



series: Romans
title: 08 the judgment
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scriptures: Romans 2:6-16, Micah 6:6-8, Matthew 7:21-23, Matthew 25:31-46.

I read a story in the Los Angeles Times this week, and even though it was from around the year 1450, it still made me so sick to my stomach to read... I will try and navigate it briefly and gently for you here... a few years

ago, archeologists in Peru discovered a site where, based on what they found, it was very clear that about 140 children were all sacrificed at the same time and left at this site. They said 140 children, 3 adults and over 200 llamas.

The article said:

“The sacrificial victims ranged in age from 6 to 14, and appear to have been killed in a well-planned and choreographed event on a single, horrific day.”

The details were grim, and I won't get into them for the sake of our stomachs... but it messed me up a bit when I read it.

And I couldn't help but wonder, WHY? Why would anyone do that to their own child? why would anyone do that to any child?

The article said that nothing was known about their religion, but from the conditions it appeared that it had happened during a time of heavy heavy unceasing rain which would have severely hurt their economy, and the sacrifice was likely a way of them negotiating with the powers that they believe controlled the weather, giving up what was most valuable to THEM in order that they may secure a future of their own and for everyone ELSE who would come.

These things are usually tied to religion. They are usually tied to the idea that God is angry... or, "the gods are angry" - and the only way to appease the gods is to give up the thing that is nearest to your heart to show the gods that you are loyal to them and that they may have mercy on you.

The idea of HELL is a very scary thing, and it has caused people for centuries to do crazy things to try and avoid it. In fact, in an effort to avoid it, many have caused it. They literally create it in the spaces they inhabit.

But here is the problem with the entire concept of sacrifice...

we give up something... we make a sacrifice and when its over we don't feel any different...

We make the sacrifice... and the rain doesn't stop.

because the reality is that NOTHING CHANGED... so we think...

okay, that didn't do it, I have got to give God more...

so we make another sacrifice... something that means a little more to us...

something that we love.

Maybe it is something that we should give up... something we know is not God's best for us... but then we use "getting closer to God" as our way to quit this thing that we love to do...

If your motive for sacrificing something is the result that it will bring to you Spiritually, what eventually is almost bound to happen, is you will live your life with this thought constantly in your head saying: "I gave up _____ for this God... and for what?"

And how long does that last? How long do you serve a god who YOU believed made you sacrifice your child, before you realize "a god like that sure is wack?" - now I am living my entire life without my child.

obviously our context is much different today... but if you come to Jesus that way... thinking "if I just give up enough stuff God will love me, or let me into Heaven, or spare me from Hell" - whatever it is... how long before you decide "my life was better when I didn't have that God."

what kind of a God would create people, and then have the only thing that He cares about being the things that those people give up for Him?

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There is this moment in the book of Micah... and the question is being asked: **WHAT SACRIFICE WILL BE SUFFICIENT?**

And they ask (6:7) - will the Lord be pleased with a **THOUSAND RAMS?** With ten thousand rivers of oil?

If we kill every animal on the farm, will that get through to God?

then it goes so far as to say: Shall I give my firstborn, for my transgression?

It's this willingness to do anything... I mean anything to save your soul. To alter your circumstances... to attain the favor of the Lord... But all they were buying was a false sense of security, all the while now having to live life without the things that meant the most to them.

But the answer that we find in Micah, to the question of "what does the Lord require - is actually much different than any of them would have thought. And this is **PRE JESUS!** Remember, the Gospel has always been true.

this is what it says:

what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

You have made your entire lives, and your entire experience with God about the things that you **GIVE UP** thinking that it is making Him come closer to you... all of the things that you sacrifice... but every time you make a sacrifice, it only takes a moment before you find yourself needing to

make another one... because if life is fueled by the things that you give up, there will always be more to give up.

try this: do justice... love kindness... walk humbly with your God.

do justice

be quick to pick up those who have fallen... be a voice for the voiceless... stand in the gap for the broken...

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I want to make sure that you understand something about justice, and doing justice. It does not say “do punishment.” - Your job is not to bring retribution to those who have done harm in the world or retaliation to those who have done harm to YOUR WORLD.

it ALSO does not say “do judgment” - we talked the last couple of weeks about the way that Paul built this case in Romans 1 by showing us that all of us are on his list in one way or another... then begins chapter 2 by essentially saying “if you so much as think you aren’t on this list and that because of that, you are better than these people who are on the list... YOU ARE JUST AS GUILTY. Paul makes quite the point about NOT JUDGING.

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus tells us that “with the measure we use, it will be measured against us” - so the way that we try and judge others thinking that we know their situation from the fraction of their lives that we SEE... the amount of judgment that we heap upon them will be a determining factor as to the weights God uses to judge us. We said it like this a couple of weeks ago... “those who try to play judge now, WILL ANSWER TO THE JUDGE LATER for impersonating Him.”

so unless you are in a role in which your ACTUAL job involves that - your role is not to punish the guilty... or judge the guilty... your job is to lift up the ones who have been hurt by the injustices of our world, it’s systems, and it’s people, and to stand up for them with hopes that the injustices done to

them will not continue. You stand as a wall between them and injustice, but you do NOT act as a retaliation to bring that justice to the guilty.

you bring justice to the marginalized. Let God bring justice to the guilty.

then it says: love kindness

which is the Hebrew word *hesed*. One of our favorite Hebrew words around here... its the image of the mother swan plucking out her own feathers and lining her nest so that her offspring can rest in comfort. - it is an image of God's covenant faithfulness... unwavering LOVE willing to do anything for another.

Jesus, in Matthew 9 which we talked about a couple of weeks ago... right after telling the religious people that "it is the sick who need the Doctor, not those who are well" - he then quotes Hosea 6:6 which says "I desire *hesed*, NOT SACRIFICE.

there is a difference between BEING WILLING TO SACRIFICE SOMETHING ON BEHALF OF SOMEONE ELSE... and SACRIFICING SOMETHING SO THAT you can get God's attention. Jesus says "I desire mercy... I desire steadfast love toward another... far more than I care about what you GIVE UP."

You get that concept here again in Micah... do you want to make your life about the things you give up? Or does God care more about the person that you are becoming?

Do you cross to the other side of the street when you see the man beaten up and a few steps ahead of you, or do you RUN TO THAT PERSON?

Because we think that the main thing that God cares about is what we don't do... we don't do drugs... we don't steal things... we don't hurt people...

we fast... we pray... I think of Isaiah 58... which we have done MANY sermons on... "is not this the fast I choose?" God is calling out his people, because they are fasting and giving up food and giving up all of these

things... and yet they are still oppressing people, and not welcoming the stranger, and not helping anyone... and God says "I can't hear you."

"I can't respond to people who live spiritual lives that ignore practical needs"

"The fast I choose is one where you share your bread with the hungry (we think - oh, I just won't EAT BREAD... well how about you actually use that bread to FEED SOMEONE ELSE), and bring the homeless poor into your house, and cloth the naked..."

giving up facebook for lent is cool... but do you do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly?

Because quite frankly, it has been my experience that the people who give up the most, tend to be the least humble about it. I am a recovering religious person who used to believe that he was better than other people because I didn't do all of the things that THEY DO...

There is nothing humble about that.

In Ancient Hebrew, the word "humble" means "to tear down the wall" - you get rid of the things that make you think you are better...

Pride, in Hebrew literally just means "to lift up strength"

its placing your strength in yourself...

Pride is one thing that I truly believe can put up a wall between you and Jesus - a wall that only humility can tear down.

walk humbly.

humility, as hard as it is for us, is a necessity for Christianity. Throw away everything else... That is why C.S. Lewis says that pride is the most destructive vice, and from it comes everything else...

pride tells you that you don't need the Gospel. That you have accomplished so much on your own, that you are better than others... and it is not compatible with the Gospel.

But I truly believe that if we can get the humble part right... if we can walk humbly with our God... justice and kindness will fall into place, and you will live a life in which YOU CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE that Jesus blood is enough for you... and that it has transformed you...

and with that, let's look at Romans. We are going to break this up a bit in sections... we won't spend too much time on most of the specific lines, but instead want to frame out for you the reason that this should not scare you as much as it scares most people.

First, one more time, lets read Romans 2:3-5, then we will move on:

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 you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

Briefly... before we move on. We read a lot for the last few weeks about "God giving people over to the lusts of their hearts" - when we get into the later chapters of Romans, we get into some tricky language and complicated ideas about God "hardening" the hearts of people. This passage right here is one we will come back to several times, because it speaks directly to that concept... which is a very loaded and complicated concept that we won't do much with today... so be patient on that. But real quick:

Verse 4 and 5 - people have hard hearts... God has even given some of them up to those hardened hearts and is allowing sin to run its course in their lives... but in many ways, it is an act of *mercy*...

It is mercy, because the whole time, God is over here being patient... forbearing judgment... and showing kindness... and that kindness exists to constantly remind us - hey... I am still here... I still love you... I am still on your side.”

Lovingly waiting on us to reach that place in which we realize the NEED for repentance, and that God isn't kind to us for no reason... but for the purpose of helping us TURN OUR LIVES AROUND.

Yet so many are so numb to the lives that they have worked hard to create, that rather than repenting, they are just continuing in it.

It is pride. It is the opposite of walking humbly with your God. Its a clear message of “I don't need God” and by hardening your heart... or giving you over... or letting sin run its course... it is actually the OPPOSITE of giving up on you... - it is God saying “I am still here.” - and one day this will click in you... and when it does... I WILL STILL BE RIGHT HERE.

I wanted to begin to frame that idea for you, which will flesh out later in this series.

now Let's dive into Romans 2:6-16. This is fairly intense. Here is 6-12 -

He will render to each one 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. For God shows no partiality.”

notice again... self seeking... look out for themselves... not caring about others... there is that word again: wrath. we talked through that last week... and here is another word: fury.

fury is the Greek word: “*thymos*” (thu-mos) - it is ALSO one of the words for “the mind” - we talked about it briefly when we talked about LUST... “*epithumia*” (*epi-thume-ay-o*) is LUST... lust is “IN THE MIND” - but *thymos* is used in a couple of different ways... and the picture that the word typically paints is something of an “anger boiling up and soon subsiding again”

it rises... but then it comes back down. It is also used to describe passion... someone literally breathing hard. When you are passionate in a moment... worked up, whatever it is - typically it is in the form of a just anger, probably something you shouldn't ignore... you give something a lot of energy, but you don't stay there forever... you breath heavy, but then that eventually comes down.

it doesn't stay boiled.

but when I studied the word a bit, I realized that it comes from the word “*thyō*” which LITERALLY MEANS to *sacrifice*.

and I don't know the significance of that theologically. I am sure there is something.

but... THIS IS JUST ME talking... I didn't get this from anywhere else... it is JUST FOOD FOR THOUGHT... but these words are clearly connected... one.. a boiling... THAT SUBSIDES... connected to the word “sacrifice.” -

the thing that so many people do thinking that it will get them something different than what they have now, or get to a place that they don't think they would get without it. The thing that Jesus says HE desires *hesed*, NOT sacrifice.

and this is what I kept coming back to with this... it is what so many do:

WE OFTEN MAKE DECISIONS TO SACRIFICE... TO CUT OFF... TO CHANGE THINGS... When the water is boiling.

When we AREN'T all there in our minds... when it hasn't yet subsided. Anger, for example... naturally redirects your blood away from your brain

and prepares you for a fight, and when that happens, you lose about 30 IQ points in those moments... yet so many people I know make the most life altering decisions you could possibly make during times of utter frustration and anger... instead of letting it subside.

It doesn't stop raining, everything is getting destroyed... you aren't thinking clearly, and you think "what can we do to appease the gods?"

and then we are surprised when everything falls apart. Or why when we get where we set out to go, things aren't any different, or better...

OF COURSE THEY AREN'T!

but God does NOT DO THAT.

another word Paul uses in this section that has "*thymos*" (thu-mos) in the word "*makrothymia*" - which is the word PATIENCE. God is patient with us through the times when our hearts are hard and we aren't turning to Him. He is slow to avenge a wrong.

The Bible says that God gets angry... but He is SLOW to become angry. When God renewed the covenant with Israel after the Golden Calf incident we keep coming back to, it says "God is SLOW to anger, and abounding in steadfast love" - abounding in *hesed*.

And when something like injustice brings Him to a boil... that boil subsides... He does not make decisions out of anger... Just like we learned about with wrath, it is part of His character... His heart is to bring the world back to its intended place and ultimately HE WILL DO THAT...

and not everyone is going to be on the right side of that happening, that is very clear in the scriptures. Paul is very clear about that here... God is going to sort all of this out... but every time Paul talks about God's judgment, He calls it God's RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT. Because that is what it is... It is God making the world right.

moving along through this...

Here is verse 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. 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 thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.”

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The idea is that the Jews have been given the law... and will be judged according to that which they had access too. Some others have not had access to the Torah, and so they will not be judged by the Torah, but they still, in their hearts, have an instinct of what is right and what is wrong and in fact some of them are actually really good at doing the right thing, even without the law.

Paul talks about this earlier in Romans 1:20 when He says that God’s divine attributes are clear as day to everyone, and have been from the creation of the world... its obvious, when you look at the world, that there is a master craftsman who put this all together, and so just because the Gentiles don’t have the law, doesn’t make them free to do whatever they like...

but here is the thing we need to catch AND APPLY immediately:

the Jews HAVE the Torah... and the Gentiles DON’T have the Torah... and yet the Jews are judging the Gentiles BY THE TORAH.

Does that sound familiar? It sure does to me! Christians often judge the world by the standards that have been set FOR US.

Paul spends the first five verses of chapter two on the issue of judging... and the idea that the world automatically should behave like Christians is

absolutely ABSURD, and the idea that we would measure a judgment against them based on THAT STANDARD is only going to push people away from the love of God, because it shows people that we value our rules more than we value them as people.

Before we even get to know someone, we judge them based on the way that they don't measure up to a standard that they by no means committed to follow.

We keep saying:

Don't treat people as they deserve, don't measure them on a scale they have no ability or desire to live up to.

treat people as they are worth.

REMEMBER HONOR? it's a weight... when you honor someone, you show them you value them.

Value is not determined by the actions or even the content of their character but of their place in the family of God.

If we all got what we deserved, the whole world would be empty... but the world is NOT empty, because God's kindness and forbearance continues, and should be leading us to repentance.

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So, there is a phrase that Paul uses in this passage, and Jesus uses it a couple of times... its a bit of a scary phrase:

On that day.

the day of judgment... the day of wrath... whatever you want to call it... it is nice to think that it will never happen, but Jesus, Paul and the other New Testament writers seem to agree... there will be a day when God sorts out the world.

and the question is: what will it be like when it actually happens?

and to be honest: I DON'T KNOW. There are definitely all sorts of hints throughout the Bible about some of the things that will happen.

But one of the things we do know for sure, is that for many, it will come as a surprise.

I think it would help us to gain a more detailed understanding of what Paul is speaking about when he talks about judgment, by looking at a couple of times that Jesus Himself speaks of that day, and see if we can find some consistencies to build off of.

Now, remember what Paul says... we store up wrath for ourselves when we are self-righteous. When we believe that on whatever merits that we have accomplished, we have earned something. When we believe that we can stay the way we are and we don't need Jesus to change us, and then obviously there is all sorts of stuff in Romans 1 about injustice.

Ungodliness and injustice (Romans 1:18)

In Matthew 7 and in Matthew 25 Jesus gives us a couple different scenarios of people who will be just absolutely shocked by the results of the final judgment... and I want to show you just how IN LINE both of these stories fall into what Paul is saying about people who believe that they have earned it... that they do the right thing.

Matthew 25 is probably the most famous passage about judgment, because it is the moment in which Jesus separates the sheep from the goats. The sheep on His right side, the goats on His left, based on how they responded to and treated the "least of these"

THERE ARE TWO CONFLICTING VIEWS AS TO EXACTLY WHO "THE LEAST OF THESE" are that Jesus is referring to in this passage.

Many scholars believe that "the least of these" are the messengers of the Gospel, the children of God out doing the work of the ministry, and thus the argument is that how you treat God's children you treat Jesus. There is

some contextual merit to that argument but when I read the whole of the Bible (some of which I shared with you today)... I lean the other way.

The other position is that it is referring to how we treat anyone... how we treat the person who can't do anything for us at all, THAT is the demonstration of how we treat Jesus.

That is certainly a more drastic reading of it.

The problem with that, is if that is true, then it would seem that Jesus reserves the harshest judgments that He speaks of in the Bible for people who do not: feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned... saying that whatever we did not do unto the least of these, we did not do unto Jesus.

But whichever view is accurate, this same principle still applies.

Think about the moments, and WE ALL HAVE HAD THESE MOMENTS... when you did not let that stranger into your house. When you did not help the poor person when they were standing on the street corner in the snow on a 5 degree evening in February holding a sign that just says "Hungry" - WHEN YOU KNOW YOU COULD HAVE.

You have to work against compassion to do that. You have to work AGAINST KINDNESS AND JUSTICE. You have to work against something that was naturally placed in you by God to care for another human being... its just another example of a calloused heart...

but when it comes to issues of money, security, and home... there is an added factor... Particularly money, the factor is: I need this myself. Which is justified with: I earned this myself,

which leads to: so I should keep it for myself.

because when we earn something it creates a pride that convinces us that we are able to get there. Wherever "there" is... and if we just work hard enough, one day we will HAVE ENOUGH.

again, just like so many of the others things we have been talking about... its an anti-christ. It's an anti Gospel message... and it's subtle enough, that BOTH those who DID take care of the least of these, and those who didn't, both respond to Jesus saying "Lord, when? When did we do that?"

"When did we NOT do that?"

But this is why this story matters so much to the judgment narrative:

Jesus ends by saying of those who did nothing for the least of these - "these will go away into eternal punishment" - but He uses a very very strange Greek word there, that is only used a couple other times in the entire Bible... the word for punishment is the word: *kolasis* - the writer John uses it when he says "fear has to do with punishment" - it has to do with *kolasis*.

Thats why so many sacrifice... because of fear... fear of what will happen if they don't. It is why so many people get saved but yet never learn how to respond to the least of these, and become Kingdom minded... because they accepted the message out of fear of punishment, with no real understanding of the fruit that comes when the decision is made OUT OF LOVE for Jesus.

The word *kolasis* comes from a word that means "to prune a tree."

The image is literally that of a farmer going out and pruning a tree... removing the overgrown branches so it can grow properly... removing the fruit that is taking up the space on the branch but isn't the best fruit of the year yet, in order to make room for the best fruit to come forth on the branch.

Remember, judgment is about God restoring the world back to what He created it to be. It's a good thing, not a bad thing... because once the bad fruit has been pruned... the good fruit can come. When you don't take care of the least of these... when people have to sleep on the street because nobody opened their home... because they went naked while others had dressers full of clothes - that is called injustice, rooted ultimately in pride... and its fruit that has to be cut off the tree.

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Fast forward to Romans 2:15-16 -

“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 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.”

First, I want to explore this idea of the law written on their hearts... and then we will spend the rest of our time today on verse 16, which says that on that day, God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.

Paul is quoting Jeremiah 31 when he talks about writing the law of God on your heart... and the reason that I think this is worth noting is this... Jeremiah also is the writer who says that “the heart is deceitful above all else” - so the question is... is it good? or is it bad? is the heart good or bad? And which part will be judged? The deceived part? or the part with the Word written on it?

The natural bend of the heart is to trick you into thinking you know what you want... that is what it means when it says “it is deceitful above all else” - but the heart is extremely important... it is the wellspring of compassion and empathy and love for another person... and as we see here in Romans (quoting Jeremiah 31) we can fill our hearts with God’s word - and actually do a lot of good with that. In Luke 6:45 Jesus tells us that if our hearts are filled with good treasures, we will produce good things... if its full of evil, we will produce evil.

We know that out of the overflow of what is in our hearts comes the things we say and ultimately the way that we behave... so filling our hearts with the Word of God is the best way to combat the lies that will try to get in there... that is why we write the Word of God on our hearts... but NOTICE what Paul says here... and really, it just proves that the heart is deceitful... it wants to trick you... and convince you of the things that YOU NEED...

it says "the law is written on their heart, yet while their conscience bears witness, THEIR CONFLICTING THOUGHTS accuse them or even EXCUSE THEM... on that day when God judges the secrets of men.

Their thoughts are conflicting... they are confused... they are tricked... they are even making excuses for themselves as to why they did the things that they did, trying to JUSTIFY themselves for the things that they have done... trying to write those things off as "okay" - but when we do evil... when we sin... when practice ungodliness and injustice...

its a bad thing. it is not something we should take lightly... it is something we should REPENT OF.

And its not about sacrifice... sacrifice is something we do thinking we appease God and we think puts us in right standing so that we don't go to hell.

IT IS NOT ABOUT THAT.

it's about image bearing. It's about realizing the parts of our lives that God wants to prune, now... so that He can use us NOW - as His vessels of hope in our world that He is working to restore and one day will restore in its fullness. And all of the bad things that need to get cut off from our world today... we can do that now... and we can LIVE FULL LIVES NOW...

or we can live with the fruit of an unpruned tree, not reaching our potential, not helping make the world better, not bringing Heaven to earth now... and THEN, when that DAY FINALLY DOES COME... God will have to cut off all of the bad, then... because bad fruit can not exist in a perfect world... and a perfect world is exactly what God intends for humanity. And what that will look like I can't speak to specifically... but I can say this... We can prune now... and live full now... and not have to worry or live in fear about what will happen on that day.

Do you see the difference? One way sets you up to live a life of love that looks a little more like Jesus to a world that needs Him, the other way keeps you in fear of what God will do to you for all that you have done. REPENTANCE, true repentance is NOT an act of selfishness on your own

behalf only designed to wash away your sins... True repentance is an act of love on both God's part and on your part, because its also you TURNING AROUND, pruning the bad off SO YOU CAN DO MORE FOR THE KINGDOM today.

But our conflicting thoughts are trying to convince us that we do not need the pruning. That things are just fine as they are. And it's a lie.

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In his first recorded sermon, Jesus begins by proclaiming these words: "Blessed are the poor in Spirit. Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." - It is the Gospel in a few brief words, and what it means is simply this: Blessed are you when you realize that Spiritually, on your own... you are bankrupt. There is no money in the bank. You can't pay. You need someone else to pay for you.

He says that when we REALIZE THAT, we are blessed, and we get the Kingdom of Heaven.

Because when we look at the lists that Paul gives us... some that we have committed, others that we haven't... we know that ultimately the point is that EVERYONE FINDS THEMSELVES HERE... everyone finds themselves at the bottom... everyone deserves whatever punishment it is that God gives us... but the best news in the entire world is verse 16... because it doesn't just say that God judges the secrets of men... It says that he judges the secrets of men, BY JESUS CHRIST.

Listen...

There is no place in all of Paul's writings, and I would venture to say there may not be another place in the entire New Testament, that paints a more terrifying picture of a final judgment than the whole of the passage we are on today...

And IF PAUL didn't first give us such a strong proclamation of JUST WHAT THE GOSPEL actually is in Romans 1:16-17, then this could be really hard

to navigate. But remember, THE GOSPEL IS THE POWER OF GOD FOR SALVATION TO EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES.

And the progression here from 1:16 until 2:16 really is so important because what Paul does is he begins there... The Gospel is the power of God for Salvation to everyone who believes...

then he frames this next section by talking about the glory of God and the image of God that we are called to reflect but explains how EVERYONE exchanges that. The whole of humanity, in one way or another exchanges that and then, AS A RESULT of that exchange, Paul gives us a list of things that people do... and his list actually begins with some narrow topics, things that only a few people have done, then he broadens it more and more and more until by the end of it we find that every single person is on this list and every single person will have to be accountable one day for what we have done...

AND THAT IS WHY we need Jesus.

think about this concept for a moment:

God judges the secrets...

Now, of course, you can read that in a variety of ways. A very common understanding of the verse is that Jesus Himself will simply judge the secrets of men. God will use Jesus to judge the secrets of men, and for every secret. everything you hid, God will punish you for that...

And where that is certainly an understandable approach to it, I READ IT VERY DIFFERENTLY THAN THAT.

The more I understand the grace of God, the more loaded with grace the Bible becomes to me... and that is exactly how I read this: when God judges the secrets of men, He will do it BY judging Jesus Christ.

Or let me put this another way:

In the Supreme Court building, throughout the building are images of scales throughout, symbolizing what is known as “the scales of justice” - it is the concept of impartial deliberation, or “weighing,” of two sides in a legal dispute and it is a symbol of the pledge that each justice makes, THAT THEY WILL indeed try the cases fairly, and as the scales tip, so will the verdict.

We need to be extremely clear here... God is the judge, and HE WILL JUDGE EACH CASE FAIRLY... and as the scales tip, SO WILL THE VERDICT.

There is a very common argument that comes from misappropriating scripture, in which someone may say “I am glad that God judges the heart... not the things that I have done.”

Okay... please. That is ridiculous. Your heart has had far worse intentions than any action you have ever brought to life from it. That is for sure. Sure, you in your heart may desire good things for your family, for the community... even for the homeless person on the street that maybe your life doesn't always translate into a reality...

BUT ITS THE EXACT SAME WITH SIN. THERE IS ALWAYS MORE GOING ON INSIDE THAN WHAT WE SEE ON THE OUTSIDE and its NOT ONLY GOOD.

If you read this passage that says GOD JUDGES THE SECRETS OF MEN, that should absolutely terrify you especially if you leave OUT the part about Jesus. Because when all those secrets are placed on that scale, it isn't even going to be close.

You will be on one side... your sin will be on the other... and your sin will find you guilty... UNLESS God judges YOUR secrets... BY Jesus Christ. UNLESS GOD JUDGES YOUR SECRETS... by the things that JESUS DID.

That is what makes justification so incredible and it is why Paul had to lay that foundation before he got into our sins and ungodliness and injustice... because justifications means “TO BE DECLARED AS RIGHTEOUS” - the

heart behind it is that everything you are, Jesus became on your behalf,
AND DIED FOR... AND YOU BECAME EVERYTHING THAT JESUS IS...

so when God passes that judgment and he looks at the person standing in
the court room waiting for a verdict... He does not see you... HE SEES
JESUS.

because anything less would be a guilty verdict.

The passage that to me brings the most clarity to this is the second “on that
day” passage that has a tendency to terrify even the Christians who go to
church twice on Sunday.

Matthew 7 is the one that is the scariest for most Pentecostals, and
rightfully so. Jesus says “on that day, many will say to me LORD LORD!
Did we not prophecy in your name? Did we not do mighty works in your
name? Cast out demons in your name?”

These people are crying out to Jesus “we did all of the Spiritual stuff!” and
yet Jesus will tell them “depart from me you workers of LAWLESSNESS, I
never knew you.”

Which, of course as people begin to flesh out this verse we try and figure
out a way to frame it so that it of course is not talking about US... right? So
we say things like “yeah, but its like this: these people did all of these
things, but like Jesus says, they didn’t actually know Him” - they didn’t have
a relationship with Him... and that may be true... they may not have... but it
is not comforting BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT THAT THEY DID.

That is the thing that is so scary about that verse. It describes people just
like us, and they thought, just like we think... that we are in right standing
with Jesus and yet He says to them “I never knew you.”

But when you look really really really closely at this passage, you may
notice something that makes this story COMPLETELY CONSISTENT
WITH THE GOSPEL.

It is three little words... three very destructive words: DID WE NOT.

Did we not prophecy in your name? and cast out demons in your name?
and do mighty works in your name?

All of these people standing before God are trying to get to him on account
of something that *they did*.

But if you stand on what you've done, you will stand all alone.

But on that day... I can tell you, if I am weighed on account of the things
that I DID... I am not going to make it.

But thank God, the Gospel is that on that day, I won't stand alone. Because
God has accounted TO me the righteousness of Jesus Christ, who suffered
a sinners death at the hands of sinners, but who defeated death, and is
now seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

If you are far from God today, God wants you to give your life to Him. He
wants you to trust in Jesus.

If you know that you are going in the wrong direction today, God wants you
to repent... to turn around... He will meet you right where you are... but the
first step is coming to terms with the fact that you are not as you should be.

I know I am not.

and until you grasp the fact that Jesus will be there, standing with you...
you are going to spend your entire life trying to figure out what you can do
to tip those scales... that is the heart of sacrifice... God... I'll give you
this... so you can forgive me... God, I'll give this up, so that you will rescue
me.

It's not about fear... fear has to do with punishment. And IF you give your
life to God out of fear of punishment, you will live your life FOR God, out of
fear of punishment... But perfect love casts out fear... and LOVE IS WHY
WE DO WHAT WE DO.

Love is what put Jesus on the cross.

and until you can come to terms with the fact that you needed Him there...
and that He did that amazing act of LOVE FOR YOU... you will spend your
whole life saying "Did we not?"

when the entire Gospel is coming to terms with the fact THAT JESUS DID.