

## 6. Membership of the Holier-than-thou club

May 4, 2008

Let's go to Matthew 7.

*Matthew 7:1-5 "Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. 3 And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? 5 Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.*

"You can not judge me. That is what the Bible says." I am sure that many of you have heard this kind of outcries of people who backslid when you confront them about their ungodly decisions and behaviors.

First of all, according to the Bible I can judge other's actions according to what we just have read. Second, if they want to go with the principles of the Bible, how come they are still backslidden?

When it comes to judging others, we're mighty quick on the draw. We're always ready with a hair-trigger accusation. But when it comes to noticing and working on our own shortcomings, we're slower than a snail on ice. And more often than not, we're often guilty of the very sins we're criticizing. The guilt of "the holier-than-thou club" is Paul's focus in Romans 2:1-16.

### A. WE THE GUILTY JUDGES

*Romans 2:1 Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.*

Late Dr. J. Vernon McGee, a good old preacher from south, used to say in his southern drawl, "Whenever you see 'therefore' in the Bible, you must find out why 'therefore' is there for."

In Romans 1, apostle Paul pointed out the notorious sins including homosexuality and 24 other sins. He now envisions those who are generally "moral" in their conduct congratulating themselves and patting their own backs that they are not like the people Paul described in Romans 1.

A good example of this mind set is Jesus' illustration of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:10-14. If we take that context from Jesus' parable, now Paul addresses all the moralists – self-righteous people who don't consider themselves sinners.

The problem is that their self-evaluation is not accurate. In addition to that, they are inexcusable. Why is that? It is because they were judging others while they themselves have the same kind of sin.

How we can condemn bad behavior in others while practicing the same things ourselves? As fallen creatures, we are conveniently blind to our own faults. And we purposely forget our own wrongdoing. Or we rationalize it. Or rename it.

- “Oh, I’m not argumentative or divisive, I just have strong convictions.”
- “Me? An anger problem? No way. I’m just very expressive.”
- “Come on, that’s not lying. That’s salesmanship; part of doing business.”
- “Pornography? Don’t be ridiculous. I’m just, uh, appreciating art.”

## **B. JUDGMENT BY GOD**

*Romans 2:2-3 But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. 3 And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?*

We often think or convince ourselves that God has two different sets of judgment standards for the same sins – a harsh punishment for others who commit the same sin we do; but for our case, He should say, “Now My child, don’t do that again,” and let us get away with it.

Just because we’re righteous in our own eyes doesn’t mean we are in God’s favorite children’s list. And just because the judgment doesn’t come immediately does not mean that it’s not going to come at all. Don’t forget that the judgment of God doesn’t turn fast, but it grinds exceedingly fine.

## **C. THE GOODNESS OF GOD FOR REPENTANCE**

*Romans 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?*

When we judge others with the idea of ourselves being exempt from God’s judgment, we are challenging His kindness.

The blessings the Jews received from the Lord gave them greater responsibility to obey Him and glorify Him. In His goodness, God had given Israel great material and spiritual riches: a wonderful land, a righteous law, a temple of God and priesthood, God’s providential care and many more blessings. God had patiently endured Israel’s many idolatries and rebellions, and had even sent them His Son to be their Messiah. Even after Israel crucified Christ, God gave the nation nearly forty more years of grace and withheld His judgment. It is not the judgment of God that leads men to repentance, but the goodness of God. But Israel did not repent.

May I put this in our situation? In human history, no other country was so much blessed like the United States of America. Indeed, it is the land of plentiful because the first settlers in the 18th century came to this country with Jesus Christ in their hearts, even though the current secular historians, educators and media try to remove that historical facts. Every single country around the world envies what America has. But it started to change with a single decision by the American Supreme Court – removing the Ten Commandments from schools. From that moment everything went down. Students’ grades went low, but kids get high on drugs. We lost a war to a little tiny nation in Southeast Asia in 1973. Each time we open a newspaper and watch the 6 o’clock news, there is another way of pushing God out of the American lives. America has not repented.

Here is a good Scripture for us to remind ourselves:

*Luke 12:48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.*

Yet, our God still extends His mercy and goodness to the Americans to repent from our wicked ways. Again, the Holy Spirit reminds us another great verse which we memorized a few weeks ago:

*Lamentations 3:22-23 Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.*

I need to stop here and ask all of us this question:

For whatever the hidden sin that you've been continuing, do you think that God does not know about it or He is winking at your sin? I think not. In His goodness and mercy, He is giving you a chance for you to repent and turn away from it. Someday, the Lord might say, "Enough is enough." Repent today before you leave here.

#### **D. GOD'S JUDGMENT AGAINST HUMAN'S HARDENED HEARTS**

*Romans 2:5-10 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who "will render to each one according to his deeds": 7 eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; 8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness--indignation and wrath, 9 tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; 10 but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

Here is a plain and simple truth that can not be denied. Those who choose a life of sinful self-righteousness and not turning to Christ will suffer God's ultimate and eternal punishment. But those who embrace Christ by faith will receive eternal life.

Not one sin escapes the righteous wrath of God. Sin is always paid for – either by Christ, who was punished for our sins or by the sinners who reject Him and suffer eternal punishment.

I asked you to underline 'according to his deeds' in v5. Does it mean that apostle Paul is talking about salvation through works? Absolutely not! None of us lives a perfect life, not even Christians. If our escape from God's judgment depends on our righteous deeds, we're all doomed, busted and finished.

We need to talk about this:

Salvation is a free gift from God. We cannot merit eternal life by our own works. Yet both the Old and New Testaments consistently speak of judgment according to works. How can these two truths be compatible? The answer is that true faith produces good works.

*Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

True saving faith results in obedience and godly living, even though there may be occasional falls and struggles. This is the reason why I said before that if your life has not changed into a godly way after you received Christ as the Savior, you have to wonder if your salvation is true or not.

#### **E. NO PARTIALITY WITH GOD**

*Romans 2:11 For there is no partiality with God.*

The Jews still consider themselves deserving of special treatment because they are chosen by God.

It is not unusual for someone to think or ask me that I should pray for them since I am a pastor, I should have a direct line with God. Some denominations even convince their congregation in that manner. It is unbiblical. You don't find it anywhere in the Bible.

Once we receive Jesus Christ into our hearts, we become His children. God is not like us who would have a favorite child among his or her siblings. He doesn't have a favorite. You might say, "What about Billy Graham, or Chuck Smith, or those famous Bible teachers?" We put them in that status, not God.

If you are a born again Christian, you are as important as any of so-called famous Christians to God. He has no partiality toward anyone.

## **F. GOD'S law IN EVERYONE'S HEART**

*Romans 2:12-16 For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law 13 (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; 14 for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, 15 who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) 16 in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.*

Nobody can say to God that He is not fair. He is an equal opportunity Judge. He doesn't get swayed by anyone or take a bribe. He judges everyone the same – the Jews, who received the written law, and the Gentiles, who possess a sense of right and wrong even without the written law.

The Jews received the Mosaic law at Mount Sinai, and it clearly detailed for them the way to live. Even now, the reading of the law was a regular part of synagogue worship. Having the law, however, doesn't make one righteous. Only keeping it perfectly does. And no one but Christ has done that.

The Gentiles, on the other hand, were not the custodians of the Mosaic law. But they did have God's law "written in their hearts" – that is, they possessed a conscience, a sense of right and wrong, which they knew instinctively, even though they couldn't keep that moral code perfectly.

Some people's consciences are so twisted because of their own selfish motive that they would not do what is right.

*1 Timothy 4:1-3 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 3 forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.*

Even those people still see right and wrong when it comes to their own interest. For an example, even the most hardened criminal thinks it is wrong for someone to steal or hurt him to get what he has stolen from others.

I believe that all of you remember what we learned from chapter 1 v20 a couple of weeks ago.

*Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse*

With what we just read in v15, there is not one person in human history who can claim that he or she is not given a chance to get to follow God. The nature around them reveals God's invisible attributes and God Himself put the work of the law written in their hearts. Men are without excuse.

## **G. APPLICATIONS**

**1) We need to remember that self-righteousness only heaps condemnation on our own heads.**

Condemning others' sins may make us feel good about ourselves. It may make us feel superior to those around us whose faults are so obvious to us.

**2) To obtain true righteousness, we must first see our own sinfulness, then run to Christ.**

Because Jesus not only removes the log from our eye, He removes the stain of sin from our lives.