

Romans

#5: Judgment Is Certain

Romans 2:1-16

Dr. Matt Cassidy ---- September 14, 2025

Let's pray.

Lord, we come to you celebrating that you made us white as snow at the great expense of your blood. We come to you now with heavy hearts now again, trying to find meaning in meaningless violence. We ask that you would visit our country in a special way. We see revival around us—around our world, around our city and state. We know you're working, and then we see these terrible acts of heinous, purposeless violence. We don't know what to do with that contrast, Lord. I'd ask that You would visit the Kirk family in a special way, as they witnessed such a terrible thing that happened to their husband and father. I'd ask that You would surround with them with the right people saying the right things; that You would give those kids sweet dreams somehow. Give them some kind of peace and tranquility that could only be provided by a loving, supernatural, righteous God. I'd ask that You would help heal the family of the gal from the Ukraine and the violence that was taken out on her. Lord, we just don't know what to do. We don't know what to say. Sometimes we don't know how to pray. May Your Spirit translate our grief. We bring it to Your throne and ask that You would move mightily and put Satan back on his leash. We pray this Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, good morning. Welcome to Grace Covenant Church. We're doing an in-depth study on the Book of Romans. It's a piece of literature that has literally changed mankind. We're on chapter 2, and it's on page 10 of our study book. If you don't have one of these, we've bought some more—again. And we'll keep buying them. But one per person.

We're going to look today at a full outline of the way Paul shows himself to be an outstanding, maybe even unparalleled, prosecuting attorney. His skills at making a case and laying out a very compelling, logical sequence of proofs, and the manner in which he did this is so exemplary, that the first hundred years at Harvard Law School it was required that first-year students study the Book of Romans to see how he works the logic, how he explains his principle

and his big idea, which is the gospel, and then presents facts, then counterarguments. Then he uses the counterarguments, not just to answer those arguments, but to show that the counterarguments actually validate his thesis of the gospel being the only way we can have the righteousness of God attributed to us. It's a beautiful book in that way. If for no other reason, it's for that.

Let me give you a quick summary of where we are, because we're starting chapter 2 today. We found that the climax of his talk that he rolls out with details is chapter 1, verses 16 and 17, where Paul says, *Happy news, everybody! It's good news—no, it's great news!* Paul says, *I'm not ashamed of that good news.* "I'm not ashamed of the gospel. Because the gospel, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and the purpose which it fulfilled, has the power of salvation, to the Jew first, and then also to the Greek."

He'll say those types of words a lot, because that's his audience, and he wants everyone to know that it applies to everyone.

And that gospel has the righteousness of God. It displays the righteousness of God and shows it. And what's wonderful is that we receive that benefit of His death and resurrection merely by faith.

And then, finally, he ends verse 16 and 17 by saying that all—everyone—all who believe have this righteousness.

The guy knows how to start. It's a beautiful start. And then in the next verse, verse 18, the mood changes dramatically. It goes dark. He says, "And now the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. Because we suppressed the truth in our unrighteousness." And from chapter 1, verse 18 on, until chapter 3, verse 20, that's his theme in this outline. He's going to show that the wrath of God is being revealed; that all ungodliness and all unrighteousness is being demonstrated by you and I suppressing the truth in our unrighteousness.

And so, after chapter 1, verse 18, to chapter 3, verse 20, you're going to see this proof that we're in trouble, and we've broken something, and we can't fix it.

Right after verse 18 he's going to start talking about the Gentiles. And they stand before God, absolutely guilty. And it's because, even though they haven't received, particularly, the Word of God, they know better. He says that they know. He says they are without excuse,

because God has clearly revealed Himself in nature. God has revealed Himself in nature and He has revealed Himself in their conscience. And because of that, they are without excuse.

Then he writes a list of the various sins that they commit. And it's a gross expression of an orgy and frat parties. It's disgusting. And we're supposed to be repelled by that, because in chapter 2, he's now starting to talk to the moral people, and particularly to the Jews, especially to the Jews in this congregation who are Christians. And he's saying, *Look, you're just as guilty, not because you violated the natural revelation of God, but you violated the particular revelation of God. You definitely knew better, because you had the law.*

Let me just show you, this is absolutely the theme from chapter 1, verse 18 until chapter 3, verse 21, from this very fact alone: the name Jesus is not going to be used in these two and half chapters, except one time. He's not going to bring Jesus up except for one time. And the one time he brings Jesus up is showing Jesus as judge. You'll see that in our passage today. *Yeah, I'll mention Jesus. You'll stand before Him and He'll judge you.*

And why? Because in this section of this logical case that he's rolling out he's not trying to save us. He's trying to condemn us. He's not telling us about justification; he tells us about the desperate need we're supposed to have for justification. You can't get found until you admit that you've been lost. And so, Paul has to convince us of that.

Have you ever been on one of those trips?

You're lost, honey.

I'm not lost. I'm just going to keep driving the wrong way.

And that's what he's up against. You can't be born again unless you understand that you are dead in your sins. And in these two and a half chapters, that's what he's rolling out. We'll talk about justification in 3:22, but until then it's condemnation. He's going to keep saying this again and again, so that we don't respond, "So you're saying that I have a chance." You have no chance to stand before the holiness of God.

There's a saying that getting a person saved is no problem. Getting a person to understand their sinfulness—there's your problem. That's the problem Paul is solving in these chapters. We have an incurable disease. Paul calls it unrighteousness. Think skin cancer—no, think sin cancer. It is a cancer in our souls, and there is no cure. Only God can save us. That's his thesis. That's what he's trying to show us.

And in chapter 1, he's talking about the type of person who is unrighteous. And in chapter 2 he's going to be talking about the self-righteous person. Now he's meddling in their business.

It's a simple outline. There are three paragraphs, and each one of the paragraphs has a theme, and he actually states that theme. It's that God's judgment is **inescapable**. The next paragraph's theme is that God's judgment is **impartial**. And then, finally, God's judgment is **universal**.

1. God's Judgment Is Inescapable (2:1-5)

Romans 2:1-5

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. 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? 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.

Let's take a look—God's judgment is inescapable. Look for the pronoun while we all read this together. Chapter 2, verse 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. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. 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? 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? But because of your hard and impenitent heart ..." (I'm sorry—

“impenitent” means “shameless.”) “Because of your hard and shameless heart you are storing up for yourself wrath for the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.”

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.

Do you see his new audience? See how the pronouns switch? Look at verse 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 same things.”

Fifteen times in Romans 1, Paul uses “them” or “they”—*those people over there, those Romans chapter 1 people are hedonists. They are nasty. They do all kinds of vile things.* “They”—“them”—pointing fingers.

In chapter 2, Paul turns the Gatling gun on his audience. Most of his audience are moralists and Jewish believers. And thirteen times he says “you” in five verses. He’s talking to us. Now he’s meddling.

His style of writing, by the way, is called a diatribe. And it was pretty common back then. And I want you to look for it, because it’s throughout the Book of Romans. It’s the idea that Paul is writing this book with an audience in mind. He has a pretend conversation with us. Paul’s been an itinerant preacher for twenty-two years before he writes this book called Romans. And so, he’s been all around. He’s seen all the problems and listened to all the questions. So, he’s going to propose questions, and then he’s going to give those solutions. He knows what they are.

And he says, *Know this. The wrath of God is being poured out, not just on “them,” those Gentile sinners, but also on moralists.* And when Paul talks about the wrath of God being poured out on those sinners—“them,” the Romans chapter 1 types—he knows that every time he would do that, the moralists and the Jews would celebrate. *Yeah, get ‘em, Paul!*

And now he says this: *Look, the wrath of God is also being exposed, not only to the unrighteous, but to the self-righteous.* That’s why Paul in Romans 1:20 says, “They are without excuse.” And then in Romans 2:1 he says, “You are without excuse.” There’s a large portion of

his audience that we would call good ol' boys—patriotic, American flag flying outside, attend church regularly, go to baseball games. (That's America's sport.) And when he catches that home run baseball, he's the sort of guy who would catch it and then give it to that little league kid with his dad's catcher's mitt. That's what kind of people these church attenders are. You know—I mean ethical, devoted to family, generous with their time and resources. And Paul is saying, *Does he even know he's lost? Does he know he's dead in his sins? He's got sin cancer.*

So, Paul is going after this part of the audience as well. *Those people in chapter 1...* When you shake your finger and judge, Paul is saying that you're going to have three fingers pointing back at you. Because the standard is not you being good or better than the next guy; the standard is God's righteousness. We suppress the truth in our unrighteousness.

Paul's teaching in this section is what Jesus taught in one section of His famous Sermon on the Mount. When Jesus is looking at the various laws, He's saying, *You're missing the point...* When Jesus said, "You've heard it said, 'Thou shalt not murder.'" "

Yeah, it's one of the Ten Commandments.

So, Jesus says, *Sure, that's what it says. But here's what it means: any of you who get so angry with your brother or sister, with another human being, that you would be so infuriated that you say, "You fool!"*—that's the meaning of the command. You committed a kind of murder that has fire in hell waiting for you.

And then Jesus does the same thing with adultery. It's not just committing the act of adultery; it's everything that leads to it.

The point is, there's the letter of the law, and then there's the spirit of the law, the meaning of the law, the deeper purpose of the law. And what Paul is saying here is what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. *It's not just the action; it's all the mess that's going on inside your soul to get you to that action. You're just as guilty, he's saying, of failing the righteousness standard. No more talk about "they" and "them."* Let's talk about you. That's the theme here.

Romans 2:2-4

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? 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?

Verse 2: “We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. 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? Or do you presume”—I’m listening to you—“that the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, now knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?”

I love it—twice he says, “O man.” And the reason he’s saying “O man” is that he’s taking away any kind of bragging point away from them. You’re going for the holy throne of God? Who do you think you are? You came naked into this world, you left naked, you’re showing. Up there with what?

Well, I was raised Christian. My parents were missionaries. I’ve done all these neat things. Or, in this case, I’m Jewish. You like me best.

With that “O man” you have none of that. It’s a person who has this attitude that heaven’s gates have this red rope, like it’s some kind of bar where you’re going to have to wait at the end of the line, and this person just kind of comes in and says, *Here I am*. It’s a Romans 2 type person whose sin is not unrighteousness—it’s self-righteousness. And Paul says, *This judgment is unescapable*.

Paul is going after another assumption of theirs. He says, *Are you thinking you’re safe because of the rich kindness, the forbearance of God, the patience of God? Is that why you think it’s all good? Do you even know you’re lost?*

And then Paul says, *No, you don’t even understand the purpose of those gentle and generous attributes of God. It’s not for you to take advantage of them. It’s not for you to have*

contempt for His patience. The reason that God displays that type of patience and kindness is so that you will repent.

God is making it easy for us to ask for directions. He's making it a lot easier for us to admit that we don't have any righteousness to bring to Him, to repent. These kind of attributes are to help us get right with God, not to push God away and feel as though we're entitled to them. That's the definition of self-righteousness. If you're looking for a symptom that shows that, it's when you feel entitled to God blessing you. In your head you have a running list of *Here's the things that I have done for God. Here's another list of sacrifices I have given with my time, my resources. I've been generous. And I have this list, and I can't help but think my peripheral vision is thinking I'm doing better than other people, you know.*

Then there's the *Okay, God. You do Your part. You owe me. I have a certain expectation for the way my life is going to play out.*

Sometimes we don't even know we're keeping lists. It's subliminal. And we find out we're keeping the list when things aren't going well. And one of the reasons we shake our fist at God when life doesn't go according to our plan is because we say, *This is what I did. So ... how come You're not helping? How come my kids are running crazy for a while?* It's taking God for granted.

And Paul is saying here that for this self-righteousness, the judgment of God is inescapable.

Romans 2:5

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.

In verse 5 he goes on to say more: *“But because of your hard and shameless heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.”* There it is. That's why the theme here is that God's judgment is unescapable—because God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

And the word there for “hard heart” is literally the word *sclerosis*, the word we now apply to our physical health when your arteries are hardening, or your heart is hardening. That's

sclerosis. And as it's true with the physical heart, it's true with your physical heart. Every opportunity you have because of the kindness and the longsuffering of God makes it easy for you to apologize, easy for you to repent and take responsibility. When you say no to that and have contempt towards it and take it for granted because you're entitled to it, your spirit gets hard. Your soul, your heart gets sclerosis. It's not a good thing. And God's judgment is inescapable.

Jesus tells a wonderful story in Luke 18. He's trying to help His disciples understand the difference between righteousness and self-righteousness. He does a beautiful job by having these contrasting characters. It's almost like a joke—two men walk into a sanctuary...

Two men walk into a sanctuary. The first one is a Pharisee, and he is famously a man of God. He's a religious person, a religious leader, so much so that if you wonder, you can just ask him. He would say, "I'm a man of God."

And then another man walks in, and he won't even go to the front of the sanctuary. He stays in the back, because he's not worthy to be near the presence of God. He's a tax collector, and the tax collector is a sinner. He's that Romans 1 type of person. And if you doubt me, you could ask him. He says he's a sinner. And as the tax collector, it's part of his job description and his annual review.

And while it looks like the Pharisee is the healthy one and the tax collector is unhealthy, Jesus comes and says, *Listen to their prayers. Hear their heart and soul. That will tell you whether they're healthy or not.* They listen and eavesdrop on the Pharisee, and he says, "God, thank You that I am not like one of the Roman 1 type people. "Thank You that I am not a sinner like the guy in the back." It's a version of "You're lucky to have me." That's self-righteousness.

Meanwhile, the prayers of the tax collector in the back of the sanctuary—he's saying, "Have mercy. Be merciful to me, O Lord. I'm a sinner."

And Jesus is saying what Paul is saying. He says that the tax collector understands that he's lost. So, he'll go home justified. He'll be found. And that Pharisee is entitled. That's self-righteousness. That's a Romans 2 type sinner. And justice is inescapable.

The application is pretty obvious. If that's rattling around in your heart and soul, you might be assuming things that Paul says are proof positive that you're desperately sinful, and the wrath of God is being revealed in your life, and you're suppressing truth in your self-righteousness.

2. God's Judgment Is Impartial (2:6-11)

Romans 2:6-11

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 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 show no partiality.

The second point here in the second paragraph is that God's judgment is impartial. Not only is it inescapable, but it's also impartial. He says it rather clearly. Let me just read the paragraph. "He will render to each on according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, He will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek." Here's the punchline: "For God shows no partiality."

Now this is an interesting paragraph. It's rather difficult to spend a short amount of time on, and that's all we have. Understand the context and the purpose of the paragraph, and it will help you understand the meaning of it. And the context and the purpose of the paragraph is to show you—it says it three times, in some respects—that there is no difference between a Jew and a Greek. Basically, God will judge us on a level playing field. And that's why he's saying what he's saying here. He's saying, *Look, don't think that because you're Jewish or you're Baptist that you're going to be immune to judgment, or that He plays favorites and likes you best.* I've heard that. That's the point.

If you look at it at face value, it looks like he's saying that salvation can be had by works. He's not, because that would contradict everything he's been saying in the Book of Romans and

all his other writings, so we know that can't be it. He's stating a case, and the case goes like this. If salvation is by works, great. But look—Gentiles and Jews are on a level playing field. Equal standards are applied. It's an absolute righteous life. You do the right thing, you have to do it for the right motives, and you can't sin.

The second point, which will come up later, is that the sin within us, the sin cancer, prevents us from achieving that life.

And so, his third point will be that you don't have a chance—no chance at all. It's like you going into the doctor with some incurable illness, and your response is, "Yeah, but I'm doing diet and exercise." And he says, "So, you're going to die healthy. But you're going to die."

Romans 2:11

For God shows no partiality.

If you're in doubt about what the paragraph means, just read the last sentence in the paragraph: "[For God shows no partiality.](#)" God's judgment is inescapable. And it's level. It's impartial. He doesn't have any favorites. The Romans 1 type of Greek or pagan, or the Romans 2 good ol' boy—God's being impartial.

God is showing Himself as Lady Justice. You've seen those statues of Lady Justice—what does she wear? A blindfold. She's not partial. She plays no favorites. She is no respecter of persons. She's blindfolded. She's holding a scale. She cares about the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. That will decide if the person is guilty or innocent. And what's in her other hand? A double-bladed sword, because she will bring out retribution. She's going to make things right once those scales determine who's right and who's wrong. She will bring justice to that.

Paul is saying that. He's saying that at the end of days, in the Day of the Lord as it's called in the Bible, every single person who has ever breathed is going to stand before God. And we're going to put our deeds and our motives on this scale of righteousness. And the standard will be the righteousness of God. And God will be all but blindfolded. It won't matter how much money we had, or power, or influence. Our race, our heritage, what kind of church we went to, whatever—it doesn't matter. The plumbline, the standard will be the righteousness of God. And those scales will show that no amount of good deeds could possibly make us right in the presence of God.

Are you telling me there's no way? Yeah, I'm telling you there's no way, unless God intervenes. That's the point. Anybody want a cure? Anybody lost and need to be found? That's Paul's point.

3. God's Judgment Is Universal (2:12-16)

And so, in his third paragraph, the third point, it's not just about judgment being inescapable and impartial. It's also universal. Here's what I want you to listen for in this paragraph. I want you to look for his continued idea that it's impartial. But also, how he starts bringing in Old Testament law a lot. And he's also going to show the situation with non-Jews who don't know anything about the Old Testament law. Are they going to be held accountable? How can they possibly know the right and the wrong out there? Paul knows that's the question, and so, he'll answer it in this paragraph.

Romans 2:12-16

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 a 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 thought accuse or even excuse them ¹⁶ on the day when according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

“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. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. 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. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while

their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thought accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.”

Paul is saying that every single person has the law of God written on their hearts in some way. We all have the echo of Mt. Sinai rattling around within us. We have an intuitive sense of right and wrong, and the right kind of thinking, our conscience. The second part of that word is “science”—thinking. The philosophers call this natural law. It’s written in every soul.

And what’s interesting is that Paul—we’ll read it in just a second—but look at how Paul is deepening this injection of absolutes. He starts with: It’s in your nature, it’s in your hearts, it’s in your conscience, it’s in your thoughts. I think it starts in verse 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. 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 ...”

Guilt is the universal absolute in all cultures at all times. That’s what Paul is saying here. We are all without excuse. And the Jews that might think they have an advantage because they know the law? Paul is saying, *Yeah ... but at least the Gentiles are obeying their conscience. You’re just obeying the ink, the words, the pen and ink of God’s absolute morality.*

Here’s the point. Third time, third paragraph: God’s judgment is coming. It’s inescapable. It’s impartial. And it’s absolutely universal. “They” are without excuse. That’s chapter one. “You” are without excuse. That’s chapter two.

God’s righteousness is the standard. Whether you’re unrighteous or self-righteous, I’m telling you that you don’t have a chance. Do you know you’re lost? Do you understand how dead you are?

Once upon a time there was a loving and righteous father. And he had two prodigal sons. And this is how they broke his heart. The younger son went to the father and said, “I can’t wait for your death. I want my inheritance now.” And the father gave it to him.

And he took that wealth and went as far away from the father’s love as he could get, to a far-off, foreign land. And he squandered it recklessly. He was a Romans 1 kind of guy. And he finally got to the point where he was out of money and out of friends. And his rock bottom happened—he’s Jewish—when, as a Jewish young man, he was attending pigs. And one day in stomach was growling, and he looked at what the pigs were eating and went down and

whispered, “Can I have that when you’re done?” Leftover pig slop. That’s when he realized that he was dead. He was lost. And he thought to himself, “I’d be better off working at my dad’s ranch as a hired hand.”

So, he gets up. From a distance his father saw him coming and felt compassion towards him. So, he ran and embraced and kissed the son. Why? That would lead him to repentance. He’s making it easy for him to apologize. He’s making it easy for him to repent.

And so, the son said to the father, “I have sinned against you and against heaven. I am not worthy to be anywhere near you, not even in this county. If I could just work here ...”

And the father said, “Quick, somebody get the best robe and put it on this boy. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. He’s not hired help. He’s family. He’s a son. And somebody hurry and get a fatted calf. We’re going to celebrate. And here’s why: the boy was lost, but now he’s found. He was dead, and now he is alive.”

You can only become alive if you know you’re dead. You can only be found if you know you’re lost.

That’s the younger son. There’s a second son, and he’s a prodigal as well. And this is how he breaks the father’s heart. It says that the older son came in from the field, and he heard happiness and joy, dancing and music. And it enraged him to hear people in revelry. And he refused to go inside of “they,” because of “them,” “those people.” *Do you know what he did with that money? He squandered it on prostitutes.* It never said he did that. The older son says that he did that.

And here’s how the father appeals to his rebellious older son. He goes outside of the party he’s hosting and entreats the boy, the young man, and says, “Why don’t you come inside and enjoy this joy that we all have?”

And he responds like this: “All that I have done for you ...” And then he says this out loud: “I have never disobeyed your command—never.” Well, there’s our first candidate for earned righteousness. And yet, “I’m entitled to it—I’ve made my list—and you’ve never slaughtered a cow for me and my friends.” And then he says, “This son of yours squandered all that.” “Him”—“those people.” That’s a Romans 2 type person.

And the wrath of God is being revealed because people are squashing the truth is righteousness and self-righteousness. Does this young man even know he’s dead? Does he know he’s lost? We never know.

J. B. Lightfoot put it this way. He said that the blackest of all sin is not righteousness violated, but it is mercy despised. This older son despises the father's mercy for his younger brother. The blackest of all sin is not righteousness defiled; it is mercy despised. One more time: the blackest of sin is not righteousness violated; it is mercy despised.

They are without excuse. You are without excuse. I'm without excuse. Does anybody out there need a cure? Are you that sin-sick? Anybody out there grasping just how lost you are? So much so that you would repent and ask for direction?

The theme of this section of Scripture is that judgment is coming. And the standard is absolute holiness. It is inescapable. And fear this—it's impartial. And it's going to be universal. Get ready. "The wrath of God is being revealed against all ungodliness and all unrighteousness, which is suppressing the truth."

Today's lesson is about the weight of God's holiness and the power of our sin to keep us from knowing God and enjoying His presence. I'm hoping we get to Romans 3:22 where the answer to the problem is given to us. But until then, you can't enjoy the grace of God until you experience the wrath of God. The road to Golgotha where Jesus was crucified goes right through Mount Sinai, where the Ten Commandments were given. And we spend our lives violating those. Do you feel and experience the conviction of God? That's the point of Paul's writing today. Let's thank Him for that.

Lord Jesus, we are grateful for these words, that You would give us the bad news so that we could fully appreciate the good news; that we would not be self-righteous and take advantage of Your kindness; that we wouldn't be entitled, Romans 2 type people who feel like You owe it to us; that we would enjoy the fullness of Your forgiveness because we are grasping the fullness of our total and complete depravity; that we are born again because we first died—died of our sin cancer. And only You have the cure.

Lord, I'd ask that You would help us grasp the fullness and the depth of the meaning of Paul's writings this week and next, so that we can enjoy You so much the more. I pray this because Jesus obeyed the Father, took on the wrath intended for us, so that we might enjoy the righteousness of Christ. We pray this in His name. And everybody said, Amen.