

Intro:

What does the word ‘gospel’ mean in its root or ‘etymological’ meaning? ‘Good news’ – the word comes to us from the Old English *god* (long ‘o’) = ‘good’ + *spell* = tale; ‘good tale, good story’. It is a direct translation of the Latin *evangelium* which is a transliteration of the Greek *ευαγγελιον* – lit., ‘good message’.

When we think of good news in general, what kinds of things do we think of? Good things... [I have an incredible grasp of the obvious.]

Good things like:

- The birth of a baby
- The announcement of an engagement
- A new job
- A pay raise
- A promotion

What makes these things ‘good’ news? They are positive signs of progress in life, in the midst of a world full of bad news.

What would bad news be?

- A serious illness
- A financial crisis
- A stock market crash
- A marital crisis; a divorce
- A baby with a serious congenital condition

Suppose we lived in a world where no bad things ever happened. Would we think good news was so good, or would it just be normal?

When we hear that someone has a healthy baby, we rejoice because we know by experience or by acquaintance how difficult it is for those whose babies aren’t healthy.

In our passage in Romans, we have been dealing with a lot of bad news.

- We aren’t finished.

But I do want to remind you that the theme of Romans is good news.

- Paul is set apart for the gospel [good news] (Rm 1.1)
- Paul serves God in his spirit in the preaching of the gospel (Rm 1.9)
- Paul is anxious to preach the gospel in Rome (Rm 1.15)

- Paul is not ashamed of the gospel, it is the power of God, it is the righteousness from God, it is for those who need it most, those upon whom the wrath of God is being revealed (Rm 1.16-18)

But as Paul begins to preach to us in Romans, he preaches first the bad news. And I want to suggest to you that the blackness of the bad news is like the black cloth on which the diamonds of the good news are displayed.

Today, our passage brings us to the day of judgement, the blackest bit of the bad news we can imagine — the day when God’s wrath against all sin is finally and fully displayed.

Read Rm 2.11-16, our text is v. 16

Proposition: The GOOD news of the gospel would be NO news if there were no BAD news.

I. Good News laid against this: There is a day of judgement

A. A brief explanation of the passage structure (review)

1. We are right in the midst of understanding this thesis: God’s judgement of sin is absolutely impartial (11, 12)
2. We have looked at a parenthetical argument against possible objections to God’s impartiality (13-15)
 - a. The Jew: but look at me, I at least have God’s Law and hear it every day (13)
 - 1) Hearing is not justifying
 - 2) Only doing is justifying [implication: *and you’re not doing*]
 - b. The Gentile: wait a minute, I don’t have the Law, how can you blame me (14-15)
 - 1) You are a law to yourself because you do the things of the law ‘by nature’ [KJV] or ‘instinctively’ [NAS] (14)
 - 2) By your instinctive understanding, you show sufficient acquaintance with God’s Law (15)
 - a) The *work of the Law* [not the Law itself] is written in their hearts [instinctive knowledge]
 - b) The *conscience* accuses and excuses deeds
 - c) The *mind* reasons its way concerning the guilt of others and innocence of self

The implication of this acquaintance with the principles of God's Law is that the Gentile is condemned by what he naturally knows.

3. Now we are going back to the impartial judgement of God which will happen *in the day when God shall judge the secrets* (16)

B. The theme of judgement

1. Notice that even the pagan man knows that his deeds are worthy of death [judgement] (1.32)
2. Notice the principles of judgement taught throughout Rm 2.1-16
 - a. The moral man who condemns the pagan by his condemnation condemns himself – for the moral man does the same kinds of things (2.1)
 - b. The moral man agrees that God's judgement of sin is righteous (2.2)
 - c. The moral man should not think that he will in any way escape by his morality or by God's goodness or by God's delay (2.3-5)
 - d. The moral man must realize that God's judgement is according to deeds, not moral values and good intentions (2.6-10)
 - e. The moral man just realize that God's judgement is absolutely impartial (2.11-16)

C. The reality of the day of judgement

1. It is a day in the future: men are 'saving up' their deeds til then (2.5)
2. It is a day of sharp demarcation between men based on deeds: evil deeds will produce wrath and indignation; tribulation and anguish (2.8-9)
3. It is a particular day, one long prophesied, a day that is coming (2.16)

Called by the prophets 'the day of the Lord', 'the day of wrath', 'The Day' and 'That Day' — it is a day you want to miss, for it is an exceedingly *BAD* day.

Against this backdrop, the apostle says he has good news!

II. Good News laid against this: Every secret thing will be judged

- A. When men judge, they attempt to judge what they can see (the external infractions)
- B. When God judges, He judges the secrets – in other words, the whole life and the whole man is judged
 - 1. Secrets = κρυπτός – the tales from the ‘crypt’
 - 2. Hidden things, the things you know about yourself that no one else knows

“Men are ready to think they may take a liberty in their thoughts that they may indulge themselves there as long as they don’t proceed to the outward act.”¹

“They can indulge their lusts in their thoughts as they go about the world and be secure from mortal eyes yet their thoughts are written down in God’s book — they are not forgotten, but are written with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond.”²

- What lies hidden in your past?
- Are those hidden things covered by the gospel, the good news? Or are you not yet a true believer in Jesus Christ?

A man without Christ on the day of judgement will stand before God with every secret thing revealed. Every. Secret. Thing.

- A man who has repented of sin and believes in Jesus Christ as his Saviour will be ‘hid with Christ in God’ (Col 3.3)

¹ Jonathan Edwards [1743], *Sermons, Series II, 1728-1729* (WJE Online Vol. 43), Ed. Jonathan Edwards Center, *The Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University* (Accessed 10/8/2008)

² Jonathan Edwards [1743], *Sermons, Series II, 1728-1729* (WJE Online Vol. 43), Ed. Jonathan Edwards Center, *The Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University* (Accessed 10/8/2008)

III. Good News laid against this: Jesus Christ will perform the judgement

A. Jesus Christ is the one who will judge (Jn 5.22, 27, Ac 17.30-31)

1. Because he is the Son of man – the one righteous man who has the right to judge other men (not like the sinning moral man of Rm 2.1)
2. Because he is the humiliated man – the one who innocently suffered judgement for all men so God has exalted him above all men (Phil 2.9-11)
3. Because he is a man – God will not judge men from his position of incredible distance, but from his position of God become man, one of us who ‘knows our frame’ (cf. Ps 103.14)

B. Jesus Christ is an all knowing, all seeing judge – you cannot escape the eyes ‘as a flame of fire’ (Rev 1.14)

But if you are in Christ you will not be judged in the day — your judgement happened in Jerusalem almost 2000 years ago on a cruel cross where the innocent died for the guilty...

“Last use is to encourage godly men in their secret piety for God who sees in secret will bring it into judgment and will reward it openly. ... God don’t forget none of your prayers nor none of your tears, none of your secret praises, none of your holy conversation that is in secret between God and you. He remembers every passage and lays up a reward for you accordingly against you. Come into his presence!

“What great encouragement is it to diligence and exactness in walking with God in secret that every gracious thought and every gracious act shall have an eternal reward. That your crown of glory which shall be set upon your head at the day of judgment will be proportionally bright and glistening to the exercises of that holy life that is hid with Christ in God.”³

³ Jonathan Edwards [1743], *Sermons, Series II, 1728-1729* (WJE Online Vol. 43), Ed. Jonathan Edwards Center, *The Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University* (Accessed 10/8/2008)

IV. Good News: The gospel teaches us to judge ourselves

- A. Can we have the good news of the gospel without the bad news of judgement?
- B. Our passage says that this revelation of God's judgement comes 'according to my gospel'

The gospel without sin and judgement is an incomplete gospel – if you don't need saving, why do you need the gospel?

Conclusion:

In conclusion I would like to call your attention to the words of the old Princeton theologian and godly Bible scholar, Charles Hodge. He said this:

“Such, then, are the principles on which Paul assures us that all men are to be judged. They commend themselves irresistibly to every man's conscience as soon as they are announced, and yet every false hope of heaven is founded on their denial or neglect. It may be appropriate to repeat them, so that it may be clearly seen how the hopes of the Jews, to which Paul applies them from verse 17 onward, are at variance with these moral axioms.

1. “The person who condemns in others what he does himself by that very act condemns himself.
2. “God's judgments are according to the real character of men.
3. “The goodness of God, designed to lead us to repentance, is no proof that he will not punish sin. The perversion of that goodness will increase our guilt and aggravate our condemnation.
4. “God will judge every man according to his deeds, not according to his words or his ecclesiastical connections or background.
5. “Men will be judged by what they individually know to be their duty. Therefore God is perfectly impartial.

“These are the principles on which men are to be tried, on the last day, by Jesus Christ, and those who expect to be dealt with on any other basis will be dreadfully disappointed.”⁴

How do you expect to be dealt with?

⁴ Charles Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 55-56.