

Intro:

My dad is something of a walking encyclopedia of business publications. He has read many books on success in business, sales, and human motivation. I suspect that his library on the subject rivals my own library on the Bible.

One of the principles that I recall my dad teaching me concerning success in business is something called “The Slight-Edge Principle”.

The Slight-Edge Principle goes something like this: “Success means being just a little bit better than the competition.”

You can see this illustrated in sports in particular:

- In a golf tournament, how many strokes do you need to win by? Just one.
- In a hockey game, how many goals you need to win by? Just one.
- In a football game, how many points you need to be ahead to win? Just one! That’s $1/6^{\text{th}}$ of the value of a touchdown.

The point of this illustration in business motivational books is to teach salespeople that success is not dependent on superhuman effort to exceed the abilities of your competition. That’s fair enough as far as it goes.

But when it comes to God and his evaluation of the success or failure of a human life, men are often looking for that ‘Slight-Edge’ that will get a favorable evaluation with God.

We’ve been talking about the Moral Man in Romans 2. The Moral Man thinks he has an edge over the Pagan Man of chapter 1 – that edge is his morality.

Paul is starting to introduce another man in our passage today, the Religious Man [specifically, the Jew]. The Religious man certainly thinks he has an edge over not only the Pagan Man but also the Moral Man. He not only has morality, he has *Religion* to give him his edge.

- That is why Paul has been emphasizing the impartiality of God in the verses we are looking at. You notice he says it in his concluding verses on the Destinies of Men, 2.9-10: God judges the works of ‘the Jew first, and also the Gentile’.
- Then we saw last week the plain statement of Rm 2.11: ‘For there is no respect of persons with God.’ (‘no partiality’ NAS)
- This week we are going to see the same theme repeated, and we are going to begin to see the specific distinction between Jew and Gentile mentioned and expanded on.

Read Rm 2.11-16 (Our text today is essentially just Rm 2.12)

You will notice that a number of our verses have the connecting word 'for': 11, 12, 13, and 14. These are not all the same, which contributes to some confusion in understanding our passage.

- 'For' in 2.11 gives the reason why the Jew first, then the Gentile is to be judged on the basis of his deeds: 'For' or 'because' God is impartial.
- 'For' in 2.12 gives an explanation or a parallel with 2.11 – you could translate it, 'in other words...'
- Then the next two, 2.13 and 2.14, each give reasons why the preceding statement is true. Both of them can be translated 'because'. They answer the question, 'why'.

So today, we are concerned with the explanatory sentence in v. 12, 'in other words'. Our verse explains explicitly that man's problem is sin, be he ever so moral or ever so religious.

Proposition: Every man's sin will receive equal treatment before the bar of God, regardless of any perceived 'edge' or special preference any man thinks he has with God.

I. The argument against God's impartiality: the fact of the Jew

- A. An argument based on a point of fact: God's historical preference of the Jew
 1. The terms 'without law' and 'in the law' point to this history: it is The Law these terms refer to
 2. God gave special blessings to the children of Abraham
 - a. First, the Promise (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob)
 - 1) Exodus
 - 2) Conquest
 - 3) Messiah
 - b. Second, the Law (Moses)
 - 1) The office of prophet
 - 2) The office of priest
 - 3) The blessing of access to the Most High and Most Holy

3. The point of fact is introduced in vv. 9-10 and dismissed in v. 11 – God is no respecter of persons, *i.e.*, God is impartial
 - a. God is leading up to the specific condemnation of the Jew beginning in v. 17
 - b. God is declaring his impartial judgement of both Jew and Gentile alike when it comes to the final judgement of all men

B. An argument that can be made from two perspectives

1. From the perspective of the moral man of the Gentiles: “Wait a minute, you can’t hold me up to condemnation, I never knew about all these things”
 - a. The moral man of the Gentiles has to rely on
 - 1) Natural revelation
 - 2) Conscience
 - 3) Mental powers
 - b. The moral man of the Gentiles says, ‘By my standards, I’m not so bad.’
2. From the perspective of the moral man of the Jews: “Wait a minute, you can’t condemn me with those Gentiles, I don’t do anything near so bad as them.”
 - a. The moral man of the Jews thinks: “At least I know better than the Gentiles what is right and wrong.”
 - b. The moral man of the Jews says, “By any standard, I am way better than those Gentiles.”

One of the problems of men is that they judge themselves by their own standards, not by God’s standard.

But let me say this — if you ever catch yourself thinking something like this:

- ‘Well, at least compared to so and so, I’m morally superior...’
- Or, ‘Well, at least I know better than so and so, and I’m not as bad...’

Then you are arguing against the impartiality of God.
You are missing God's point.

II. The context of God's impartiality: the judgement

Context is important – our context makes understanding God's point Of view (God's impartiality) critically important

A. The immediate context in v. 12

1. "Will also perish without the Law"
2. "Will be judged by the Law"

These words are speaking of final judgement. Consider Lloyd-Jones:

"Perish! And perish means perish; it does not mean go out of existence. It is the opposite of eternal life; it is the same as everlasting destruction. It is the same as that place where their 'worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched'. It is the state of those who are outside the life of God. There is the warning and we ignore it at our peril."¹

B. The broader context

1. The moral man condemns himself (2.1)
2. All men agree God's judgement is 'according to truth' (2.2)
3. The moral man should not think he will escape judgement (2.3-4)
4. The moral man is in fact 'treasuring up' judgement against himself (2.5)
5. The whole point of God's partiality is his 'rendering' [judging] according to deeds (2.6-11)
6. The impartiality of God will be ultimately displayed on the day God judges secrets (2.16)

Do you see that theme running through the passage? Our context from beginning to end is judgement.

¹ D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: The Righteous Judgement of God*, p. 107.

The context of God's impartiality is judgement. Specifically, *The Judgement*, *i.e.*, the Great White Throne Judgement at the end of the Millennium. This is when the evil deeds of all men will be judged.

This is what the moral man needs to be thinking about. Does he want to argue with God in that courtroom?

III. The objects of God's impartiality: all men, those with and without the Law

A. Those ['as many as'] without law

1. Not 'lawless' – criminals with no conscience and no restraint (see Rm 1)
2. But 'law-less' – men who exist as strangers to 'The Law', *i.e.*, Gentiles

B. Those ['as many as'] in the law

1. "Under" or "with" the law
2. Those who have the specially revealed law. *i.e.*, the Jews

Perhaps I am belaboring the obvious, but I want to emphasize that these two categories cover everyone.

Everyone is in God's sights. No one escapes.

IV. The issue of God's impartiality: sin

A. In both categories, the issue is sin

1. Thayer: "from the alpha privative and μέρω, μέρομαι, μέρος, properly, *to be without a share in*, namely, the mark); properly, *to miss the mark*"²
2. The major Hebrew concept of sin is 'missing one's way; wandering off the path' [See Kittel]

B. The Law is a clear revelation of the mark

1. It is quite obvious that one under the Law who fails the keeping of the Law is in sin

² Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*.

And what Jew has ever perfectly kept the Law? [See the Sermon on the Mount — ‘you have heard that it was said, but I say unto you’]

2. The fact remains that those ‘without law’ are also capable of sin – and they will perish

How can someone without the Law [without ‘the mark’] sin? Stay tuned, but see vv. 14-15 – being outside the hearing of the Law doesn’t mean ‘no notion of the law’.

3. If ‘as-many-as-without-the-law-sinning’ will perish, how much more will ‘those-under-the-law-sinning’ be judged by the Law?

The issue of God’s impartiality is sin:

This is *the Moral Man’s Problem: Sin*

Conclusion:

July 1976, Israeli raid of Airport in Entebbe, Uganda³

- 103 Jewish hostages were freed.
- In less than fifteen minutes, all seven of kidnapers killed; captives freed

As successful as the rescue was, however, three of the hostages were killed during the raid.

Commandos entered the terminal, they shouted in Hebrew, “Get down! Crawl!”

- The Jewish hostages understood and lay down on the floor
- The guerillas, who did not speak Hebrew, were left standing
- Quickly the rescuers shot the upright kidnapers

But two of the hostages hesitated - perhaps to see what was happening - and were also cut down. One young man was lying down and actually stood up when the commandos entered the airport.

- Those ‘under the Law’ [of the Hebrew language] who ‘sinned’ – disobeyed the command, were cut down...

³ Scott F. Marsh, “Obedience,” *Leadership Journal*, 1990 Winter, p. 50.

- Along with those 'without the law' [of the Hebrew language] were likewise cut down. Their disobedience was of a different sort, but judged equally as harshly and swiftly.

Man's problem is sin.

Your problem is sin.

Do you know about Jesus Christ? Do you hear him say, "Repent, and be converted"? [That means give up your way of life and submit to him. Change.]

Will you repent? Have you repented?

If not, your problem is sin. If not, you are like those poor Israeli's who didn't obey the command of freedom and were destroyed by the very forces who were their salvation.