 where

he does pretty much the same thing and they say you can see it in 10:16 where he returns to that two-fold division by saying, **“For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--”**

They argue that Paul has just finished hammering the Gentile world so if Paul is turning to another group, and since he only knows two groups, he must in fact be turning to the Jews.<sup>4</sup> You can see why that makes really good sense. That is why someone like Roy Aldrich would say this about chapter 2.

In the second chapter of Romans the Spirit of God turns the Jew inside out, and shows that on the inside he is no different from the Gentile. The verdict for the Jew is stated in Romans 2:1: **“because you who pass judgment do the same things.”** The Jew is not saved because he has the law. He is rather condemned, because he has the law, which he does not keep.<sup>5</sup>

Still, there are those like F.F. Bruce, John Stott and James Montgomery Boice that argue that Paul is speaking of an in-between group. First they argue that point textually. Paul does not actually use the word **“Jew”** until 2:17. Look there for a minute.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 2:17** Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God;

They would say, that the **“you”** in 2:1 is a different **“you”** from the Jew mentioned in 2:17. They would say that Paul doesn't actually get to the Jews until he reaches verse 17. They would say that Paul had to transition through a group that included both moralistic Gentiles and non-religious Jews before he finally dealt with the religious Jew in 2:17. In fairness, of course, the other group the one that holds that the passage is directed toward Jews would simply say,

**“See he has been talking about Jews all along and he finally makes that clear by using the word ‘Jew’ in verse 17.”**

Still, F.F. Bruce argues that it is not altogether clear that Paul’s argument is directed toward the Jews only and he does that on an almost purely sociological basis.<sup>7</sup> Listen to what he says:

We know that there was another side to the pagan world of the first century than that which Paul has portrayed in the preceding paragraphs. What about a man like Paul’s illustrious contemporary Seneca, the Stoic moralist, the tutor of Nero? Seneca might have listened to Paul’s indictment and said, **“Yes, that is perfectly true of great masses of mankind, and I concur in the judgment which you pass on them—but there are others, of course, like myself, who deplore these tendencies as much as you do.”**

Paul imagines someone intervening in terms like these, (someone like Seneca) and he addresses the supposed objector: **“My good sir, in judging others you are passing judgment on yourself, whoever you may be, for in principle you do the same things as you condemn in them.”** And how apt this reply would have been to a man like Seneca! For Seneca could write so effectively on the good life that Christian writers of later days were prone to call him **‘our own Seneca’**. Not only did he exalt the great moral virtues; he exposed hypocrisy, he preached the equality of all men, he acknowledged the pervasive character of evil (‘all vices exist in all men, though all vices do not stand out prominently in each man), he practiced and inculcated daily self-examination, he ridiculed vulgar idolatry, he assumed the role of a moral guide. <sup>8</sup>

Of course, even Seneca had his lapses. He was a wonderful moralist...still Nero was able to talk him into helping him murder Nero’s mother. Still, on the whole I think I agree with Bruce. I think he and Stott and Boice are right and that Paul is not limiting his address to the Jews. Oh, he may have the Jews principally in mind but more than likely he has left the group being addressed sufficiently nebulous to also include **“high-minded moralistic Gentiles.”**



Now, I said earlier there were two points of controversy in this section. The first one concerns whether Paul was addressing Jews only here or perhaps both Jews and Gentiles who happen to agree in a very judgmental sense with his evaluation of the pagan, idolatrous Gentile world. Now, the second controversy in this section concerns whether or not Paul poses the possibility of someone actually winning God's approval through righteous works. But that doesn't occur until verse seven so I think I will hold off on that until we get there.

Now finally let me add one more thing. This section is cast in the form of what first century speech makes and rhetoricians called a "**diatribe**". Now, the word "**diatribe**" comes from the Greek and in New Testament times had come to mean something like "**stay awhile.**" But earlier usage had the idea of "**wearing down through rubbing.**" Generally it referred to one person anticipating another person's objection in an argument and answering their objection even before they have a chance to state it. I think if you are married you have no doubt at one time or another entered into the rhetorical art of "**diatribe**". In fact, my own personal experience is that women are generally much more advanced in the art of "**diatribe**" than are men. They have a keener wit and an uncanny, inherent ability to guess where their husband's objection is going to come from and to answer it even before it is spoken. Of course, I am speaking here of other men's wives and not my own. My wife has no need to engage in the art of "**diatribe**" as I never disagree with her. In fact, last night I asked her if I had her permission to read that last line and she said, "**You may say the only time we ever fight is when you are wrong about something.**" Anyway, listen to what C.H. Dodd says:

From this point the sermon takes the form of a dialogue with an imaginary Jewish hearer, in which Paul follows the practice of contemporary popular preachers of Stoicism, whom he had doubtless heard in the market-place of Tarsus or other towns. It is important to bear in mind that, all through this passage, Paul is speaking as a good Jew, and meeting his Jewish hearers on their own ground.<sup>9</sup>

F.F. Bruce makes the point even plainer:

Paul's style is that appropriate to the type of composition which the ancients called the *diatribe*, in which questions or objections are put into the mouth of an imagined critic in order to be answered or demolished. We can almost envisage him as he dictates his letter to Tertius, suddenly picking out the complacent individual who has been enjoying the exposure of those sins he has no mind to, and telling him that he is no better than anyone else. He imagines an interruption by some objector, and turns to refute his objection, first rebuking it with God forbid! and then giving a reasoned reply to it.<sup>10</sup>

Now, finally with all that as introduction let's look at Paul's comment when he turns from his accusation of the idolatrous pagan world to the **"high-minded moralist."** I am reading from Romans chapter 2, starting in verse one and reading down through verse five.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 2:1**...You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. <sup>2</sup> Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. <sup>3</sup> So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? <sup>4</sup> Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that **God's kindness leads you toward repentance?**

I have to tell you brothers and sisters, for the most part I am undone by these words. You see, Paul is telling the moralist or anyone that will listen that the act of condemning others is inherently dangerous simply because he is guilty of the

very things about which he condemns other. Now let me make a couple of observations about verse one. First, Paul's point is generic. In other words, he uses a generic reference when he refers to the man that judges others and it is so generic that it includes every one of us. Here's what I mean.

The Greek actually goes something like this:

**TRB Romans 2:1...**You, as a result, you have no excuse, O man, whoever you are (everyone of you), when you judge, for at the point you judge someone different, you are actually judging yourself, because you practice the very things that you are so quick to judge.

Now you may be thinking, (notice here I employing the ancient rhetorical device called diatribe) **"That's not true. There are a lot of things that I judge others for that I don't do."** I will, of course, concede the point that you may not judge others harshly for the exact same sins you commit.<sup>11</sup> I will do that gladly because I don't think Paul necessarily has in mind a one to one correspondence. I think Paul is clearly thinking in terms of categories. For example, Paul would say, **"Do you say amen to the idea that their thinking is depraved? Is your thinking clean and wholesome or do you bear dark thoughts toward some brother or sister? Or are you just obsessed with some sexual lust that is of a different nature than the one with which they are obsessed?"**

You see there is something inherently self-righteous about our hearts that will compare our deeds and the deeds of someone else and will always see to it that our actions come out a lit bit higher than the other persons. J. Vernon McGee used to use a stick to illustrate what I am talking about. He used to say to his audience, **"I have a stick, a crooked stick, behind my back and it is one foot long and about as big around as my finger. I want you to imagine it."** Then

when every one had had a minute to do so, he would take out the stick and ask, **“Now, how many of you imagined the crook being somewhere else on the stick?”** Dr. McGee said people almost always imagined the stick looking different than it actually did. Then Dr. McGee would ask the congregation, **“Do you know why that is? It is because there are ten thousand ways to be crooked. But there is only one way to be straight.”**

You see that is Paul’s point. He is saying to this high-minded moralist, **“You know you see the sin of others perfectly and you may even be bold enough to go up to them and point out their sin but while you are at it you ought, in fact, to take at least a good long stiff look at your own heart in the mirror because when you view their sin with contempt you are just heaping judgment on yourself. Do you know why that is? It is because you are mangling the truth just like the Gentiles did. True, your sin looks a little different, the crook is in a different place but it is the same sin...it is the same repression of the truth of God.”**

Look at verse 2.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 2:2**...Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. <sup>3</sup> So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment?

Do you see his point here? God has made His assessment of the Gentiles according to the actual truth. But the high-minded moralist has perverted the truth in judgment, by condemning others and excusing himself and Paul’s question is just the right one to prick his conscience, **“Are you thinking in doing that that you will somehow escape the judgment of God?”** Of course, Paul’s

answer extends beyond that. Paul continues his thought in verse four by pointing out that the denial of guilt is actually an act of contempt.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 2:4**...Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that **God's kindness leads you toward repentance?**

Now I want you to ponder this verse for a moment with me. Do you realize the implication of what Paul is saying here? He is saying when someone denies their own sinfulness and moral failure and yet are quick to castigate the sin of others they are, in fact, mocking the very riches of the kindness of God. Now, Paul really stresses this point here by using the three different nouns to describe God's riches. The first word he uses is translated "**kindness**" and is really just a general term to describe mercy or kindness.<sup>12</sup> The second word translated "**tolerance**" really has to do with God's endurance of the magnitude of our sin and the third word translated "**patience**" has to do with God holding back the judgment of our sin over a long period of time. You see the denial of one's own sinfulness is a refusal to accept the riches of God's kindness, a refusal to accept the height and depth and breath of the kindness of God toward us in Christ. Of course, that doesn't mean that there will be no payday. Paul tells us that God, in retributive justice, keeps track of everything. Isn't that the point Paul is making in verse 5?

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 2:5**...But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. **God will give to each person according to what he has done.**

Do you see his point? People who reject the riches of God's kindness do so because they want to store up for themselves a completely different kind of treasure. I love what Donald Grey Barnhouse calls such people. He calls them

**“misers of wrath.”<sup>13</sup>** Don’t you think that is an extraordinary image? You can almost visualize some withered old man sitting alone at a table in a dark room pulling his prized coins to himself and counting them and worshipping them. You can also see coming home at the end of the day pulling from his pocket each additional deposit earned by the sweat of his sinful labors and adding it to his pile. You can see him marveling over the gleam of each coin failing to note that each has some pronouncement of judgment on it. No, he is only concerned with adding more. And so he deposits and deposits and deposits until the exhausted riches of God’s mercy, tolerance and patience whisper, **“You know that’s it. Time is up...It’s time to settle. It’s time to get paid. Its time to get what’s due you...Come-upance...You thought it grand for them to get what they deserved, now it’s your turn. Come-upance... come-upance...come-upance”**

And as dreadful as that is, Paul doesn’t stop there. It is not just that God will give to every person according to what he has done. But God will give to all people everywhere the exact measure of what they are due for God doesn’t show any favoritism at all. It doesn’t matter to God whether a man is a pagan idolater or a moralist or member of His covenant people raised on Moses and the prophets. God will give a man according to the light he has.

Now before I go on let me just make an observation and brief application. **When a person is quick to see the sin of others and anxious to see them drawn across and hammered upon the anvil of God’s judgment they need to stop and contemplate the riches of God’s longsuffering and patience.** Let me say that again. **When a person is quick to see the sin of others and anxious to see them drawn across and hammered upon the anvil of God’s judgment they need to stop and contemplate the riches of God’s longsuffering and patience.**

It seems to me that that such a desire betrays a lack of compassion that is completely out of keeping with the revelation of the mercy of God. Nowhere is that more true than when we as Christians gather around the Table of God. When we commune with God here, it seems to me that we ought to have made every effort to lay aside our denunciation of others...to lay aside every carping criticism and especially, I think, we ought to have laid aside every wicked desire of our heart to see someone else get there come-upance. In particular, I think the communion of God's people around the His table ought to be a time for us to renew our love and consecration both to the Lord and to each other. Listen to what the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:23.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Matthew 5:23**..."If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

Now of course, we are presenting no offering at the Lord's Table. We are not Catholics but Protestants. Still, the Lord's Table is a time when we consider the offering of Christ in our place. Ought that not be even more a time of reconciliation than that mentioned here in Matthew.

Now, finally in the time we have left let me talk about the verses that are left. I mentioned early on that there is a bit of a controversy concerning verses 2:7-2:11. Let me read the verses.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 2:7**...To those who by persistence in doing good **seek glory, honor and immortality**, he will give eternal life. <sup>8</sup> But for those who are **self-seeking** and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. <sup>9</sup> There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; <sup>10</sup> but glory, honor and

peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

**<sup>11</sup> For God does not show favoritism.**

The controversy is this passage seems to imply that those who work for salvation will obtain it. But we know that can't be right. Just forty verses or so from now, Paul is going to say with a measure of firmness that...

<sup>NAS</sup> **Romans 3:20**...by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight;

So what commentators have generally done is to say that this section is really just a contrast of the lives of believers and unbelievers. They argue that the actions of the two demonstrate whether such a person is on the path of faith or on the path of selfish indulgence. Listen to James Boice:

*On the day of God's judgment, a public verdict will be given and a public sentence passed, will require public and verifiable evidence to support them. And the only public evidence available will be our works, what we have done and have been seen to do. The presence or absence of saving faith in our hearts will be disclosed by the presence or absence of good works of love in our lives. The apostles Paul and James both teach this same truth, that authentic saving faith invariably issues in good works, and that if it does not, it is bogus, even dead. "I by my works will show you my faith," wrote James) Faith works through love" echoed Paul."<sup>14</sup>*

I think Boice is right. Of course, it is not that believers muster up this way of life through their own strength. No, that is not the point at all. Rather it is the kindness of God that regenerates our hearts and draws us to Himself and sets our feet on the solid ground.

And then finally in verse twelve to sixteen, we see that all people everywhere will come to a day of recompense and that that recompense will occur in Jesus Christ.



<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 2:12...**All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. <sup>13</sup> For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. <sup>14</sup> (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, <sup>15</sup> since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) <sup>16</sup> **This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.**

On the one hand, Jesus will be the standard by which God judges all men. I want you to think about that for a moment. I want you to think about that the next time you have a strong desire to see someone get their come-uppance. Do you see what I mean? On judgment day, all men everywhere including you and I will be judged by putting Jesus Christ on one scale and us on the other. We won't be judged by each other's righteousness or even each other's lack of righteousness. We will be judged by how we stack up to the sinless, selfless, Son of God.

On the other hand, the Lord Jesus will execute that judgment Himself. To those that are in Him, He will speak peace. To those that have rejected His offer of mercy and grace He will speak terror. Now I mentioned in closing last week that one reason why we need the revelation of a righteousness from God in the gospel is that we are "lost". But this morning, I want to remind you that there is another reason why we need the revelation of a righteousness from God. That is because "a judgment is coming." Oh to be sure, God's wrath is being revealed now but there is a future judgment and praise be to God there is still a chance for mercy and forgiveness.

I think it might be helpful to think of it this way. I want you to imagine for a moment the glorious throne of almighty God. I want you to see the view from behind His throne as he looks out a great sea of humanity. On the left is every man, woman, boy and girl ever conceived. On the right is the sinless, selfless, righteous Son of God, standing alone.

Then I want you to hear the Father saying, **“Let the books be opened and let every man, woman, boy and girl be judged according to what he or she has done. Let them be judged by the one true standard, my sinless, selfless Son of righteousness, the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Then I want you to imagine these gracious words coming forth from the precious sinless lips of the Lord Jesus, **“Father there are a great many over there that are mine. I bought them with my own blood. Father let them come to me. Let them be with Me. They deserve no come-upance. I bore their come-upance in their place.”**

Let's pray.

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<sup>1</sup> Booth Tarkington, *The Magnificent Ambersons* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1918), Chapter 2, paragraph 59.

<sup>2</sup> John Stott, *Romans: God's Good News For the World*, (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 68. Stott writes and this so good, **“It is between these two great affirmations of the revelation of God's gracious righteousness that Paul sandwiches his terrible exposure of human unrighteousness (11:18-3:20)”**

<sup>3</sup> C.H. Dodd, *The Epistle to the Romans* in the Moffatt NT Commentary Series (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932; reprinted 1947), 30.

<sup>4</sup> John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans (NIC)* 2 vols. in one (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968; reprint 1980), 55. Murray list four reasons which Boice covers in his commentary. See James

Montgomery Boice, *Romans Volume 1: Justification By Faith, Romans 1-4* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 203.

<sup>5</sup> Roy L. Aldrich, "Grace in the Book of Romans: Part 1" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 97:386 (April 40):221

<sup>6</sup> John Calvin, *Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 101. Calvin see the interchange with the Jews as starting inverse 17. "Having now completed what he meant to say of the Gentiles, he returns to the Jews; and that he might, with greater force, beat down their great vanity, he allows them all those privileges, by which they were beyond measure transported and inflated: and then he shows how insufficient they were for the attainment of true glory, yea, how they turned to their reproach."

<sup>7</sup> Stott, 80. "Secondly, if this section refers exclusively to the Jewish world, then 1:18–32 is the only picture Paul gives us of the ancient Gentile world, in which case it would seem to be an unbalanced one. For not all Gentiles preferred darkness to light, became idolaters, and were abandoned by God to sexually and socially promiscuous behavior. There were others, as F. F. Bruce has pointed out: **Stott may be right in his argument but if he is he right only in degree. Compared to the whole, not all Gentiles were equally as idolatrous and so on...Objectively, they were, in fact, all idolaters. Still, his point is a good one.**

<sup>8</sup> F.F. Bruce, *Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Tyndale Press, 1963), 86-7.

<sup>9</sup> Dodd, 30.

<sup>10</sup> Bruce, 86.

<sup>11</sup> C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans: Volume 1, Introduction and Commentary on Romans 1-8* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975; reprint, 1992), 142. Cranfield writes: **"There are, for example, more ways than one of breaking the seventh commandment, as is made clear in Matthew 5:27f."**

<sup>12</sup> Boice, 213. "I would define each of these three terms as aspects of God's goodness: the first as goodness to man without any specific relationship to sin; the second as goodness in relation to sin's magnitude; the third as goodness in relation to sin's endurance or continuation."

<sup>13</sup> Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Romans Volume 1: Man's Ruin 1:1-32 and God's Wrath 2:1-3:20* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1952 and 1953; reprint 1994), 23. This quote occurs in chapter 3 of the second half of the volume.

<sup>14</sup> Stott, 84.