Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Principles of God's Judgment, Part 3
Scripture: Romans 2:6-10
Code: 45-19

Principles of Judgment, Part 3

Tonight we continue our series in Paul's epistle to the Romans, chapter 2. Every time I come to the study of the Word of God, I concentrate on the reality that this is in fact God's very message to us, that we're not dealing with some kind of second- hand commentary on what God thinks, but this is His own precious Word. And Scripture claims for itself that every Word of God is pure and that all Scripture is given to perfect the man of God. And so, as we approach the Word of God tonight, we hear God speak to our own perfection.

We're looking at verses 1 through 16 of Romans chapter 2, and taking it slowly as we go through this section. And we've entitled this section, "Principles of Judgment...Principles of Judgment."

In Psalm 9 verse 7 the Scripture says, "The Lord hath prepared His throne for judgment." In Psalm 96 verse 13 it says, "The Lord cometh to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with His truth." Now those are just two of multitudes of Scriptures throughout the Bible that tell us that God is coming some day to judge the world.

The final judgment day is given many different titles in Scripture. Here in the second chapter of Romans and also in the sixth chapter of Revelation it is called the day of wrath. Here also in the second chapter of Romans and in verse 5 it is called the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. In 2 Peter 3:7 it is called the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. In Jude 6 it is called the great day. But by whatever terminology there is coming an inevitable day when God will judge the world.

Paul tells us in 2 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 1 that it will occur at the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He writes, "I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His Kingdom." God will judge and God will judge when Jesus Christ returns.

In 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 verse 8 it says that the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This final judgment is described in detail in the twentieth chapter of Revelation where John says, "And I saw a great white throne and Him that sat on it from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God and the books were opened and another book was opened which is the book of life and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it and death and Hades delivered up the dead that were in them and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire, this is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." And there we have a rather explicit look at the coming day of judgment when the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

In Matthew chapter 13 verses 41 to 43, we also read, "The Son of Man shall send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend and them who do iniquity and shall cast them into a furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father."

Now these Scriptures simply help us to get our focus on the coming judgment which will bring Jesus Christ into His throne, and all the dead of all the ages will be brought to that throne to be judged by Him. Now if in fact all men on the face of the earth will face the inevitable judgment, we have something that we should clearly understand. If all men are to face Jesus Christ in that hour, then we had best know what is necessary to avoid that judgment.

The New Testament says, "It is appointed unto men once to die and after this, the judgment," so that all of human history moves inexorably and unavoidably toward the final sentencing. The writer of Hebrews warned then of a fearful judgment of fiery indignation which would devour God's adversaries. And he records in the tenth chapter of Hebrews these words, "Vengeance belongs unto Me, I will recompense, says the Lord, and again the Lord shall judge His people." And then he says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

God will judge and God will judge all man, and if that's true we need to know that. And so, God has constantly in the pages of Scripture warned us. But a question of great importance now faces us. If all men will face the judgment of God, what then will be the standard for that judgment? How is it that He is going to judge us? What criterion will He use? What are the elements of judgment? On what basis will men be condemned and sent to hell forever? And on what basis will men be sent to heaven forever?

Well, I believe the basis of judgment is given in the 16 verses of the first chapter...or the second chapter of Romans, rather. In these 16 verses the Apostle Paul gives us six principles for divine judgment, the six factors by which God judges men.

Let me just remind you of the six and then we'll pick it up where we left off last time. Number one, God judges on the basis of knowledge. Secondly, on the basis of truth. Thirdly, on the basis of guilt. Fourthly, on the basis of deeds. Fifthly, on the basis of impartiality. And sixthly, on the basis of motives.

Now keep in mind as we are looking at the second chapter of Romans that this chapter is not in isolation but is a part of a very large picture in which Paul presents the gospel of Jesus Christ. Back in chapter 1 verse 16 he brought up the gospel of Jesus Christ. And then beginning in verse 18 he starts to explain what it is. Gospel means good news, but before you can hear the good news you have to hear the bad news. And so, for chapter 1 and 2 and the first part of chapter 3, the news is all bad...man is sinful, he is immoral even at his highest ethical point he falls short of God's standard. And he is under the stain and the condemnation of sin. So that when you come to chapter 3 verse 19 you read this, "We know that whatever things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight, for by law or by the law is the knowledge of sin."

In other words, the first three chapters are designed to stop every mouth so that there is nobody who can claim that he is exempt from God's judgment. There is no one who can claim that he doesn't need to be evaluated by the divine standard. And so from chapter 1:18 through 3:20 we have all bad news. Now that is really a set up, folks, as I'm sure you know if you've studied the book of Romans, because in chapter 3 verse 21 the news is good and it begins to talk about how Christ saves man from his lostness.

Now as we looked at chapter 1, we saw basically a condemnation of pagan man, immoral man. And as we're looking at chapter 2, we're seeing more of an emphasis on the outwardly moral religious self-righteous man. But both come up in the same, into the same category at the end, both are condemned. Whether an immoral pagan debased life style such as chapter 1 verses 18 to 32, or an outwardly moral religious self-righteous life style such as in chapter 2, it all ends up the same way. Man is a sinner and condemned to judgment.

Now let's go back and look at these single elements that make up the six principles of judgment. Verse 1 reminds us that God will judge according to knowledge, listen to it. "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself for thou that judgest doest the same things." In other words, God is going to judge you on the basis of what you know. And the fact that you know enough to be judged is indicated by the fact that you judge other people. And if you judge others, then you must know the standard. He's speaking most particularly to the Jew who would sit in condemnation on the Gentile and he would agree with verses 18 to 32 of chapter 1, he would agree that the Gentile is to be

condemned only he would hold himself as apart from such condemnation and in fact Paul says he is equally condemned because if he can judge another then he knows the standard and knowing the standard he does the very same things. So God will judge men according to their knowledge. And we went into detail on that.

Secondly, God judges according to truth. "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth," verse 2 says, "against them who commit such things and thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them that do such things and doest the same that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" You see, the hypocrite's hope is that God will not judge on the basis of truth, He will judge on the basis of the surface delusion. But He will not. He will judge on the basis of the truth. He will not exonerate people for a form of godliness, for an outward appearance of godliness, He will judge on the basis of an inward reality. And no man can hide the truth of what is inside from God.

In Job 8:13 it says, "The hypocrite's hope shall perish." In Job 36:13 it says, "The hypocrites in heart heap up wrath." So God will judge by knowledge as revealed in the ability we have to hold other people to a standard, and God will judge by truth, the real facts not the facade.

Thirdly, God will judge on the basis of guilt. We talked about that in verses 4 and 5, "Despiseth thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness or hard and unconverted heart treasureth up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." And here what he is saying is you're guilty of despising the goodness of God. God has been merciful and gracious and kind and loving and patient and instead of you following that goodness to repentance, your hard and unconverted heart in rejecting it has been piling up wrath which will be poured out on the day of judgment. And you are guilty of the severest abuse of God's grace.

Now fourthly, and for tonight, God judges on the basis of deeds. He judges on the basis of deeds. Verse 6, follow as I read, "Who will render to every man according to his deeds," and that's the key verse. He will render to every man according to his deeds. "To them who by patient continuance and well doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, or immortality, eternal life, but unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath. Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory, honor and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek, for there is no respect of persons with God."

Now look at verse 6, God will render to every man according to his deeds. And then in verse 7, to them who by patient continuance and well doing seek for glory, honor and immortality, eternal life. But unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath. And then he repeats essentially a similar thought and says it doesn't matter whether you're a Jew or a Greek, it's all going to come out the same because God has no respect of persons.

Now this passage is very simple at first reading but it has some very complex theological thought in it and so I hope the Lord will really lead us as we think these things through.

We saw when we read Revelation 20 that God is going to judge men according to their works. It said it twice, according to their works, according to their works. And this is saying the very same thing. The basic truth is in verse 6, men will be judged according to their deeds, their works.

Now that is not a new concept, that is a concept that is all throughout the Scripture. In Jeremiah 17:10 it says, "I the Lord search the heart, I test the conscience, even to give every man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings." In Isaiah 3 verses 10 and 11 it says, "Say to the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill for him for the reward of his hands shall be given him."

The Old Testament then tells us that God will judge on the basis of the product, the works, the deeds, the life pattern of an individual. You say, "Well, that's...that's really an Old Testament thought, isn't it? That's certainly not New Testament." No, it's equally New Testament that God will judge men on the basis of their works.

In Matthew chapter 16, and I want to show you some verses, you don't need to turn to them but you might want to jot them down. I want to show you some verses in the New Testament that emphasize the same truth. In Matthew 16:27 it says, "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels," speaking of that great time of judgment in the future. "And then He shall reward every man according to his works." Same concept, according to his works. Even in 1 Corinthians 3 a familiar passage to all of us, we find in verse 8 that each of us shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. Some of us have built upon a foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and stubble, and every man's work shall be made manifest for the day shall declare it for because it shall be revealed by fire and the fire shall test every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he's built upon it, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved yet as by fire."

In 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 10 we read similarly, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that everyone may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done whether it be good or worthless." Even Galatians, that great epistle extolling grace says this, chapter 6 verse 7, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap, for he that soweth to his flesh shall have the flesh reap corruption, and he that soweth to the spirit, shall have the spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we...what?...don't faint."

And you find the same principle elsewhere in the New Testament. There is a place for works in judgment, both of the unbeliever and the believer. In Romans 14:12 it says, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Now let's go back to the second chapter of Romans. Whether you're looking in the Old Testament or the New Testament, and those are just sample Scriptures, you will find many many Scriptures that remind us that God will judge men on the basis of their deeds. Now the primary thrust here is that God does not judge us on the basis of our profession. He does not judge us on the basis of our relationships. He does no judge the Jew on the basis of his Abrahamic heritage. He does not judge you on the basis of your identification with a church. He judges on the basis of the product of your life. The question will not be whether a man is a Jew or whether he's a Gentile, whether he is heathen, whether he is religious, whether he goes to church or doesn't go to church, the issue is does his life manifest obedience to God...that's the issue. The actions of men...now mark it...form an infallible index to their character. That is what the Scripture says again and again, by their fruit you shall...what?...you shall know them. The life pattern, the life mode, if you will, the works and the deeds of life are an infallible index to character. And so this forms one of the unchanging standards by which God judges.

In fact, you might say there are only two classes of people in the world, that's all, just two. My grandfather used to say the saints and the aints. There are only two classes of people in the world, those who obey God and those who do not obey God. None of us perfectly obeys God, but there are some people in the world who don't obey God at all, and there are others who seek to obey. Those are the two kinds of people. So every man faces an impartial judge who has a comprehensive record of that man's deeds. And by that record will his eternal destiny be determined, says Paul.

I read this week about a new publishing effort that's being made in the area of children's books. And through the marvel of computer printing, a company has designed a story book series which can feature your own child. All you have to do is send in your child's name, the names of your child's friends, your child's school and the name of the teacher, and something about the child's life and what they like and so forth and so on, and they will through the computer put your child into the whole story and send you a book about your child. That's a fairy tale, that's a fantasy world. But God has a book about everybody's life that is absolutely on target and by that record shall God judge.

Now, some of you are getting a little nervous. Ha...that's why you kind of laughed, you just had to let it out. You're saying, "MacArthur, you sound like a works/righteousness person." And those of you who have been here for any time know that I'm not so let me try to help you a little bit.

Somebody's going to say, "Well, salvation by works," I've been accused of teaching that before, somebody's going to say, "You're talking about a works salvation." No, I'm not talking about that because the Bible doesn't teach that. The Bible doesn't teach that you can be saved by your works.

The Bible teaches just the opposite. "Not of works lest any man should boast." The Bible never teaches salvation by works. In Psalm 115 verse 1 it says, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory for Thy mercy." In other words, for whatever we are, the glory is not ours, not unto us...not unto us but unto Your name.

In the forty-eighth chapter of the prophet Isaiah we find another indication of the thought of the writer in the Old Testament in regard to this subject. In verse 11, "For Mine own sake, even for Mine own sake will I do it, for how should My name be polluted and I will not give My glory unto another." In other words, God says I will do what I will do, I will save and I will fulfill My promise for My sake and I will not give it to someone else to do that, lest I give My glory to another. So to maintain God's glory for Himself in saving grace, there can be no works salvation.

In Jeremiah 31 where you have the great statement of the new covenant, "The days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt which My covenant they broke, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts and will be their God and they shall be My people." In other words, God says I'll do it. "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more." The essence of that new covenant is that it is a covenant of mercy and grace extended to unworthy people.

In the New Testament we find the very same thing. Again there can be no works salvation. In 1 Timothy 1:15 Paul says, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save...what?...sinners of whom I am chief, nevertheless for this cause I obtained mercy." And Ephesians 2:8 and 9 sums it up, "For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast."

Now listen to me very careful that you understand this, we're building to a very important truth. We will be judged by our works, says Romans 6, and we'll get into the specifics in a moment. But we cannot be saved by our works. You say, "If that's the case then, how do works fit in? Or do they fit in?" Well, though we cannot be saved by works, works are a very important part of our life. In Philippians chapter 2 verse 12, "Wherefore, my beloved, as you've always obeyed not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you both the will and to do of His good pleasure." He says you must show some works, you must work out on the outside the salvation that you've received on the inside.

In Ephesians 2 it says this, right after verse 9, "Not of works lest any man should boast," it says, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Now what are these verses saying? And there are myriad other ones in the New Testament. They're saying this. You cannot be saved by works but you will be saved unto works, right? In other words, if you are truly saved you will be His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that you walk in them. Therefore God when God judges can look at a man and if He sees the works He knows that the salvation has been accomplished. It is not that you're saved by works, it is that you're saved unto good works. A person's deeds, a person's works reveal whether he has been saved and they are the absolute infallible indicator. So an unbeliever will be judged by his works, his deeds and they will reveal his unbelief. They will reveal the absence of God in his life because all of his works will be unrighteous. And even when he tries to be righteous, it will turn out to be filthy rags.

So all God has to do is look at the works. If He sees works that are manifestations of righteousness, He knows there is a regenerated person. If He sees no such manifestation of righteousness, He knows there is an unregenerate person. Therefore judgment in the end can be rendered on the basis of works. The believer, the one who by faith has been given the power of God to produce righteous works will be clearly indicated by those works of righteousness. So the deeds then of a person, what you do in your life, is a fair indicator of where you stand with God.

Now as we approach verses 6 to 10 and then just close with just a thought about verse 11, I want you to understand one very important thing. Paul is not talking about salvation here, so get that out of your mind or you'll be confused. He doesn't talk about salvation till chapter 3 verse 21. He is simply dealing with one of the elements of judgment. He doesn't say how the righteous people got righteous or he doesn't say why the unrighteous people were unrighteous, he just says you can judge them by their works. A true Christian is known by his righteous deeds. A non-Christian is known by the absence of righteous deeds.

Now what does that say to you? Simple thought. If there's nothing in your life to indicate righteousness, then there's no righteousness there. "For if any man be in Christ, he is a ...what?...new creation, old things are passed away and behold all things have become new." If there's no manifestation, there can be no salvation. There may be periods of time when we walk in disobedience and the flesh. But there cannot be a life that is barren of righteous deeds that can still claim to be redeemed.

And notice there's no neutrality either, Jesus said, "He that is not with Me is against Me. He that gathereth not with Me, scattereth abroad," Matthew 12:30.

Now let's look at the two sides. First of all, those whose deeds manifest that they receive eternal life. And secondly, those whose deeds manifest that they are the recipients of wrath.

First of all, those who receive eternal life, verse 7, "To them," and this is a marvelous verse, "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, I give eternal life." Now I want you to listen to this, people, this is such a critical verse and so many people misunderstand the standard of salvation. Eternal life belongs to those who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality or incorruption. That is the mark of a believer. And those three terms in verse 7 are just marvelous terms. In a sense they're distinct and in a sense they're interwoven and indistinct. For glory and honor and immortality could all be wrapped up into the same thing. But let me see if I can just give a shade of meaning to them that gives them some difference.
First of all is glory. The highest and most wonderful goal of a believer is glory. He seeks to glorify God. He seeks to attain unto the glory of God some day. He seeks as 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "In whatever he does to do it all to the glory of God." What does that mean? Glory basically is to manifest the essence or nature of God. And the believer seeks to be a vehicle through which God can be manifest, through which God's glory can be seen. That's his desire.

Somebody who doesn't have the desire to glorify God cannot be truly a Christian because that is basic to the desire of a true believer. And yet so many times, you know, we say, "Well, I know they don't have any desire to glorify God but once upon a time they made a decision or once upon a time they used to go to church, or whatever," but the mark, says Paul, is patient continuance in well doing and seeking that God would be glorified. They seek glory. They seek it even in its fullest sense, that in that incredible reality of the future day when we see Jesus Christ we will be transformed into His own image and eternally without flaw will radiate His marvelous glory. The goal of a true Christian, you see, is to reflect God's glory. And if that's true then his life will manifest enough of a righteous pattern that God can judge him on that basis and say that's a true believer.

Secondly, honor...that's very close to glory and, I guess, in a sense you could say it's the result of glory. To reflect the glory of God is to receive divine honor, is to receive the honor that God gives, the blessedness that God gives. I don't know about you but I seek to be honored by God, do you not? I seek that God would be pleased and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." And so, as you seek to manifest the glory of God, that marvelous reality of what He is through your life, you also seek that God should honor and reward such faithfulness because that's what He's promised. And then ultimately we seek incorruption when full glory and full honor is realized in the resurrection when we are like Jesus Christ.

And so, we could spend time on each one of these terms going all through Scripture, marvelous terms. But he's saying a true believer patiently continues in doing good works because he seeks after

glory and honor and immortality.

Now what is this saying? Let me sum it up in one statement. His perspective is heavenly, you see? It's heavenly. The true objective of the saint is to live for that which is eternal. As Colossians 3 says, "He sets his affections on things...where?...above." That is a Godward perspective.

These three terms describe a person with divine aspirations. The highest level of the Christian's life is to aspire to glorify God, to receive honor from God and to enter into the incorruption of ultimate immortality and being transformed into the image of Christ. This is not only the goal of our life here, but the goal of our life in the future.

Now, when God looks at a life and He sees a life that seeks glory and He sees a life that seeks to be honored by God and not men and he seeks a life that longs for immortality that isn't bound to this earth, it longs for incorruption, it isn't engulfed in corruption, it seeks the heavenly dimension, to that He gives eternal life. That is the standard by which God will judge. Now Paul isn't saying anything about how a person like this is produced. He just says you can judge that person by their works and say they have been redeemed. He's not talking about how they got that way, he's just saying it's fair to judge them by those righteous patterns. And He gives them eternal life. Some time we'll have to do a whole study on what eternal life means, but basically eternal life means the life of God in the soul of man forever.

I love what it says in 1 John 5:20, "This is the true God and eternal life...who?...Jesus Christ." What is eternal life? Jesus Christ. What does it mean to have eternal life? To have Jesus Christ living where? In me. "Christ liveth in me and the life I know live I live by the faith of the Son of God. Nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ living in me." You see, eternal life is the life of God in the soul of man by the presence of the indwelling Christ. And it goes on throughout eternity.

Basically, people, eternal life is not a quantity of life, it's a quality of life. It is the life of God in the soul of man and...mark it...the life of God in the soul of man will always produce a righteous pattern. And if you have an unrighteous pattern in your life, you are fighting against the very nature God has created in you in salvation. It's like holding your breath. It's a lot harder than breathing. Once Christ comes to live in your life, there's a sense in which the flow of God's life should dominate, and we fight it and resist it in our human sinfulness.

So, to begin with then, God says in the final judgment ultimately when we say eternal life or eternal death, eternal life...and this is talking about it in its fullness because a Christian already has eternal life, right? He that believes has eternal life. But in the ultimate sense, in the final sense, when final sentence is given, we who receive eternal life receive it because God has looked at our life from this perspective and seen a patient continuing in well doing as we have sought for glory and honor and incorruption. There is a perseverance there, there is an obedience there, there is a constant seeking

of God.

John Murray said something that I think sort of simplifies this whole thing. He said this, "Works without redemptive aspiration are dead works. Aspiration without good works is presumption." So there are people whose aim is heavenward and they will be judged by the life that God has produced in them because they have done well.

Now you can start even with Adam and you can go all the way to today and there will be a patient continual seeking to do what is right in the heart of a true believer. They are made manifest by their deeds. That is a pattern of life.

Now look at verse 10, and this is the corresponding verse. "They seek glory, honor and immortality," and verse 10 says, "glory, honor and peace shall be given to every man that worketh good to the Jew first and also to the Greek." All that we seek we receive. We seek glory, He gives glory. We seek honor, He gives honor. And then there's a change, we seek incorruption and He gives peace. And in a sense I guess there's a parallel there. For when we enter into eternal holiness, utter holiness in the presence of God, the battle with our corruption will be over and the result will be eternal peace. We seek for those things and He gives us those things. What a thought.

At the time of judgment in the future, when God sends the righteous into His eternal heaven and the unrighteous into an eternal hell, the ones who enter into eternal heaven will be those who have sought. You see it there? They have sought. They do seek for glory. It doesn't say they've deserved it. They just sought it. They had aspirations for what was heavenly and godly. They sought for glory and honor and incorruption. And they'll receive the glory and the honor and the peace of eternal life for they are the ones that have worked good. And I submit to you that if there is no such good work visible in a life, then there is no genuine salvation. If this text says anything, it says that. And if it doesn't say that, it doesn't say anything. We will be rewarded then for our deeds because they are the proof of the righteousness within us. And in the third chapter he'll tell us how to get the righteousness of God within us. And this applies to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. God will give heavenly and eternal blessing to the Jew and the Gentile.

The Jew thought the Gentile would be shut out. No, the Jew had a priority in the covenant, the Jew was first in a priority of the covenant. The Jew was first in chronology as Christ came first to the Jew. But may I hasten to add that because of their priority in salvation they also have a priority in judgment and theirs will be a severer condemnation if they reject. And that is the meaning of Amos 3:2 where the prophet says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." And most people stop there. "You only...He speaks to Israel...You only have I known of all the families of the earth, you're the family that I have made My own," and the word "know" means an intimate love relationship, "You only have I loved as My own of all the families of the earth." And then He says, "Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." There's a severer punishment on Israel because of the intimacy they had with

God. So they are first in salvation opportunity and they are first in judgment responsibility. There's no exemption for the Jew or the Gentile, no exemption for the moral man, the religious man, they don't make it any easier on Him, they just make it harder.

Let's look at the second group. The works of those who receive wrath, verses 8 and 9. And they're kind of sandwiched in the middle of those other two verses. "But unto them that are contentious...that's the Authorized translation...and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek."

Those who by their good works prove they have sought God are contrasted with those who by their evil works prove they have sought self. And they are characterized by three terms, or three phrases. First one, verse 8, look at it. The word is contentious in the Authorized, *erithia*is a Greek word and there is a lot of discussion about what its original root is. It seems best to take this as coming from a root which means a hireling. And the basic concept of the word is self-seeking. And the first characterization of an unrighteous person is that he is utterly wrapped up in what pleases him...what pleases him. What satisfies me? What makes me feel good? What makes me happy? What feathers my bed? Second Timothy 3:2 says that men will be lovers of their ownselves. And this is the basic problem of unregenerate man, he is totally wrapped up in himself.

The Lord died, it said in 2 Corinthians 5:15, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves...because that's man's basic bent. So you have a person then who is totally self- seeking. And, of course, that would lead to a contentious attitude toward the Lord. That would basically lead to a spirit of rebellion, and that's what you have in the second thought. Look at it in verse 8, "They do not obey the truth." You know, if you're self-seeking, you're going to resist what God says. God speaks the truth and you say I'm not interested in what You want, I'm going to do what I want. They don't obey the truth.

It doesn't say why in this passage, it just says they don't. We're only looking at the deeds, they just don't obey the truth. Man rebels against God, his reaction is against God. He is quarrelsome with God, if you will. And this reflects the basic egotism of sinfulness.

There's a third phrase. Not only does he not obey the truth but he does obey unrighteousness. No man lives in a vacuum, you either do right or wrong, you just don't go down the middle. This is the flow of life. First there is rebellion and out of that rebellion comes disobedience and then comes dire sinfulness as the life simply goes toward unrighteous behavior.

Now listen, the road to hell then is basically very simply defined. It is a spirit of antagonism toward the lordship of Jesus Christ. Did you get that? The road to hell is basically a spirit of antagonism toward the lordship of Christ. You will not respond, you will rebel. You will not obey, you will disobey. Now

listen carefully here, I want you to get this point, if the road to hell is a spirit of antagonism toward the lordship of Christ then the road to heaven must be the opposite...it must be an attitude of submission to the lordship of Christ. And that is precisely what it is saying.

God wants you to seek for glory and honor and incorruption. God wants the heart to seek heavenward, Godward, above. And even though we don't always attain, there is that seeking heart. And when we fail there is that brokenness. If an unregenerate person is one who rebels against the Lordship of Christ, then a Christian has to be the opposite of that by character. That is clearly the message of this text. Eternal life belongs to those who show the work of God in their hearts by living under the obedience of the lordship of Christ. Those who refuse to do so are the unregenerate and those who receive wrath.

You can see that sin is basically an attack on God and calls for His holy reaction. Look back at verse 8 for a moment. To those people He gives indignation and wrath. Kind of interesting words. Indignation, the Greek root means to rush along, to be in a hurry, to be in a heat or a sweat, to breathe violently. It is someone moving fast, breathing violently, hurrying, sweating. It was used from Homer in the classic Greek writings through the centuries of the spirit panting in the body. And the rage of a man that pants and swells. It is the word, by the way, describing Pharaoh's desire to kill Moses, Hebrews 11:27. It is the word used in the fourth chapter of Luke to describe the fury and the rage of a mad crowd that wanted to throw Jesus off a cliff. It is the word used of the Ephesians when they heard the gospel and started a riot filled with fury in Acts chapter 19. So it's a word of fury, it is a word of fervor. And it is saying that toward those whose works are against God and the lordship of Christ, God will burst out in a heat. He will burst out like a consuming fire against those living in such rebellion.

And then it adds the word "wrath" which is another term for anger, a little differently. It means to reach a pitch of fury. It is the end of mercy. It is the end of grace. It's just all over with in terms of God's patience and God's tolerance...a swelling furious final anger. And so, you can see by these terms that God is talking about a great fury of anger against those whose works reflect an earthward attitude and a denial of God.

Verse 9, "Tribulation and anguish," he adds those as if we don't have enough words...tribulation, *thlipsis*, it means to put pressure on something, or to press it. It is used in Acts 11:19 of the crushing persecution of the early church. It is used of the struggles of saints in Romans 12:12. It is used of Paul's being persecuted nearly to death in 2 Corinthians 1:8. It is used of Christ's sufferings in Colossians 1:24 as He was put through tribulation, pressing pressure, oppression. It always carries the idea of affliction...affliction. It can refer to an inner or an outer affliction but affliction is the idea.

And then anguish is a most interesting word, a common Greek word for narrow, meaning the narrowness of a place, a confined narrow place, limited. Think of it this way. God is going to be angry.

His fury is going to reach a fever pitch, in verse 8. In verse 9 the result of that is going to be affliction in a narrow place. I can't think of a better definition of hell than that. Affliction in a narrow confined imprisoned place, a confinement and imprisonment that produces a powerful fearful pain. That's why the New Testament says hell is an everlasting punishment, an everlasting fire, a furnace of fire, a lake of fire, fire and brimstone, an unquenchable fire, a place of suffering where the worm dies not, the fire is not quenched, there's weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth. It is anguish in a confined imprisonment and it will come upon every soul of man that doeth evil...everyone whose life pattern is continually evil, everyone whose mode of living is that of an unrighteous behavior, people filled with selfish ambition refusing to obey the lordship of Christ...wrath and anger.

So, God judges and He judges according to deeds just as He judges according to guilt, as He judges according to truth and He judges according to knowledge. And a person's deeds, as we said long ago, are the inflexible, infallible indicator of their life. Look at David. David committed terrible sins but the direction if not the perfection of his life was Godward, wasn't it? On the other hand, look at Judas. Judas was outwardly attached to Christ, but the direction of his life was self-centered rebellion and disobedience all the while. You see, the key thought is that true righteousness produces true good deeds. And God can judge then on the basis of those deeds. And unrighteousness, no matter how religious it gets, will produce only evil deeds. And God will have no respect for any person. He will judge all equally. There will be an absolute equity in ultimate judgment.

Now, just one question and I want to close. How...and we have to answer this question even though it doesn't come till chapter 3...how can a person produce the good works that gain for him glory and honor and peace and eternal life? That's the question, isn't it? We started with the fact that God's going to judge. We saw something about that judgment. We have now seen criteria by which God will judge. The question is, now I know that I must produce the righteous works to avoid the eternal judgment of God, but how?

Well, let's jump the gun on Paul a little bit and go over to chapter 3 verse 21. The righteousness that God desires, the righteousness of God apart from the law is manifest. In other words, it isn't going to happen through your own self-effort of trying to keep some rules, even though they be the right rules. It is the righteousness of God that comes, verse 22, by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that...what?...believe. Verse 24 says we're justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Now that's really all you need to know, beloved. The way and the only way to produce the righteous deeds is to possess the righteousness of Christ. And the only way to possess the righteousness of Christ is by faith in His redemptive work. Do you believe that He died God incarnate for your sin? Do you believe that He rose again for your justification? Do you believe that He ever lives to make intercession for you? Do you believe that He'll come back to complete the redemptive plan? If you believe and you receive Christ, He gives you the capacity by the implantation of His own eternal life to

produce righteous deeds. And when the day comes that judgment is to occur, God will see the record of a righteous life and know that such a life could only be the product of the indwelling presence of the living Christ and grant eternal life. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, this is a very basic message we've shared tonight and yet it has been overlooked by so many. The world is full of people trying to earn their way into the Kingdom, people who think that the things they're doing are even righteous when they're really filthy rags because they're not produced by the life of God dwelling within. May we know that we shall stand before You some day and if there are righteous deeds, we give evidence of a righteous life, the life of Christ in us and we will enter into eternity and the blessing You have prepared for Your own. And if there are only unrighteous deeds, then there is only damnation forever. We know, God, that You are a judge who judges with equity and You have no respect of persons, you favor none over the other, but You will judge according to man's knowledge, according to the truth about him, according to his real guilt, and according to his deeds.

Father, we pray that no one in this place would come short of the standard, but that all of us would enter in to the righteousness of Jesus Christ by faith in Him and in such entering in escape the wrath to come and enter into Your gracious merciful plan for eternal life.

Just as we close while you're prayerful for a moment. I realize this has been just a very basic message that many of us have understood these principles. But I know there are many who have not, many many of you that are new. I hope you understand now. Look at your life. We could have gone into myriads of Scriptures to show that the evidence of a regenerate life is in the pattern of the living. And if it isn't there, then the question is whether there is regeneration at all. And I think that's why Paul calls us to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith. Look at your own life, see...is your desire upward? Is the seeking, longing in your heart heavenward? When you sin is there a brokenness and a contrition and a desire to confess and a hunger for glory and honor and incorruption? Is that your desire? If it is, you give evidence of the life of God in your soul. But if you don't in patient continuance and well doing seek those things but rather you are rebelling against God, you are disobedient to His truth and obedient to unrighteousness as a way of life, then you will receive indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish no matter who you are. For God has no respect of persons, He judges equitably.

Maybe you'd like to change that tonight. As we said, you can receive the righteousness of Christ by simply believing in Him.

Father, we pray that You will bring those to the prayer room that You would desire to come, that we would see the great miracle of transformed life, regeneration occur even tonight and we'll praise You in Christ's name. Amen.

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