

## Romans Chapter 2A

Those of you who have spent time raising and training children, especially in the middle and high school years, are probably familiar with two very normal responses that come when those children are found to be in disobedience.

1. First they will say, “**I didn’t know.**” (curfew) Sorry Dad I didn’t know it was so late, we were involved in watching a movie and we lost track of time.
  - *Sure you did!*
2. When you finally convince them that what they have done is wrong they’ll often point to someone else and say, **Well at least I’m not as bad as HIM.**
  - Shifting blame is as old as mankind itself. Remember what happened when God confronted Adam in his sin, He turned on his mate: the woman, you gave me, she made me do it! (*She’s worse than I am!*)

Well, in the first chapter of this book of Romans Paul dealt with the Pagan Gentile population who claimed to be ignorant of God and of his ways. They didn’t know!

- IN reality, they were willfully ignorant, because they suppressed the truth of God that was revealed through creation.

In Chapter 2 Paul deals with the moralistic, self-righteous Jews. Of course, they couldn’t claim to be ignorant because they had Moses and the Prophets.

- BUT instead of humbling themselves and taking responsibility for their sin they pointed their judgmental fingers at the gentiles. “*we’re not as bad as them*”

It is one thing for a teenage boy to face the wrath of his Father, it is quite another for sinful man to face the holy wrath of Almighty God.

- Last week we looked at two of the three ways the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

Let’s begin this morning where we left off last week. In an effort to explain HOW the wrath of God is being revealed we considered Paul’s threefold repetition of the words, “*God gave them up.*” And we found that:

- IN his wrath, God withdrew his restraining, protective hand and allowed the consequences of men’s sin to take their inevitable and destructive course.
- The final declaration of God’s wrath of abandonment is found in Vs 28:

Romans 1: 28 **Since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.**

- Now, the fruit of that debased or depraved mind produced a multitude of corrupt activity among the Pagans who rejected the revelation of God.
- Moving down to verse 29 Paul lists some of those activities under the twofold heading of “**Unrighteousness and Evil.**”

29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil,

- These are general and comprehensive terms that encompass a full range of sinful activity among those who are given over to a debased mind.

In the verses that follow, Paul exposed the fruit of their debased mind in a manner reminiscent of Fourth of July Fireworks. One explosion of iniquity releases another and then another until you come to the rapid-fire finale where Paul piles up the Adjectives that reveal the destructive power of a debased mind.

**Covetousness**, A relentless urge to acquire more. John D Rokerfeller, one of the richest men on the earth was asked how much money is enough, and he responded, “Just a little more.” Covetousness – fundamental dissatisfaction w/ God’s provision.

**Malice**. Describes man’s moral impurity or the evil habit of the mind in which He continually conjures up illicit schemes to please himself and exploit others.

- Paul goes on to say:

They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, (*taking pleasure at the affliction of others*) haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

- This catalogue of sins is certainly not exhaustive, but it is representative of the virtually endless number of vices that flow from the reprobate mind of one who has been given over to the wrath of abandonment.
- And the final item in Paul’s indictment of the ungodly found in Vs 32, is climactic.

Romans 1:32 **Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.**

- With impassioned rebellion and unholy zeal these who are given over to the wrath of God flaunt their sinful lifestyle before the world and entice others to join them.
- As if to stifle or still their clamoring conscience by gathering a crowd of like-minded malcontents who lift their fists to God in a unified voice saying, **“We reject you, your laws and your people!”**

When a society abandons the revelation of God and rejects the creator, when their consciences become seared through continual obstinate rebellion they will be given over to the wrath of God and if they do not repent, they will be destroyed.

Now as we move from Chapter One to Chapter Two there is a change in wording that tells us Paul is addressing a different group of people. In Chapter One he used the third person plural... They, Them.. (*Look at Vs 19*)

Romans 1: 19 **For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. .. (20) ... So they are without excuse.**

But when Paul opens chapter 2, he uses a second person pronoun “YOU” and he says: **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.** (Romans 2:1)

I can imagine the Apostle Paul standing before a mixed crowd of Jews and Gentiles, And all the while He is describing the wrath of God that is being revealed from heaven against the ungodliness of the Gentiles the Jews are in the background shaking their heads in agreement.

- Preach it Paul! They need to hear about God’s wrath
- And then Paul turns to those moralistic Jews and says, “**And you are No better!**”

Most of the Jews in Paul’s day believed that their family line and their religious rituals assured them a permanent place in the Kingdom of God.

- They were sure that God would judge the Pagan Gentiles because of their idolatry and immorality and they were equally certain that no Jew would ever experience the condemnation of God; after all they were His particular people, His chosen nation.
- Some actually taught that Abraham sat outside the gates of hell in order to prevent even the most wicked of Jews from falling into the pit.

Well here in Ch 2, Paul exposes the hypocrisy of the moralistic, religious Jews by pointing to three things.

1. Knowledge – They had sufficient knowledge to judge others.
2. Truth – They possessed the truth about God’s Judgment.
3. Responsibility – Sadly they lost sight of the fact that they were responsible to God for their sin.

### 1 Knowledge

Romans 2: 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.**

- Addressing this new group of “Moral Individuals” (Vs 17 Jews) Paul says, “YOU ALSO are without excuse, every one of you who passes judgment.”
- **WHY is that?** Why would Paul say that they were “**without excuse?**”
- Well, since they have a standard by which they can judge someone else, they should be able to judge themselves by that same standard, but they don’t!

Like the Gentiles the Jews were accountable to God for the “General” revelation that he provided through creation and the human conscience. However, since they were Jews, they possessed an even greater knowledge of God. They had the “Special” revelation that God provided through the Scripture.

- They had Moses and the Prophets. They had the Commandments and the Sacrificial System through which God revealed himself, his person, his Justice and his Mercy.

- They had the testimony of God's redeeming grace laid out for them in the Book of Exodus.
- However, all this wonderful knowledge that they possessed only made them MORE inexcusable.
- You might say that when they suppressed the truth of God they had to push a little harder because they possessed greater revelation, they had more knowledge.
- The author of Hebrews speaks of the accountability that comes with knowledge.

Hebrews 10: 26 For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. 28 Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. 29 How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?

- Since God will hold those relatively unenlightened pagans responsible for the knowledge that He has provided through Creation HOW much MORE accountable are those who have received the fullness of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ!
- You see, Greater knowledge is always accompanied by greater responsibility.

At the end of Vs 1, Paul exposes the real ugliness behind the sin of the unrighteous moralists by revealing their hypocrisy. He says:

- “Because you, (who) judge (Others) practice the very same things.”
- Of all the despicable practices and sinful behaviors that have been listed by the Apostle Paul none is worse than hypocrisy.
- All the while they are ranting and raving over the immoral practices of the pagans, they themselves are indulging in the very same sins. OH they may hide them and not flaunt them in public, nevertheless, they do the same things.

Those who are self-righteous make two very serious errors.

1. They underestimate the perfect righteousness of God.
2. And, they significantly underestimate the depth of their own depravity.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus highlights our propensity to exaggerate the faults of others while minimizing our own sinfulness.

Matthew 7:1 "Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. 3 Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?"

- I suppose you could liken the sin of the moralist to being Far-Sighted. You can easily focus on the sinful flaws in someone else's life but everything that is close to you is a bit fuzzy.

- As we move from verse 1 to verses 2-3 Paul transitions from the knowledge of sin to the Truth of God's Righteous Judgment.

#### Second Point: Truth

Romans 2: 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?**

- Remember at the end of Chapter one Paul told us that even the pagan Gentiles who don't have the Word of God know that those who give themselves to a life of wickedness, murder, deceit, slander and strife, even THEY know that they are worthy of death.
- Although they know they are deserving of death, they not only continue in their sin, but they magnify their guilt by enticing others to join them.
- Well if the Pagans know that they're deserving of death certainly the Jews who have the Word of God must also know that they deserve God's judgment.
- With that in mind, Paul Asks this probing question: "DO you think that YOU will escape the Judgment of God?"

Friends, One of the problems that we face as we ponder the judgment of God is this: We don't normally experience the immediate results of our sin. Even though the Word of God tells us:

**"The wages of sin is death."** (Romans 3) **"The soul that sins will surely die"** (Ezekiel) **"If you live according to the flesh you will die"** (Romans 8:13)

- We don't automatically drop over dead the moment that we sin.
- We aren't struck by lightning when we lie.
- The ground doesn't swallow us up when we covet our neighbor's belongings.

And because we don't face the immediate results of our sin it's easy for us to become insensitive to our own depravity and think that we can go on living forever in the same grace that we are experiencing today.

- Because God doesn't act in immediate judgment, the TRUTH concerning his Wrath seems to be more theoretical than practical, more imagined than real.

#### Quote John Mac

Men are so used to God's blessings and mercy that they take them for granted, not realizing that they receive those things purely because of God's longsuffering and grace. God would be perfectly just to blot out any person or all persons. But human nature trades on God's grace, believing that everything will work out all right in the end because God is too good and merciful to send anyone to hell."

- As someone astutely observed, "There seems to be some kind of still small voice in everyone that constantly tells them. "In the end, it's all going to be OK."

When you hold that still small voice up against the truth of Scripture you realize it is a lie. God WILL in deed act in judgment, it's only a matter of time. Moving on to verses 4-5 Paul helps us understand WHY God waits to release his judgment.

### 3. Responsibility

We should never lose sight of the fact that we are responsible for our sin. We should never doubt the righteous judgment of God even if it takes a long time to arrive.

- In His patience, God restrains his wrath displaying his kindness to all men allowing them sufficient time to repent. But Paul cautions us clearly NOT to assume that the riches of God's patience will endure forever.

Romans 2: 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.**

Without exception, every person who has ever lived has experienced the kindness, the forbearance and the patience of God.

- Every breath that we take and every morsel of food that we eat, all of the pleasures that we enjoy in this present life serve as evidence of the gracious provision and kindness of God.

When Paul speaks of God's kindness, he is referring to the benevolent goodness that God shows to undeserving men and women throughout their lives.

When he speaks of God's forbearance, He is referring to the restraint that God displays withholding His righteous judgment for a season from sinful people.

And when Paul speaks of God's patience, he is referring to the long period of time when God displays his kindness and forbearance.

- You may be blessed to experience a prolonged season of God's kindness and therefore be deceived into thinking that somehow, you deserve that kindness.
- You may point to your Baptism as an infant, your first holy communion at the age of 10 and your confirmation at the age of 13. You may think that you earn God's kindness by going to church and get Bonus Points for tithing.
- Let me ask you: DO you count on your own obedience OR CHRIST'S obedience to keep you safe from the wrath of God?
- The Jews of Paul's day felt that they were above God's judgment simply because they were physical descendants of Abraham.

But, we need to understand that every one of these blessings (Kindness, forbearance and patience) is part of God's common grace. What is common grace? It is a grace that God bestows on the whole of mankind. The Psalmist declared:

Psalm 33: 5 He (God) loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD.

Psalm 145:9 The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.

Even though everyone receives at least a measure of God's common grace we don't generally give thanks to him or honor him for his benevolence.

- Instead we take that grace for granted and assume somehow that we deserve it. But when something goes wrong, many people are quick to accuse God of being unloving, uninvolved or even unjust.
- You will hear people say:

“How could God allow that child to die?” “Where was God when that Storm ravaged Alabama?”

- IN the corruption of their foolish sinful minds people are quick to judge God for what they perceive to be a divine oversight or even worse an act of injustice.
- But from a Biblical perspective, understanding the truth concerning man's depravity, if it were not for God's kindness and his incredible patience NO human being would be alive. It is only by his grace that we take our next breath.
- Think about it:

Before God destroyed the world in the flood, he waited 120 years for men to repent while Noah built the ark and proclaimed God's righteousness. (2 Peter 2:5)

And despite the bold and passionate warnings of the Prophets the children of Israel continued in their rebellion. But God waited 800 years to send them into captivity.

- Friends, The Bible clearly testifies to God's benevolent longsuffering.
- Rather than asking why God allows bad things to happen to seemingly good people, maybe we should ask why God allows seemingly good things to happen to obviously bad people?

Everyday that we live we should thank God for his patience and praise him for his abundant mercy. He withholds the punishment that people rightly deserve for a long time.

- He gave the Canaanites 400 years to repent before sending Joshua and the armies of Israel to cleanse the land.

Paul teaches us that the purpose of God's kindness is not to excuse men of their sin but to convict them of it and to lead them to repentance.

- Peter confirms this truth in his second epistle

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Anyone who presumes upon God's kindness, forbearance and patience, while continuing to live in stubbornness and unrepentant sin, that person is actually storing up wrath for the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

Vs 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.**

- For those who have repented of their sin and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Every drop of God's grace is like a cleansing, refreshing spring rain falling upon the parched earth of their soul. With joy and thanksgiving, they receive it.
- They sing, "*Grace, grace God's Grace, Grace that will pardon and cleanse within, Grace Grace God's grace, grace that is greater than all our sin.*"

BUT for the stubborn and unrepentant, that same grace which falls on the just and the unjust is like the spring rains that flood the swollen rivers and press against the dam of God's forbearance. WHEN his patience finally runs out and the floodgates of his wrath are released there comes a day of painful reckoning.

As the world around us becomes more and more corrupt, as the wrath of God is revealed from heaven resulting in greater immorality, depravity and violence all around us, we must never become like that Pharisee who Prayed.

Luke 18:11 **'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.'**

- NO my friends, we need to live our lives in the glorious revelation of God's holiness, remembering our continual need for His grace and mercy.

- Like the Tax collector:

13 **But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'** 14 **I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."**

- My Friends this portion of Romans reminds us that there is a day of reckoning on the horizon. If you have never humbled yourself before God, repented of your sin