**Lesson 4: God Holds All Sinners Accountable**

Text: Romans 2:1-11

**Introduction**

Thus far in our study, we have seen Paul’s confidence in the power of the gospel. It reveals the righteousness that man needs and the only way to receive it. It reveals the sinfulness of all mankind. Rejecting the knowledge of God has led man farther and farther away from God into paths of sin. Man is not improving without God. He is deteriorating.

A Jewish element resided within Rome. To this point in Paul’s letter they would have agreed whole-heartedly with his assessment of the Gentiles. They were appalled at their sinful lifestyles! By comparing themselves to such individuals, the Jews felt religiously smug. Sure, they may have committed some of the same sins, but they were the people of God by virtue of their birth! They were the descendants of Abraham! They believed that they were right with God on that basis. In this lesson, we see that Paul turned the tables on the pious Jews. He pointed out the fact of their sin and demonstrates that God holds all sinners accountable to the same judgment.

1. **The Jews wrongly assumed that they were exempt from God’s wrath against sin. (v. 1-5)**
   1. A grammatical change takes place in chapter two. In Romans 1:18-32, Paul used the third person plural (“they”). Now, he began to use the second person singular (“thou”). He is not addressing his readers directly. Otherwise, he would have used the second person plural (“you”). In doing so, he used a literary device in which he has an imaginary conversation with an opponent. He anticipated the objection of those who were blinded by their own self-righteousness.
   2. There is question as to the identity of the individual described in these verses. Some hold that it may refer to moral Gentiles as opposed to those described in the latter part of chapter one. Most hold that Paul is referring to the Jews. This seems to fit the context best and is made clear in verse 17.
   3. The Jews viewed themselves as the recipients of God’s special treatment. Jesus interacted with many of these self-righteous Jews who fiercely opposed His message. For example, in John 8 they refused to admit their guilt and took pride in the fact that they were the descendants of Abraham. Another example is found in Paul himself. There was a time when Paul held this same position (Philippians 3:1-8).
   4. Although they thought they were right with God, they were without defense. (v. 1)
      1. The “therefore” in verse 1 is connected back to 1:18-19. If God’s wrath has been revealed against all ungodliness then all face His wrath.
      2. The Jews were committing some of the same sins that are listed in 1:20-32. A brief survey of Jewish history reveals idolatry, sexual sin, pride, arrogance, gossip and other forms of disobedience listed in chapter one. They judged others, and yet did the same.
      3. The fact that they were God’s people did not exempt them from His judgement. In fact, their privilege made their responsibility even greater.
   5. God will judge those who commit such sin. (v. 2-3)
   6. They misunderstood God’s goodness and forbearance as an indication that they were accepted with God. (v. 4) His goodness was not extended to applaud them, but to lead them to repentance. “God’s purpose in His kindness is not to excuse sin but to stimulate repentance.” (Douglas Moo)
   7. A lack of repentance adds to the wrath that will come. (v. 5)
2. **Their assumption was faulty because God’s judgment is impartial. (v. 6-11)** 
   1. Verses 6-11 form a unit of thought. Notice that God’s impartiality is highlighted in verses 6 and 11. God’s judgment according to man’s works is described in verses 7-10.
      1. God will judge every man according to his deeds. (v. 6)
         1. The righteous receive eternal life. (v. 7, 10)
         2. The unrighteous face God’s judgement. (v. 8-9)
      2. God is not a respecter of persons. (v. 11) He holds every sinner accountable.
   2. This does not mean that acceptance with God is based on performance. That would be a works-based salvation. This would contradict the remainder of Paul’s letter to the Romans. Plus, it is impossible that those with a sin nature could perfectly keep the law!
   3. There are two possibilities regarding Paul’s intent in these verses:
      1. Paul is referring to the spiritual state of an individual as revealed by their actions.
      2. He is leading up to his discussion regarding the need for Christ’s righteousness.
   4. Paul’s focus at this point in the letter is not on the way to salvation, but the impartial nature of God’s judgment against sin and need for salvation.
   5. Notice the attention directed to Jews and Gentiles. Compare 2:9-10 with 1:16. It is not one’s birth that determines his eternal destination, but his second birth. The Jews need to respond to God’s grace like every sinner.
3. **Central Idea: Paul made it clear in this section of Romans that since God holds all sinners accountable, the only way for Jews to escape the judgment of God is by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.**
4. **Application: Since God holds all sinners accountable, the only way to escape the judgment of God is by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.** 
   1. We must be cautious against the tendency to point out the faults of others and to overlook our own.
   2. We must also reject the tendency to dismiss transgressions in our own lives because of some perceived advantage. God will not overlook sin in your life just because you hold a position of spiritual leadership, have been in church for many years, or have special circumstances that you feel justifies your actions.
   3. We must take the judgment of God seriously. You need to examine your heart before God to make sure that you have been born again. This is staggering when we consider the population of our world. God will not let their sin go. He cannot overlook the need for the new birth. He cannot righteously show favor to a sinner apart from the work of Jesus Christ. They must hear and believe the gospel!
   4. There are those who think they will escape the judgment of God, but who will not. Atheists may deny the existence of God and assume they are okay, but they are not. The religious may think that they are okay, but they are not. You may think you are okay because of your church membership and family history, but unless you have been born again you cannot see the kingdom of God.

**Conclusion**

This chapter levels the playing field. Both Jew and Gentile stand condemned before the holy God. Since God is impartial, He will treat all people the same. If you enter a building or home that is armed with an alarm system, you must enter by the code. The alarm is unbiased. Everyone who enters must know the code. You can’t enter just hoping the alarm will not sound. You can’t just push buttons and hope to gain entrance. There is only one solution. You must enter by using the code. God is unbiased. The only way to enter is by the Son. All stand condemned, but all can be saved!