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Series: The Book of Romans

## Sin and Condemnation: The World's need to get right with God

(54)

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[Romans 1:18-3:20](#)

(Continuation from 11/27/16)

### C. God's Case Against the Moralist: Judgment, [Romans 2:1-16](#)

[Romans 2:1-5 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>1</sup>“Therefore you have no excuse, every one of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

<sup>2</sup>And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.

<sup>3</sup>But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same *yourself*, that you will escape the judgment of God?

<sup>4</sup>Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

<sup>5</sup>But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

[\(Romans 2:1-16\) Introduction](#): this is one of the passages that covers several subjects and can be studied from the viewpoint of any one of them. It is an excellent study on judging, criticizing others, the judgment of God, self-righteousness, the moralist, and the legalist.

It also deals with the judgment of the heathen, and answers the question so often asked: “What will happen to the heathen, to the person who never hears about Jesus Christ?” [\(Romans 2:11-15\).](#)

The present study is entitled: “God's Case Against the Moralist.”

1. [The moralist \(v.1\).](#)
2. [The judgment of God is according to truth: perfect justice \(v.2-5\).](#)
3. [The judgment of God is according to deeds: eternal reward or punishment \(v.6-10\).](#)
4. [The judgment of God is without respect of persons: absolute impartiality \(v.11-15\).](#)
5. [The judgment of God is to be executed by Jesus Christ and His gospel \(v.16\).](#)

2. [\(Romans 2:2-5\) Judgment— God, Misconceptions of— Man: the judgment of God— of the only living and true God—is according to truth.](#)

[Romans 2:2-5 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>2</sup>“And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.

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<sup>3</sup> But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same *yourself*, that you will escape the judgment of God?

<sup>4</sup> Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

<sup>5</sup> But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

In doing so, he presents six principles by which God judges sinful men: **knowledge (v. 1)**, **truth (vv. 2-3)**, **guilt (vv. 4-5)**, **deeds (vv. 6-10)**, **impartiality (vv. 11-15)**, and **motive (v. 16)**.

## Principles of God’s Judgment--part 1 ([Romans 2:1-5](#))

### Guilt

[Romans 2:4-5 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

<sup>5</sup> But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

Here the Holy Spirit, through Paul, affirms that God judges on the basis of a person’s true guilt, guilt that is common to every human being, including those, such as ancient Jews, who considered themselves exempt because of their high moral standing, their religious affiliation, or any other external reason.

The apostle first warns his readers not to think lightly of the riches of God’s kindness and tolerance and patience. The famous commentator **Matthew Henry** wrote, “There is in every willful sin a contempt for the goodness of God.” Every intentional sin takes **lightly** and presumes upon God’s kindness and tolerance and patience.

**Think lightly of** translates *kataphroneō*, which literally means “**to think down on**” something or someone and to underestimate the true value. It therefore often had the connotation of disregarding or even despising.

Through the prophet, **Hosea**, God proclaimed His great love for His people, saying, [Hosea 11:1-4 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>1</sup> “When Israel *was* a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.

<sup>2</sup> The more they called them, The more they went from them; They kept sacrificing to the Baals And burning incense to idols.

<sup>3</sup> Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them in My arms; But they did not know that I healed them.

<sup>4</sup> I led them with cords of a man, with bonds of love, And I became to

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**them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws; And I bent down and fed them.”**

But “**My people are bent on turning from Me,**” the Lord lamented. “**Though they call them to the One on high, none at all exalts Him**” ([Hosea 11:7 NASB](#)). It seemed that the more gracious God was to Israel, the more she presumed upon or spurned His grace.

Without exception, every person who has ever lived has experienced the **kindness and tolerance and patience** of God. Every breath a person takes and every bite of food he eats is by the kind provision of God. God is the only source of goodness, and therefore everything good and worthwhile a person has is from the gracious hand of God.

Gods own **kindness** is reflected in His children and is one among the fruit of the Spirit that believers are to manifest ([Galatians 5:22](#)).

[Galatians 5:22 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>22</sup>“**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, **kindness**, goodness, faithfulness.”**

**Tolerance** comes from *anochē*; which means “**to hold back,**” as of judgment. It was sometimes used to designate a truce, which involves cessation of hostilities between warring parties. God’s **tolerance** with mankind is a kind of temporary divine truce He has graciously proclaimed. **Patience** translates *makrothumia*, which was sometimes used of a powerful ruler who voluntarily withheld vengeance on an enemy or punishment of a criminal.

Until the inevitable moment of judgment, God’s **kindness and tolerance and patience** are extended to all mankind, because He does not wish “**for any to perish but for all to come to repentance**” ([2 Peter 3:9](#)). **Kindness** refers to the benefits God gives, **tolerance** refers to the judgment He withholds, and **patience** to the duration of both. For long periods of time the Lord is kind and forbearing. That is God’s common grace or providence that He bestows on all of fallen mankind.

The psalmists rejoiced that “**the earth is full of the lovingkindness of the Lord**” ([Psalm 33:5](#)), that “**the lovingkindness of God endures all day long**” ([Psalm 52:1](#)), that He gives “**His wonders to the sons of men**” ([Psalm 107:8](#)), that the Lord is “**good and doest good**” ([Psalm 119:68](#)), and that “**the Lord is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works**” ([Psalm 145:9](#)).

Strangely most people do not perceive of God as being totally good. Instead of recognizing His gracious provision, patience, and His mercy, they accuse Him of being insensitive and unloving for letting certain things happen. “**How could God allow that little child to die?**” they ask, or, “**Why does God allow that good person to suffer pain and poor health and permit a scoundrel to enjoy health and wealth?**” Such people judge God from an *incomplete* and *distorted* human perspective, failing to acknowledge that, if it were not for God’s gracious goodness and patience, *no* human being would be alive. It is only His grace that allows any person to take another breath ([Job 12:10](#)).

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**Job 12:10 (NASB)**

**<sup>10</sup>“In whose hand is the life of every living thing, And the breath of all mankind?”**

Before God destroyed the world in the Flood, He waited 120 years for men to repent while Noah was building the ark and calling them to repentance through his preaching of righteousness ([2 Peter 2:5](#)). Despite His many warnings and Israel’s continued rebellion, the Lord waited some 800 years before sending His people into captivity.

**2 Peter 2:5 (NASB)**

**<sup>5</sup>“And did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.”**

Rather than asking why God allows bad things to happen to seemingly good people, we should ask why He allows seemingly good things to happen to obviously bad people. We could ask why He does *not* strike down many other people for their sins, including Christians, as He did with **Ananias and Sapphira** ([Acts 5:1-10](#)).

We should wonder why does God not cause the earth to swallow up apostate Christendom as He did with the rebellious Korah and his followers ([Numbers 16:25-32](#))? The reason is that God **“endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,... in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory”** ([Romans 9:22-23](#)).

The purpose of the **kindness of God** is not to excuse men of their sin but to convict them of it and lead them **to repentance**. *Metanoia* (repentance) has the basic meaning of changing one’s mind about something. In the moral and spiritual realm, it refers to changing one’s mind about sin, from loving it to renouncing it and turning to God for forgiveness ([1 Thessalonians 1:9](#)).

**1 Thessalonians 1:9 (NASB)**

**<sup>9</sup>“For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God.”**

The person who, because of **stubbornness and an unrepentant heart**, presumes on God’s kindness, tolerance, and patience, is simply **storing up wrath for himself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God**.

**Stubbornness** translates *sklērotēs*, which literally refers to hardness and is the word from which we get the medical term *sclerosis*. Arteriosclerosis refers to hardening of the arteries. Such physical hardening is an ideal picture of the spiritual condition of hearts that have become unresponsive and insensitive to God. But the spiritual condition is immeasurably worse than the physical. Hardening of the arteries may take a person to the grave, but hardening of his spiritual heart will take him to hell.

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Scripture is replete with warnings about spiritual hardness, an affliction which ancient Israel suffered almost continually. Through Ezekiel, God promised His people that one day “...I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh” ([Ezekiel 36:26 NASB](#)).

Jesus reminded His Jewish hearers that “...because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives...” ([Matthew 19:8 NASB](#)). When the self-righteous, legalistic Jewish leaders were waiting for Jesus to heal on the Sabbath and thereby give them an excuse to accuse Him of breaking the law, He looked “...around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart...” ([Mark 3:5](#); cf. [Mark 6:52](#); [Mark 8:17](#); [John 12:40](#)).

[Mark 6:52 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>52</sup>“For they had not gained any insight from the *incident* of the loaves, **but their heart was hardened.**”

[Mark 8:17 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>17</sup>“And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you discuss *the fact* that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? **Do you have a hardened heart?**”

[John 12:40 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>40</sup>“HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND **HE HARDENED THEIR HEART**, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM.”

In each instance quoting the Old Testament, the writer of Hebrews three times warns against hardening one’s heart to God ([Hebrews 3:8, 15](#); [Hebrews 4:7](#)).

[Hebrews 3:8 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>8</sup>“**DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS** AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS.”

[Hebrews 3:15 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>15</sup>“While it is said, “TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, **DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS**, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME.”

[Hebrews 4:7 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>7</sup>“He again fixes a certain day, “Today,” saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, “TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, **DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS.**”

To stubbornly and unrepentantly refuse God’s gracious pardon of sin through Jesus Christ is the worst sin of all. To do so is to greatly magnify one’s guilt by rejecting God’s goodness, presuming on His kindness, abusing His mercy, ignoring His grace, and spurning His love. The person who does that increases the severity of God’s **wrath** upon him in **the day of God’s judgment**. When God’s goodness is persistently taken lightly the result is certain and proportionate **judgment**.

[Romans 2:5 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are

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storing up wrath for yourself in **the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.**"

**The day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God** doubtless refers to the great white throne judgment, at which the wicked of all times and from all places will be cast into the lake of fire, where they will join Satan and all his other evil followers ([Revelation 20:10-15](#)).

**Revelation 20:11-15 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

<sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

<sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of *them* according to their deeds.

<sup>14</sup> Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

<sup>15</sup> And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

The German philosopher Heine presumptuously declared, "**God will forgive; after all it's His trade.**" Many people share that presumption, although they might not state it so bluntly. They take everything good from God that they can and continue sinning, thinking He is obliged to overlook their sin.

Modern man looks askance, suspiciously, skeptically, cynically, and mistrustfully at the Old Testament, finding it impossible from his purely human perspective to explain the seemingly brutal and capricious acts on the part of God that are recorded there. Commenting on the release of the *New English Bible* some years ago, **Lord Platt** wrote to the **London Times (March 3, 1970)**: "Perhaps, now that it is written in a language all can understand, the Old Testament will be seen for what it is, an obscene chronicle of man's cruelty to man, or worse perhaps, his cruelty to woman, and of man's selfishness and cupidity, backed up by his appeal to his god; a horror story if ever there was one. It is to be hoped that it will at last be proscribed as totally inappropriate to the ethical instruction of school-children."

Superficial study of the Old Testament seems to confirm that sentiment. Why, many people ask, did God destroy the whole world through the Flood, except for eight people? Why did God turn Lot's wife into a pillar of salt simply because she turned back to look at Sodom? Why did He command Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac? Why did He harden Pharaoh's heart and then punish him for his hardness by slaying all the male children in Egypt? Why did God in the Mosaic law prescribe the death penalty for some thirty-five different offenses? Why did He command His chosen people to completely eradicate the inhabitants of Canaan? Why did God send a bear to kill forty children for mocking the prophet Elisha? Why did He instantly slay Uzzah for trying to keep the Ark of the Covenant

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from falling to the ground, while at the same time allowing many grossly immoral and idolatrous Israelites to live? Why did God send fire to devour Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, for making an improper sacrifice, while allowing many other ungodly priests to live to old age? Why did He not take David's life for committing murder and adultery, both of which were capital offenses under the law?

We wonder about such things only if we compare His justice with His mercy rather than with His law. The Old Testament must be understood from the perspective of the creation. God declared to Adam, **"...From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die"** ([Genesis 2:16-17 NASB](#)).

From the beginning, therefore, *all* sin was a capital offense. God sovereignly created man in His own image. He made man to glorify Himself and to radiate His image and manifest His character. When man rebelled by trusting Satan's word above God's, God had every right to take life back from man. Man, is God's creature. He did not create himself and he cannot preserve himself. Everything he has is by God's gracious provision.

Although by justice they deserved to die for eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve instead experienced God's mercy. And at that moment the plan of salvation was activated, because it became necessary for someone to bear the death penalty that Adam and Eve deserved and every subsequent sinner has deserved. In light of that provision it becomes clear that demanding the death penalty for only about thirty-five transgressions, as in the Mosaic law was not cruel and unusual punishment but an amazing reduction in the severity of God's judgment. Did you hear that?

Compared to the original created standard, the Old Testament is full of God's patience and mercy with Gentiles as well as with His chosen people, Israel. Even in the case of the specified capital offenses, God frequently did not demand their enforcement. When adultery became commonplace in Israel, instead of demanding that every adulterer be put to death, God permitted divorce as a gracious alternative ([Deuteronomy 24:1-4](#)).

[Deuteronomy 24:1-4 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>1</sup> **"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts *it* in her hand and sends her out from his house,**  
<sup>2</sup> **and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's *wife*,**  
<sup>3</sup> **and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts *it* in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife,**  
<sup>4</sup> **then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance."**

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And even a cursory reading of the Old Testament clearly reveals that God graciously spared many more sinners than He executed (people like David). Periodically, God did dramatically take someone's life to remind men of what all sinners deserve. Such incidents seem capricious because they were not clearly related to certain sins or degrees of sinning, **but showed, by example, what all sins and degrees of sinning deserve.**

Even under the Old Covenant, God's people became so accustomed to God's grace that they came to take it for granted. They became so accustomed to not being punished in the way they deserved that they came to think they were above being punished at all. ***In much the same way***, Christians sometimes become offended when God is not as beneficent as they think He should be and are scandalized at the idea of His actually punishing them for their sin.

If God did not occasionally exercise **deserved judgment instead of undeserved mercy**, it is hard to imagine how much more we would trade on His goodness and abuse His grace. If He did not give periodic reminders of the consequences of sin, we would go on blissfully presuming on His grace.

Paul soberly reminded the Corinthian believers,

**1 Corinthians 10:1-11 (NASB)**

**<sup>1</sup>“For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea;**

**<sup>2</sup>and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;**

**<sup>3</sup>and all ate the same spiritual food;**

**<sup>4</sup>and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.**

**<sup>5</sup>Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.**

**<sup>6</sup>Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.**

**<sup>7</sup>Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, “THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY.”**

**<sup>8</sup>Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day.**

**<sup>9</sup>Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents.**

**<sup>10</sup>Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.**

**<sup>11</sup>Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”**

Every day we live we should thank the Lord for being so patient and merciful with us, overlooking the many sins for which, even as His children, we deserve His just punishment. The crucial question is not “**Why do certain people suffer or die?**” but “**Why does anyone live?**”



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When some Jews asked Jesus “**about the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices,**” He replied,

**Luke 13:1-5 (NASB)**

**<sup>1</sup>“Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.**

**<sup>2</sup> And Jesus said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were *greater* sinners than all *other* Galileans because they suffered this *fate*?”**

**<sup>3</sup>“I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.**

**<sup>4</sup> Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were *worse* culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?**

**<sup>5</sup> I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”**

Obviously, those who questioned Jesus thought that the worshipers who were slaughtered by Pilate and the men who were killed in the tower accident were exceptionally wicked sinners and were being punished by God. Jesus plainly contradicted their presupposition, however, telling them that those unfortunate victims were no more sinful than other Jews. More than that, He warned His questioners that *all* of them were guilty of death and would indeed ultimately suffer that punishment if they did not repent and turn to God.