

Intro:

Last week we looked at Romans 2.6-10 and I gave you what I think is the burden of the passage: a heavy emphasis on the destinies of men, particularly the destiny of men under the wrath of God.

That message is the focal point of the passage.

There remain a few items we must address in our passage. These items are concerned with the **main message** of the passage. The message is something **often misunderstood**, and perhaps **obscured** by the weight of our focus point last week.

Chapter 2 is a warning to the moral man, and it will become especially a warning to the religious man as personified by the Jews of the first century.

We are still mainly in the section warning the moral man against his self-confidence:

- He is reminded that he does the same kinds of things he condemns in others. (1)
- He is reminded that God is righteous in judging such things. (2)
- He is warned that he should not think he will escape judgement. (3)
- He is warned against presuming against the forbearance and goodness of God. (4)
- He is warned that in his impenitence, he is only treasuring up wrath against himself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God. (5)

If you don't keep this context in mind, you might find yourself misunderstanding our passage (as many do). You might look at these verses and suppose that there remains a possibility (however remote) that 'if I have enough righteous deeds, I will please God.'

Read Rm 2.6-10

"In this passage the apostle is not discussing the way to be saved or the way to be lost. That is taken for granted. The only way to be saved is by faith in Christ Jesus, and that is grace. The only way to be lost is to reject the grace in Christ Jesus. In this passage Paul is discussing judgment, which will be the evaluation of deeds for the corresponding degree of reward or punishment."¹

¹ Herman A. Hoyt, *The First Christian Theology*, p. 44.

Proposition: The morals of the moral man cannot stand in the judgement.

I. Deeds are always the issue in every judgement

A. The thesis statement of our passage: God judges deeds

Psalm 62:12 Also unto thee, O Lord, *belongeth* mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.

Proverbs 24:12 If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider *it*? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth *not* he know *it*? and shall *not* he render to *every* man according to his works?

1. A doctrine well known in the OT
2. A doctrine repeated in the NT
 - a. Mt 16.27
 - b. 2 Cor 11.15
 - c. 2 Tim 4.14

B. The issue in the great prophetic judgements

1. The judgement of the nations (Mt 25.31-46)
2. The bema seat (2 Cor 5.9-10)
3. The Great White Throne (Rev 20.11-13)

II. Deeds are the issue in this judgement

A. The kinds of deeds at issue

1. The deeds that lead to eternal life (7, 10)
 - a. Verse 7 and verse 8 are contrasted by ... ('on the one hand ... on the other hand')
 - 1) First phrase: 'to the ones *who* by steadfastness [continuance] of works of good'
 - 2) Second phrase: 'glory and honour and immortality are seeking'
 - b. Verse 10: 'to everyone who is working the good'
2. The deeds that lead to wrath (8-9)
 - a. 'To the ones who out of selfish ambition are not obeying the truth but are obeying the evil' (8)

- 1) Selfish ambition — related to a political term which means “hiring paid canvassers and promoting a party spirit” which thus develops into “the spirit of faction, the spirit which substitutes factious opposition for the willing obedience of loyal subjects of the kingdom of heaven.”²
- 2) “The Apostle probably means men of a self-willed temper, using all arts to assert themselves against God. The result of this temper — the temper of the party men carried into the spiritual world — is seen in disobedience to the truth and obedience to unrighteousness.”³

b. ‘The ones achieving [working out] the evil’ (9)

B. What kinds of deeds are the ‘good deeds’?

1. Some make these out to be ‘Genuine but imperfect obedience of believers’
 - a. Some think these deeds are those that earn salvation (or a portion of it) (Roman Catholic and New Perspective on Paul)

Illustrated by a bad joke:

- A fellow arrives before the pearly gates and wants to get in. Peter tells him he needs 1000 spiritual points to get in – what has he done with is life?
- “I went to church every Sunday, attended every prayer meeting and fellowship dinner, read my Bible each morning and shared the gospel with everyone I met. What is more, I tithed ten percent of all I made, sang in the choir, cooked Thanksgiving turkeys for the Senior Citizen's dinner and EVEN HELPED WITH THE JUNIOR HIGH BAPTIST YOUTH ...” For two hours he went on reciting an awesome list of all he had done for God.
- Peter: That’s worth one point, what else have you done?

² William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Romans*, p. 57.

³ James Denney, "St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans" in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, W. Robertson Nicoll, ed., p. 596.

- Man: “You mean to tell me that everything I’ve done, the sweat I’ve poured, money I’ve given and time I’ve spent is only worth a SINGLE POINT?? ”I’ve got one point and it takes ONE THOUSAND to get into heaven? LORD, HAVE MERCY!!”
- Peter replied, “Oh that will be worth the other 999.You can come on in.”

What’s wrong with that joke?

It assumes that you can get any ‘points’ and God will make up the rest.

- b. Some think that these are deeds that show salvation (a proof of salvation) [a bit better, but still incorrect]
2. Some make this to be a hypothetical statement – the statement would be true if a man could actually do sufficient good deeds
3. The statement is an absolute statement: it declares absolutely what the real standard is – “perfect perpetual persevering universal obedience”
 - a. Larger context:
 - 1) 1.16-17 - theme of Romans (the gospel that reveals the righteousness from God)
 - 2) 1.17 and 3.21 form an inclusio: demonstrating why men need the righteousness from God
 - 3) 3.9 summary of section
 - 4) 3.19-20 conclusion of the section
 - b. Concern of ch. 2:
 - 1) 2.1 addressing the person who lives on a higher moral plane - I will not be judged
 - 2) 2.2 God's judgement is according truth
 - 3) Principle of God's judgement is according to the life you have lived.
 - 4) Not describing the outcome of the judgement; purpose is to set forth the principle upon which God's judgement operates: “perfect perpetual persevering universal obedience”

III. Your deeds will be your issue if you attempt to stand in this judgement

A. Your deeds cannot measure up to this judgement

1. This is 'the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God' (2.5) [Great White Throne]
 - a. The moral man has already admitted Paul's presupposition: he has not obeyed the Law (2.1)
 - b. The moral man has already admitted Paul's axiom: God judges according to righteousness (2.2)
2. The moral man cannot offer "perfect perpetual persevering universal obedience"

"Continuous" Run

"A 50-year-old Australian builder set a world record for the longest continuous run Tuesday when he wrapped up a 274-day trek around the country, clocking up 19,030 kilometers (11,799 miles). Gary Parsons started running April 25 and on Dec. 16 broke the previous world record of 17,071 km (10,584 miles) set by American Robert Sweetgall in 1983.

'Parsons limped into Brisbane with a badly damaged ankle after running a minimum of 20 kilometers (12 miles) a day for more than nine months. 'My left ankle is just bone on bone at the moment, completely worn out, but it got me through the world record,' Parsons told Reuters. 'It was my goal to run further than anyone in the history of running. I guess it is just a bit of Aussie spirit, like the old explorers who went into the beyond and went that bit further.'

"Parsons averaged 72.4 kilometers (44.9 miles) a day until he broke the record and wore out a dozen pairs of running shoes during the marathon run.

"'I had 12 pairs of rotating shoes which I had re-soled with the toughest leather about 40 times,' he said."⁴

- Is that really a 'continuous' run? Think about the effort expended...

⁴ <http://www.coolrunning.com.au/news/2000n024.shtml> (Accessed 8.31.08)

- Now think about ‘continuous righteousness’ – not 12 miles a day, but 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, for a whole lifetime

Your deeds cannot measure up...

B. You need the deeds of someone who can measure up

2 Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Conclusion:

Are you in Christ?

Or are you thinking that somehow, still, you and your deeds can measure up to God’s standard?