

As we go into Chapter 2 of Romans we read...

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.

Romans 2:1

Q. Is Paul still speaking to the same group of people that we determined to be mankind in general?

Let's look back at what we read earlier to keep things fresh...

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Romans 1:21

Q. Do we have any reason to believe anything changed in the context of this targeted group of people?

Q. Do we see the secular or non-believing world judging each other in this passage?

Q. Do we see a lot of hypocrisy in scripture coming from the world apart from national Israel?

So it seems that Paul continues to describe a mankind that rejects Yahweh.

Paul continues saying...

² We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who do such things. ³ Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Romans 2:2-4

I wanted to point out here as we read the next several verses that “O man” is written with exclamation. There should probably be an exclamation point at the end based on the original language.

According to Strong's...

ὦ ὦ, ο; a primary interjection; as a sign of the vocative case, O; as a note of exclamation, oh:—O.

Paul is expressing severity here as he describes God's judgment

But is it just me or does Paul seem to have a way of communicating that we just don't use today? Do you hear people communicating like this in your church? Probably not, other than when quoting scripture.

The writings of our apostles are ancient writings. They did not at all communicate in words the way we do today. In our intro to Romans and Paul's writings we discussed rhetoric. There is dispute over whether or not Paul spoke rhetorically in his writings.

Some points made that he does NOT use rhetoric to communicate are:

- Rhetoric was not part of the genre of letter writing.
- Paul's writings do not conform perfectly to the structure of speeches dictated in rhetorical handbooks.
- Rhetoric most often took place in certain settings: courtrooms, assemblies, festivals and celebrations. These settings are lacking in Paul's letters.
- The early "church fathers" did not identify in Paul a rhetorical communicator.
- Paul rejected the use of rhetoric in 1 Corinthians 1-3 as diluting the power of the gospel.
- Rhetoric was used for speeches and not writing.

Then there are the points that support Paul's use of rhetoric in his writings:

- Paul's letters were meant to persuade, therefore, it is possible to examine Paul's letters with reference to rhetorical motives.
- The rhetorical genre was flexible and Paul could change and shape the pattern of his speech for each situation. There were also different types of rhetoric and different styles in various regions.
- Settings such as trials before Roman governors and debates within the church would have called for expertise in rhetoric.
- Paul refused to attribute the power of his gospel to rhetoric, but his letters were still considered "weighty and strong" (2 Cor. 10.10). Even Peter calls them "hard to understand" (2 Peter 3:16). This may display that Paul did not use rhetoric in the gospel proclamation but he probably did use rhetorical devices in writing letters to his churches.
- This would also explain why in our (2 Cor. 10.10) passage, where it is said "his letters are weighty and strong" they also say "his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account"
- While it is true that rhetoric is meant primarily for speaking we should recognize a couple of things:
 1. The only knowledge we have of rhetoric is from written sources such as handbooks on rhetoric, we have no recordings. All the speeches known of come from written sources.
 2. Many of Paul's letters were likely dictated from oral speech (Tertius in Romans) and were meant to be read aloud to the churches.
- Paul was born and raised in Tarsus of Cilicia, a Greek-speaking city, his first language was Greek. Paul probably received a Greek education including Greek philosophy, literature, and rhetoric.

- Paul's use of phrases such as: 'what then?' 3.9; 6.15; 11.7; 'what then shall we say?' Rom. 3.5; 4.1; 6.1; 7.7; 8:31; 9:14, 30; 'certainly not!' Rom. 3.4, 6, 31; 6.2, 15; 7.7, 13; 9.14, 30; and 'O man!' Rom. 2.1, 3; 9.20 all have striking parallels with Epictetus' Discourses ([Tobin 2004: 93](#)).

- Romans invokes a number of rhetorical devices known to Greco-Roman authors including:

- Rhetorical Questions: Rom. 2.3, 4, 21-23, 26; 3.1, 3, 5, 6-9, 27, 29, 31; 4.1, 3, 9-10; 6.1-3, 15-16, 21; 7.1, 7, 13, 24; 8.31-34; 9.14, 19-21, 30, 32; 10.7-8, 14-16, 18-19; 11.1, 2, 4, 7, 11, 15, 34-35.

- Apostrophes (questions for an imaginary opponent): Rom. 2.1-11, 17-29; 9.20-29; 11.11-24.

- Dialogues: Rom. 3.1-10; 3.27-4.2.

- Refutations of objections: Rom. 3.1-9, 27-31; 4.1-2; 6.1-3, 15-16; 7.7, 13-14; 9.14-15, 19-20; 11.1, 19.

- Speeches in character: Rom. 7.7-25; 10.6-8.

- Comparisons: Rom. 2.6-10, 12-16; 6.4-11, 15-23; 7.1-6; 8.5-17; 9.30-33; 11.17-24.

- Example stories: Rom. 4.1-25; 9.6-9, 10-15, 16-18.

Some passages in Romans sound theological (Rom. 1.18-32; 3:21-26; 5.1-21 and 8.1-30.)

Other passages are fashioned in a rhetorical sense (Rom. 2.1-3.20; 3.27-4.25; 6.1-7.25; 8.31-11.36.)

I have come to see Paul's letter to the Romans as both theology and rhetoric.

I have also come to believe that we can gain a much deeper understanding of Paul's writings when we understand his ways of communicating. It helps us with context. It helps us to understand the intended meaning of Paul's words, especially in difficult passages.

As we go through our Romans study I believe that many of you will see what I mean.

In the passage we are studying now, and others that we will encounter throughout our study, you will find much similarity in the writings of Epictetus. Epictetus was a Greek Stoic philosopher.

Here is a link to his writings for your review: <https://classics.mit.edu/Epictetus/discourses.html>

It is not surprising to me that Paul used rhetorical speaking. Going back to episodes #33 and #34 we learned that the Jews in Rome spoke Greek. So the Jews and Gentiles both would have been familiar with rhetoric. He was merely communicating in a way that they would relate with.

This would also explain why his writings are so hard for us to relate with today. We naturally try and put Paul inside of the box of our communication methods and he just doesn't fit into that box!

Getting back to our passage, Paul wrote...

² We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who do such things. ³ Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Romans 2:2-4

Q. Did Paul see the Lord's judgment as righteous and true?

Q. Does Paul call out the self righteous here to be sure they realize that YHWH will not be fooled by that behavior?

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

Romans 1:18

Q. Looking back on this passage, does Paul teach that self righteousness, or pointing the finger at the behavior of others is godly or righteous in any way?

Q. Would self righteousness then also suppress truth?

In chapter 2 verse 4 we read...

⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Romans 2:4

Q. Could the blessing of enjoying life on earth be considered the riches of his kindness and patience?

Q. Does Yahweh owe anyone an opportunity to enjoy life on earth?

Q. Based on the true definition of repentance, a change of mind, what is Yahweh looking for in the godless?

⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶ He will render to each one according to his works: ⁷ to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

Romans 2:5-8

Q. If this passage were taken out of context could it sound like a works based salvation?

Q. If a church were to put this up on a screen and do a study on it, could we mislead a whole lot of people?

Q. Can you see why we go verse by verse to be sure that we see the correct context of the passage?

Q. Paul says “But because of *your* hard and impenitent heart” doesn’t this mean he is talking to you?

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Romans 1:21

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,

Romans 1:24

Q. So is Paul still talking *about* a mankind who rejects God here?

Paul is speaking in an apostolic judgment against those who reject the truth. He is not directing this to his church. This may seem obvious when we study it, but these simple principles are thrown out the window daily in church institutions in order to prove whatever point they want to make.

Always pay attention to context. Don’t let sloppy hermeneutics lead you into bondage and error.

Looking again at our last passage...

⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶ He will render to each one according to his works: ⁷ to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

Romans 2:5-8

Q. Is there a place here for those who are trying to please God but fail to meet his requirements?

Q. If we are to get what we deserve for our works how can we be saved from God’s wrath and fury?

Q. Do you have any sin in your life that deserves wrath?

If we look at this passage as relating directly to the works we produce, we fall into fear. We cannot stand firm in our behavior can we? Our works will never allow us to stand before a Lord who is as holy and righteous as Yahweh.

But what if the passage is actually about the root of the problem. What if it refers to that which produces bad or good works in our life?

“⁷ to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life;”

Q. Would you say that Paul describes someone seeking glory and honor for themselves?

Q. How might we find or obtain this glory and honor?

Knowing that Paul taught from the same old testament scriptures that we have today, let's see if we can find a connection with what he is talking about here that might help...

Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

Psalm 8:5

Q. Who is being described by David in this psalm?

Q. And who crowned Him?

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all.

I Chronicles 29:11

Q. Whose is the power and glory in this passage?

Q. Do you think our behavior can get us in on this?

To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

I Timothy 1:17

Q. Does Paul include any people in this statement in his writing to Timothy?

Q. Who is glory and honor to be given to forever?

And then in Revelation...

Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.

Revelation of John 4:11

Q. Are you getting the point here?

Q. Can you see where I am going with this?

Let's look at what Paul said again in our Romans letter...

⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶ He will render to each one according to his works: ⁷ to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life;

Romans 2:5-7

Q. So what are those who by patience and well doing seeking?

Q. They seek the Lord don't they?

Q. Is seeking merely looking for him in this context or is it seeking after His guidance or being directed by the Lord?

Q. So whose works are really necessary then for salvation? Whose works are being judged?

Q. Will God give his glory and honor to those who seek him?

Let's see what Paul says about that to the Christians in Thessalonica...

so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

II Thessalonians 1:12

Q. So we seek Him don't we?

Q. Whose works do we want to be found in us on the day of judgment?

Q. So is God actually looking for his glory in us?

Q. Do you think when he finds that we are glorified in Christ we will pass his judgment and receive the promised eternal life?

But then Paul writes...

⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

Romans 2:8

Q. Does Paul describe believers who at selfishly and fall into lies?

No, he is talking about a Godless mankind. A mankind who rejects Yahweh and His truth and seeks righteousness apart from him. They seek a righteousness that comes from themselves. They deceive themselves by making up their own rules and even judging others based on those made up rules.

And as we already studied...

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

Romans 1:18

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Romans 1:21

Q. Is obeying unrighteousness the same as rejecting Yahweh?

Q. Is not honoring or giving thanks to Yahweh the opposite of giving all honor and glory to Him?

Q. So do these passages describe anything about actual behavior?

Q. But does certain behavior get assigned to believing vs not believing.

Q. Why do those who reject Yahweh get all the bad labels?

Q. When Yahweh judges the works of mankind who reject Him, what will he find?

We read earlier about those who reject Yahweh. Paul wrote...

2 We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who do such things. 3 Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Romans 2:2-4

Q. Is it crystal clear what the Lord is looking for in his judgment?

So we have a clear context of belief and unbelief as we go through these passages in Romans. Let's see what Paul say next...

⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹ For God shows no partiality.

Romans 2:9-11

Q. Are we seeing a shift of focus in Paul's writing here?

Q. What did we learn earlier about glory and honor?

Q. Glory and honor are for the Lord alone right?

Q. Why were the Jews first to receive “glory and honor and peace”?

Q. Was this based on works or faith?

Later in Romans Paul makes this abundantly clear...

³¹ but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. ³² Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone,

Romans 9:31-32

But getting back to our passage....

⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹ For God shows no partiality.

Romans 2:9-11

The big question that we need to ask ourselves here is....

Q. With all of mankind rejecting Yahweh all through the ages, why is tribulation and distress coming first to the Jews?

And this question is one we will be investigating in our next episode. So stay tuned to the waking up to grace podcast.

I hope you guys have a great day out there and I will talk to you next week.

For further reading:

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<https://classics.mit.edu/Epictetus/discourses.html>