

The Judgment of God

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[0:00] I take your Bibles, Romans chapter 2, and find verse 6, and I had thought about just going all the way through the end of the chapter, but we're not going to do that.

I'm not going to make it there tonight, but starting with verse 6, and we'll read that in just a moment. We are, as I just mentioned, going to continue to see how God deals with unbelievers.

We'll one day believe. I think that much of what we're going to be considering here tonight in these verses will have, as its ultimate fulfillment, a future event, the judgment of God for unbelievers who are dying now as they die.

They are realizing this judgment, but by and large, we're speaking of the ultimate judgment of unbelievers, and not just unbelievers.

We are going to be considering something Paul says here about the judgment of believers as well. So there's judgment for both, and we'll get to that as we go along.

[1:25] And so we're looking at really the basis upon which God will judge unbelievers. And we really, in chapter 2, see three, three bases for God's judgment.

We kind of sort of considered the first one, though the focus kind of went in a little different direction. But chapter 2 and verse 2 gives us the first basis for judgment, and it is according to truth.

You see it right there, verse 2, but we know that the judgment of God is according to truth. It's according to truth. That is, God's judgment is based upon truth about sin, about the reality of sin in a person's life, sin, the nature of sin, the reality of sin, the presence of sin.

And God will judge the ungodly, and His judgment is true no matter what objections unbelievers on that day of judgment will bring before the Lord, no matter what the excuse might be.

God will judge according to truth, the truth about their sin, truth about their rejection of the truth and of Jesus Christ. We're not going to look so much at that basis for judgment as we are going to look at the second one that's given to us here in chapter 2.

[2:54] And it's found in these verses we're going to read here in just a moment. And it's not the judgment or His judgment based upon truth, but God's judgment according to works.

God will judge unbelievers according to the works. And that's what we're going to read about here, along with God's judgment of believers as well.

Look at verse 6, and I'll read on down to, I guess down to verse 11. Verse 7, All right, so it's clear, isn't it, that he's talking here about judgment.

His judgment. His judgment. And unlike what was said in verse 2, where he's judging according to truth, here the emphasis is that God will judge according to works, according to works.

Now, before there's any confusion, I don't think there would be any confusion like this with this crowd, but just to make sure, let's understand that Paul's subject here is not salvation.

[4:38] He's not talking about salvation here. His subject is judgment. It's judgment, not salvation. And the reason I need to make that clear, probably don't to you, but we need to make that clear as we consider this text, because some might and some do read this passage and try to build, you know, the idea of a case for works salvation.

That is, that the immortality, those who are going to receive glory and honor and immortality, those who are doing those kind of works, that they're going to receive that because of their good works.

That's not the idea. And there are two reasons why I think this is pretty clear, because number one, that idea would not harmonize with the whole of Scripture.

That is, Scripture teaches very clearly that salvation is by grace, through faith, and not of works. It could not be more clear in the Bible, that reality about salvation.

But secondly, I would say that because, as I've already said, Paul's subject clearly is not salvation. Just reading the text and just the plain meaning on the face of it. He's not talking about salvation.

[5:58] He's talking about judgment and the basis of God's judgment. Now, Paul is going to get on the subject of salvation, and he'll do that in the next chapter.

And that glorious chapter, chapter 2 of Romans, and we'll get to that by and by. But salvation is by grace, through faith. But judgment is according to works.

According to works. You can't get to heaven on works. It's all grace. And no works. But those who go to hell are going to be condemned for their works.

Their works. Their sinful works. All right, so. A person then, I would say to you, has then, at least from our perspective, from this side, looking at salvation, we have two options before us.

It's either faith, that is trusting God and Him alone, and trusting Christ, Him alone, or it's works, trusting self. Those are the two options men and women take in this life.

[7:06] They're either going to trust their own works, or they're going to trust the works of Christ at the cross. The latter, of course, is trusting their own works, works that are not going to be good enough, obviously.

And when they are judged according to their works, their works are going to fall short because their works are sinful works. But the one who responds in faith and trusts Christ is really trusting in the works of another.

Not trusting in self-works. The works of another. And that other, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work at the cross. But, having said that, that's not the subject here.

Paul's not talking here about salvation. He's referring to, generally, though he inserts a few words about believers, By contrast, the context of chapter 1 is unbelievers.

And both Jew and Gentile. Who will be judged on the same ground before God according to their works, their sin. All right.

[8:23] Let's put these two together before we really dig into the text a little bit here. That is, these two basis for judgment.

Because I want you to see the difference between the two. First of all, God's judgment according to truth, verse 2.

And God's judgment according to works, verse 6. And when we look at this from our perspective, judging according to truth is subjective.

It's subjective. That is, from our view. Because, see, only God knows the reality of what is in a man's heart. Only God knows that.

You don't know that. You don't know what's in my heart. I don't know what's in your heart. And so, the judgment according to truth is subjective in that sense.

[9:23] Because God only, only God can judge based upon the truth of one's heart. What's going on inside the person. He knows that truth.

His knowledge is perfect in that regard. The judgment according to works is objective judgment. His objective judgment. That is, it's what a person does.

His deeds. And even we can see that. We can see that. It's objective. It's observable. We can see that. And yet, in a sense, it's still subjective to us.

Because we can't, we can't really judge anyone based even upon that person's works, necessarily. Only God can do that.

Because, you see, only God knows what is on the inside. That's where both of these come together with God. See, God's judgment according to truth is Him looking at the presence of sin in the heart.

[10:26] God's judgment according to works looks at the activity of sin in the life. God's judgment according to truth says whether or not a man is a sinner.

Is in sin. And God knows the truth of that. But God's judgment according to works reveals the doing of sin.

The activity. Not being, but the doing, you see. And these both come together with God. And this is why we cannot judge whether a person is saved or not.

What a man is determines what he does. I keep saying a man and he. But ladies, you understand that I'm just using that in a generic sense.

And so, again, a man is, what a man is determines what he does. And what a man does never makes him what he is.

[11:31] That's putting it backward. Now, is that confusing? Let me put it this way. A man is not a thief because he steals. A man steals because he is a thief.

It's the moral condition. The reality inside. A man is not a liar because he lies. He lies because he's a liar, you see.

And so then God is alone. He alone is able to judge in this way. That's the point I want to make very clearly.

And the judgment according to truth and the judgment according to works describe, really, the inner and the outer reality of the same thing. The same thing being the judgment of God.

All right. Now, let's look at this passage. Verses 7 and 8 are talking about two kinds of people.

[12:33] And that's pretty obvious, isn't it? Believers in verse 7. And unbelievers in verse 8. Verse 8 and following. And then he's going to come back and say a word about believers.

And they're all judged by God according to truth. Both groups. According to truth and according to works.

Because only God knows the reality of these things. Now, the outward manifestation, the works, is completely different in these two people.

These two groups of people. It's completely different. For the believer, he takes the believer first.

Verse 7. Eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good.

Doing good. Good works. Seek for glory, honor, and immortality. And then skip on down to verse 10. But glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works.

[13:30] What is good? To the Jew first and also to the Greek. Now, again. I don't want to belabor this point. But he is not saying that the good works lead to salvation.

This eternal life. These good works are the result of salvation. They're the proof of the reality of the new birth.

Okay? And the good works reveal that. That's what he's saying here. They're good works. And so he deals with the believer first in verse 7.

Now, let me quickly go to the unbeliever. Verse 8. Well, look at verse 8 again. But to those who are self-seeking. I don't know what your translation, how your translation puts it.

But that's a pretty good way to put it. Self-seeking. This is a description of unbelievers. And who do unbelievers live for? Self.

[14:31] Self. Self. Live for self. Why is it primarily that unbelievers will not respond in faith to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Because that would require what? A denial of self. So there's self-seeking. And so everything in life, ultimately, and though you may not see it on the outside always, this is why you can't always judge the works and let the works tell you exactly what's inside, the reality of what's going on in the heart. Because even the good works that unbelievers do can, and I think, almost always are done for self. Ultimately, for self. Self-seeking.

This is the description of the works of unbelievers. Now, he's not giving a list of specific works in the sense of lying, stealing, adultery, and all those big sins.

He is kind of hitting the major categories of the sinful works of the unbeliever.

[15:40] Self-seeking. Self-seeking. They do not obey the truth. The truth of God. God's word. They do not obey the gospel. But they do obey something.

And what is that? Unrighteousness. Unrighteousness. Or wickedness. Some of you might have that word in your translation. Your version of the Bible.

And that's pretty good. Wickedness. Unrighteousness. Unrighteousness. All right. So, here's the description of the unbeliever. We have the believers on the one hand who are doing good works. Good works. They're not seeking self. Rather, they are, according to verse 7, they're seeking for glory. Now, don't misunderstand that. They're not seeking for self-glory.

It's that their lives, the believer's life, has a heavenly perspective. Seeking the glory of God.

[16:41] Seeking honor of the Lord. And seeking immortality. That is, they're looking way beyond this life. And they live this life in obedience for God's glory and for His honor.

And, but they're living with eternity in mind. And yet, the unbeliever is living for self. Self.

Self-seeking. And doesn't obey the truth.

But obeys unrighteousness. That's a pretty interesting description of unbelievers, isn't it? You would expect this long list of things, you know.

We're talking about the works in general. They do not obey the truth. They obey unrighteousness. Believers, good works. Unbelievers, evil works.

And both will be judged according to their works. Both will be judged. Did you know that believers will be judged according to their works? Did you know that?

[17:47] Yes. Okay. But, but now let me qualify that. Not their evil works.

Do believers still commit evil works, sinful works? Thank you. Is that a testimony or?

Okay. Of course. We should be lighthearted about that. Serious stuff, isn't it? And the wonderful glory is, and all glory belongs to the Lord, is that we will never be judged for those evil works.

But we will be judged for our works. And we will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ. According to my theology.

I don't know about yours. But 2 Corinthians 5.10, I believe, is talking about the judgment of believers. At the judgment seat of Christ. And we will stand there before him.

[18:58] And be judged. That is, we'll be examined. And, and the judge, our Lord and Savior, will be looking for their good works.

And we'll be judged for those good works. And everything else he finds that is not good works will be burned away. Burned away. Totally gone.

Now, what about our evil works, though? Isn't there something that needs to be done about that?

Well, I think our Lord, I don't think I know, that our Lord deals with that in a couple of ways.

God does deal with our evil works in this life. And he deals with our evil works as a father would his son or daughter.

The same way Sherry and I deal with the evil works of our children. Sorry, I have one present here.

[19:59] I'm wanting to embarrass him. And I'm not going to give examples. We deal with it how? Loving discipline. And that's how God deals with our sinful works in this life.

God is going to discipline us as children. One of the proofs of the reality of our salvation is that we are disciplined by the Lord for our sin. If he did not discipline us, then we would be illegitimate children.

But that's really not judgment. All right? So we're not talking here about judgment. God does deal with our sin in that way as discipline. Discipline of a father. All those he loves, he disciplines.

That's not judgment. And I said that God will judge believers for their works. And he will. Or he has. It's past tense. God has dealt with everyone, judged everyone of our evil works, even those we have not yet committed. He dealt with them and judged them at the cross.

[21:10] Because Jesus took them there. Took them all upon himself. And he took the fiery judgment. The fiery indignation.

We're going to talk about the indignation here in a moment. In regard to unbelievers. But God poured out his indignation out upon our sin.

And he did it at the cross. And the object of his indignation was his darling son. His sinless son, Jesus. Who took our sin. Took it upon himself at the cross.

Became. Literally became sin for us. All right. So believers will be judged for their works. All of our sinful works, that's been done at the cross.

All of our good works will one day be judged. All right. And unbelievers will be judged as well. But not at the judgment seat of Christ.

[22:11] Their judgment will come at a different time and a different place. At the judgment or the great white throne judgment. We're not going to get into eschatology and some of these kind of complicated, sometimes complicated issues.

In regard to end times theology. But their judgment will be different. The great white throne judgment. I think we read about that in Revelation 20 and verse 11 and following.

And unbelievers will be judged for their evil works. Sinful works. The reality is, unbelievers have no good works to commend themselves.

None whatsoever. You say, well, I don't know. There are a lot of unbelievers who do a lot of good things. But wasn't it the Bible that said that our righteousness is as filthy rags?

In fact, I think there's an Old Testament passage that speaks of even the plowing of a field is wickedness to the Lord. For the unbeliever. That even the good works are sinful works.

[23:19] Because they are not done with a heart that is right with God. Through salvation. Alright, so the unbelievers.

All their sins will be judged at the great white throne judgment of God. And notice how then Paul describes this judgment.

And it's frightening actually. That is if you kind of flesh this out as you think about these words that are used here by the Apostle Paul in verse 8.

Indignation and wrath. Tribulation and anguish. On every soul of man who does evil of the Jew first. Because God's going to deal with the Jews first.

And of the Greek or the Gentiles. That's everybody else. So what about these words? They're pretty descriptive.

[24 : 21] When you really dig down into them. Understand these words. Wrath and indignation. See, what these unbelievers are doing.

They're not obeying the truth. And literally, they're not persuaded by the truth. And they hear the truth. That is, they hear about the revealed will of God in a sense.

And they have heard that God expects them to believe it and live it. But they are not persuaded by it. They disobey the demands of the truth of God.

Instead, they obey unrighteousness. And because of that, wrath and indignation. Tribulation and anguish is the result of that.

By the way, I want to point out something I think is rather interesting. It says there in verse 8 that they obeyed unrighteousness.

[25 : 21] Well, let's put it together. Because it says they did not obey the truth. But obeyed unrighteousness. Wouldn't you expect that the opposite of truth would be error?

That they did not obey the truth, but they rather obeyed error. Now, the end result is the same. But did you, have you ever noticed that in Scripture, that the opposite of truth is almost always unrighteousness?

Let me give you an example. A good one. In 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. You want to look at that real quick. And then we'll get to this judgment. I kind of jumped ahead and got back up.

Look at 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 10. Well, let me start really with verse 8.

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy with the brightness of his coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish.

[26 : 36] And then he's speaking about those who perish. Because they, that is those who perish, they, speaking of unbelievers, they did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved.

Same thing Paul is saying here in Romans. They did not obey the truth that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion that they should believe the lie.

Verse 12. That they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. The other two are put side by side again. And the opposite of truth is not error. The opposite of truth is unrighteousness. Unrighteousness. And it's a very strong word. Here's a person who sees the truth, has been presented with the truth, and it's the truth of God.

And they, you know, they at least understand some of the basic things here and what God is expecting and what the Bible seems to be demanding that one repent and trust Christ.

[27 : 41] And so they have the truth before them and they choose sin instead. Not error, though that may come along with the unrighteousness.

But generally, here is the choice. It's between the truth of God or my sin. And a person rejects the truth of God not because of mental, intellectual problems with some error, so much as a person rejects the truth of God because they love their sin.

They love sin. Will not repent of sin. And so then the opposite of truth is unrighteousness. And so a person does not obey the truth but rather obeys unrighteousness.

And again, that word unrighteousness is really an all-conclusive word in the Greek language. We might translate it wickedness. It really is speaking of every kind of sin.

Every kind of sin. They are ready to obey any and all kinds of sin. Won't obey the truth but ready to obey any and all kinds of unrighteousness.

[29 : 00] Wickedness. And so they were not persuaded by the truth but were easily persuaded by wickedness. They were rebellious to the truth but were obedient.

And worse than just obedient, they were willing servants of wickedness. And what is the result? Well, Paul says indignation and wrath.

That's the English translation. Some versions of the Bible, the Bibles you might have with you, some versions will swap those two words in English and that would be better.

Because the words in the Greek text really ought to be wrath and indignation.

Because they're not the same. He's not just saying the same thing twice to add force to it. He's talking about two slightly different things.

[30:01] Well, not just slightly. The first word that ought to be wrath in order is the word orge in the Greek language.

The second word is indignation. And we have, I have talked about this word before. It is thumos.

We get our word thermal and those kind of words.

It's the word fire. Or the word fire comes from that. And so it's orge and thumos. Wrath and indignation. And indignation is really the climax of the two words.

Of the two activities. Really not just words. These words are attached to the activity of God.

Something going on within God.

Indignation is the climax of the two. All right, so the two words. Wrath first, then indignation. What is wrath? It's orge. It is the anger of God.

[31:08] But believe it or not, it is literally the anger of God at rest. Now don't misunderstand.

Don't get the idea. Because, you know, when I rest, it means I, you know, I lay down and I, you know, I kind of cool off. Or maybe I, you know, if you're doing something real hot, you know, get you really hot and sweaty.

And you rest and cool off. Don't make too much of that word rest. We're just talking about a definition of the word. And so orge is the anger of God at rest in the sense that this anger is an abiding anger.

The anger of God within himself. An anger that is settled. Not growing. Well, it can be growing. But it's but it's in a sense at rest.

And it's a settled anger toward all unrighteousness. It's within the heart of God. It is his wrath toward all unrighteousness.

[32:12] It's at rest in the sense that. That it has not yet led to indignation. And that's the second word.

Indignation is something quite different. It's thumos. Fire in a sense. And so the idea here is the outburst of God's anger.

God's wrath. It's the fire. Of God's wrath. His anger. Kindled.

It's kindled toward all unrighteousness. That's why I say that that really indignation is the climax of the two words. Wrath is God's anger at rest in a sense.

It's still there. Never goes away. It's a settled anger. But it's at rest in one sense. Indignation is God's anger boiling out in all of its fury.

[33:23] Something you and I have not seen. We've read about some occasions of it in scripture. Sodom and Gomorrah would be one of those. God didn't suddenly become angry with the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah.

God's eternal and his anger toward their sin. All sin is a settled thing. It is part of his eternal being. But at some point.

God came down. And his wrath. Boiled over. And destroyed. Utterly destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

We've seen some pictures of this. And some isolated incidents. Where God's indignation poured out.

There are other examples in scripture. But we've not seen indignation. God's anger boiling in all its fury.

[34:27] You see the difference between the two. Wrath is like the rumble of thunder. Indignation is like the crash of lightning.

Or wrath is like the wisps of smoke. Rising from an active volcano.

It tells you that something's going on inside. And indignation is the eruption. Wrath is the heat of the fire.

Indignation is the bursting forth of flames. Consuming its object. No one can stand against. The indignation of God. And one day.

In the consummation of all things. God's wrath will be poured out. Upon all unrighteousness of men. This is the judgment of God upon unbelievers.

[35:35] And the basis again of this judgment. And this wrath and ultimate indignation. What's the ultimate basis of it? Their works.

Their works. Sinful works. Now. He's not through yet. Because we have to move to verse 9. And we have tribulation and anguish.

Tribulation and anguish. Now. Wrath and indignation. Is God's side of the judgment. That's in a sense God's side.

The tribulation and anguish. Is the human side. In the sense of human experience. Tribulation and anguish. And tribulation is.

If we could divide these two words. Tribulation and anguish. Tribulation is the outward punishment. Anguish is the inward punishment. Tribulation describes outward torment.

[36 : 37] I tell you. Hell. Is a place. Of indescribable. Torment. You say.

Well the Bible describes it. Well the Bible writers described it. The best they could. With human language. But. The tribulation.

The torment of hell. Indescribable. The outward torment. The fire that is never quenched.

The worm that never dies. The darkness. The chains. The other vivid. Descriptions that we have of hell.

The anguish. The anguish. Though. Is inward. Because that will be there too. Hopeless. Can you imagine.

[37 : 37] A place where there's no hope. See we can't imagine a place where there's no hope. Hope. Even a man who is on death row.

And the sentence is to be carried out. The very next morning. Still has some hope. Even someone with. Terminal cancer.

Has some hope. But in hell there's no hope. No hope. No hope whatsoever.

And more than that. Other. Points of anguish. That we cannot even. Imagine. Inward. No rest.

No rest. Can you imagine a place. Where there's no rest. No easing. Of the torment. God's indignation.

[38 : 39] Will work itself out. In. Tribulation. And. Anguish. You put that together. And it's quite frightening. Really. I don't.

I don't know. Do you know anybody. Maybe in your family. Or maybe some acquaintance. Friend. Or somebody. Somebody who literally has.

No use whatsoever. For God. Know anybody like that. No use for God. No use. For his word. Cares.

Nothing about the gospel. The church. Know anybody like that. You tell them about Jesus.

And. These kind of people. They just. You know. Not one bit persuaded by that. And yet.

[39 : 36] Without even a fight. This kind of person. Is persuaded so easily. That pornography is okay. Alcoholism.

Other points of sin. Those things are all right. Know anybody like that. These kind of people.

Realize that God's wrath. Do not realize rather. That God's wrath. Is heating up. Toward them.

Heating up. And someday.

His wrath. Will break out. In all. Its fury. And. To reveal that reality.

Does not even persuade them. In the least. Know anybody like that. These people don't even know it. But the only thing standing. Between them.

[40 : 37] And God's judgment. The only thing between them. Is time. Is time. Does it put.

A sadness. In your heart. See it should. Should be. Something that. Puts.

A deep sadness. Terror. Not that. We will one day face that. That is if you know Jesus.

But that someone you know. That if nothing changes. God's righteous indignation. Would pour it out upon.

Does that put terror. In your heart. I think it should. I think it should. Does it. Produce. Any kind of.

[41 : 38] Urgency. On our part. Salvation. Is God's business. But you and I. Have been commanded. To share the gospel.

With every creature. God takes no pleasure. In the death. Of the unrighteous. The judgment. Of the unrighteous. There ought to be.

A sense of urgency. In the heart. There ought to be. A brokenness. A sadness. It's very seldom.

That we even shed tears. For the unsaved. When we read. A passage like this. And understand.

Especially. When we. Flesh out. These words. These words. That describe. God's judgment. You know.

[42 : 39] Break our hearts. Break our hearts. Break our hearts. Thank you.