

Rebuilding the Foundations - Romans
Part 6
“The Judgment of God”
Romans 2:1-5, Romans 3:9-20
Pastor Charles Price

Romans 2:1-5, Paul says, “You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgement on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgement do the same things. Now we know that God’s judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgement on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance? But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgement will be revealed.”

And then go to Romans 3:9-20, “What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: “there is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” “their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.” “the poison of vipers is on their lips.” “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.” “Their feet are swift to share blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know.” “there is no fear of God before their eyes.” Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to

God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.”

Last Friday, I spent the morning in one of our local hospitals going through some routine testing of my damaged heart. As many of you know, I had a heart attack several years ago, and so once in a while, they give me a thorough examination to see how my heart is doing.

And when you go to visit your physician, there are two things that are absolutely necessary. The first thing that's necessary is that the doctor makes a right diagnosis of your condition. Everything else depends on the diagnosis. If the diagnosis is wrong, any remedy will be wrong. If the diagnosis is right, then the remedy may be right. But everything depends on diagnosis.

The second thing that is equally necessary is that the patient must accept the diagnosis. You see, sometimes we don't like that diagnosis and we go into denial about it. We feel okay, maybe. The doctor tells me I'm sick in some way, but I actually don't feel as bad as it sounds, and so we go into some denial, and as a consequence, we don't face the reality of the diagnosis, and therefore we don't search for the remedy as we should be doing.

Now these two things are essential and Paul, in this part of the Book of Romans, is going into the diagnosis of why in the world we need a saviour; what do we need saving from? You see, the book of Romans, I remind you — and it's great that we have so many visiting us this morning — but I remind you that the book of Romans is the most clearly worked out explanation of the

gospel that we have an entire New Testament, and Paul states earlier — and we've looked at this a couple of weeks ago — that in the gospel, the righteousness of God is being revealed.

That's what it's all about. It's about revealing and restoring the righteousness of God, which is the moral character of God into human experience. But there's a problem. And Romans 1:18, which we looked at last week, he talks about the fact the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and unrighteousness of men.

The wrath of God then is not some kind of kink in God's character, that he has love but once in a while he gets angry and that's a rather unfortunate. Love and wrath are not opposites, but parallels. The more you love someone, the more angry you will be when something threatens to destroy them. And if you're not angry when something threatens to destroy them, it will question whether you really love them.

God is not indifferent. He loves us, and therefore he's angry at sin. And we saw last week in that passage in Romans 1 that as a result of his wrath, he is handing people over. This is the immediate expression of God's wrath. He gives them over to the direction in which they have chosen to go, whether it's sexual perversions —which he talks about—, or material preoccupation— which he talks about—, or self-promotion— which he talks about in those verses. That's what we looked at in Romans 1:18-32.

But now in Romans 2, there's a different emphasis. Paul talks here about the ultimate expression of God's wrath. He talks in Romans 2:5, for instance, about the 'Day of God's wrath', when his

righteous judgment will be revealed. It may be that God gives us hope; he lets us go in the direction we have chosen to go, and we reap the consequences of that in the process. But there is going to come, he says. A Day of Judgment. In Romans 2:16 he says there “that this will take place on the day when God judges men secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.”

Now let me talk about the ‘Judgment of God’ this morning. Again, it's not something that is particularly pleasant, but it is necessary. I don't want to spend time giving an apologetic for the existence of judgment, but judgment is both necessary and logical. You see, any civilized society not only has its laws, but it has this means of people being accountable for those laws. So, if a nation makes laws, at the same time, it has to establish law courts in order to judge those who violate those laws. And that is part of civilization. That's part of what gives us dignity. Judgment is necessary if we're going to live in a civilized society.

Now, supposing our government decided it didn't want to be judgmental, but it made recommendations that you do not drive down the 401 more than 100 kilometres an hour, and that's just a guideline; it's just a recommendation. If you travel 150 kilometres an hour, just make sure you drive carefully, and if you hit several vehicles, just think hard about doing it again because it's dangerous, this damaging. But there's no accountability over that. What kind of society would that be? Or if the government says we recommend to people they do not go around murdering people they don't like. That, if you do, and you murder your mother-in-law, for instance, just do not do it more than once. I mean, only kill her once. And if you have a tendency to do that kind of thing, just don't kill too many people. Just try and keep it under some kind of control. But there's no accountability of that. What kind of society would that be? It'd be total

anarchy, of course. You see, judgment actually is necessary, and it is logical, and apart from judgment, we human beings don't have much dignity and self-respect.

So, the judgment of God is not some unfortunate thing about God — it's part of the integrity of God. It's part of the righteousness of God. He may give us over as we saw last week, but like a runaway train that leaves the tracks for a while, it might seem to keep going in the right direction, but before long it's going to smack into a wall and there's a wall called the Day of Judgment. We might seem to get away in this life. God will let you go. If you want to live in sexual immorality, he'll let you go and won't stop you. He won't drop a bomb on you or anything. He'll let you go, but the day is going to come when you face his judgment. In the meantime, as we saw last week, you'll reap consequences in your own life as well. And all this is part of the diagnosis of Paul is giving.

Now in Romans 1, which we looked at last week, he speaks in the third person all the time. 30 times, from Romans 1:18-32, he talks about 'they,' and 'them,' and 'their.' 'They did not glorify God.' 'They did not give thanks to God.' 'They exchange the truth of God for a lie.' 'They reap the results of their perversion.' But now, in Romans 2, he suddenly switches from the third person to the second person, and 42 times in Romans 2, he says, 'You,' 'you're,' 'yours.' You see, I imagine at the end of Romans 1, there may well have been a few folks in Rome when this chapter was first read to them who are cheering Paul on. "They did not glorify God," he says. "They did not give thanks to them...Their thinking became foolish...Their foolish hearts were darkened...They claim to be wise but became fools... They exchange the truth about God for a lie... They reap the results of their perversions... They have become filled with every kind of

wickedness, evil, greed and depravity... They are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless...God gave them over.” (Romans 1:21-31) And I imagine there are people sitting there saying, “Paul, amen! You sock it to them.”

Because I'll tell you this, there's little that unites us in our enthusiasm like cataloguing and condemning other people's sins and failures. Nothing feeds the fire of our own ego like the exposure of other people's failures. That's why it is relatively easy to get a crowd to protest against other people's failures and sins.

And I'll tell you this: there's no greater antithesis to true righteousness than self-righteousness, the kind of smugness that the Pharisee, if you remember the story who stood up in the synagogue, Jesus told the story and he said, “God, I thank you I am not like other people. I thank you. I don't do what other people do, and I'm not like this dirty little tax collector who is sitting in the other corner of the synagogue.” (Luke 18:9-11) You know, it's very easy to become like that. And Paul, having exposed this ambiguous ‘them’ — he's got the people on his side will all agree with a sweeping condemnation of our society, probably — but suddenly he turns the searchlight from them to the unambiguous ‘you’... and ‘me.’

Here are four things summing up what Paul says in Romans 2-3. Four things about the judgment of God on you, he says: his readers. These are the Christians sitting in Rome.

1. God's Judgment is Impartial

The first thing I want to point out here is that God's judgment, says Paul, is impartial. That is, he does not show favouritism. In fact, he says that in Romans 2:11, God does not show favouritism. It is impartial. You see in Romans 2:1 one, he says, "You therefore have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else; for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself because you who pass judgment do the same thing."

Now, says Paul, forget about them now, it's you, you, you! He keeps repeating that word and there's rather a presumptuous statement we might say here, where Paul says that at whatever point you judge the other, you're condemning yourself because you who pass judgment do the same thing. Now you say, "Come on, Paul, that's a bit of a presumption, isn't it? To say the fact that you're condemning others is indicative of the fact that you who judge others are doing the same things...Why does he say that?" Well, that's a well-known fact, isn't it?

That we are most irritated in others with the weaknesses we have in ourselves. Don't you find that? I mean, Jesus implied that in Matthew 7 in the Sermon on the Mount when he was talking about judging others. Jesus said in Matthew 7:3, "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" He says, "You are sawdust spotting in your brother's eye, but actually, there's a plank, a dirty great plank, in your own eye."

Well, that's a pretty presumptuous statement, isn't it? Why is that a plank in the eye of the person who's talking about the speck of sawdust than the other person? Because again, there's the same implication: the things we like least in ourselves, are often the things that we judge most in other

people. That's why greedy people cannot stand greedy people. Have you noticed that, if you're greedy? That is why lazy people do not like lazy people!

That is why selfish people are irritated by selfish people. That is why proud people thoroughly dislike people who are proud. When I was a student, I spent a summer vacation working with a mission group, some of you are familiar with this group called Operation Mobilization. I spent six or eight weeks working in Spain with them in the province of Albacete on the west side of Spain, and we were a team of about ten people, and we were distributing literature and selling books, and going door to door and having street meetings and that kind of thing. We'd met together at a large conference with one or two thousand different folks up in Belgium. And then after a few days of orientation, we split into groups and all across Europe. I with this group of ten and went down to Spain. We had an Australian leader, and every night we used to meet together for prayer time and discussion and some Bible study.

One night after being together about three weeks, we met that evening and we were on a hillside out in the open air, looking across the local town we've been working in; it was a beautiful summer's evening. And our leader said, "Tonight we're going to do something a bit different." He said, "We've been together now for three weeks on this trip. We were together for a few days before that in Belgium, and I want us to go around in a circle and I want everybody here to tell us your first impressions of everybody else in the group. And then I want you to tell us your current impressions after three weeks and everybody else in the group."

Well, it was very interesting, and it was also very embarrassing because we tried to be as honest as we could and people would say, “When I first met ‘so and so,’ I didn't like this and I didn't like that, but now that I've got to know them, they're not like that at all. And I really love them and they're great folks, and I really understand them now.” And somebody else would say something similar, and we'd go around the group. And we all had a few things we didn't used to like, but now we love everybody. But there's one guy in the group, mid-twenties Scottish Guy, and that's purely coincidence, but he was Scottish, and his first impression of everybody in the group was bad. It was negative, and his current impressions three weeks later had only served to confirm his first impressions. In fact, most of us were a lot worse than he'd realized, and everything he said about everybody in that group was negative.

When we'd finished, our very wise leader said this: “You've been telling us your impressions of everybody else in the group, but none of you have taught us anything about anybody else in the group, but you've all taught us an awful lot about yourselves. And he turned to this Scottish guy, and he said, “Excuse me saying this, but you have a real problem.” And actually, he was right. The guy did have a real problem, because you're condemning of others is symptomatic, said Jesus in Matthew 7. Your looking at the speck of sawdust is symptomatic of the plank, and Paul says, “You who judge others, you pass judgment. Do you not do the same things?” (Romans 2:1) What is our judging others a symptom of? Well, let's look at it negatively.

First of all, it might be a symptom of pride. That's a negative thing. That is: if I can pull somebody else down relatively next to them, then I rate a little bit better. So, pride might be motivation behind that. Here's a positive one. Guilt might be a motivation behind that. I'll tell

you what I mean when I say positive. There are things in our own lives that we're trying to deal with and we're not and we find difficult to deal with.

And so, we judge them vicariously in somebody else. We wish we could deal with this in ourselves, but we're unable to do so, so we judge somebody else as a form of judging it in ourselves; that's a symptom of something good, but the only problem is, it comes out in the judgment of somebody else and not ourselves. And cheering loudly against other people's sins will never cover our own sins. This is what he's saying and these few verses in Romans 2. Because it says in Romans 2:2, we know the God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth; ours is based on prejudice.

I cannot have a totally impartial view of anything, but God does. I have a vested interest in which since I like to highlight as being bad and which ones I like to identify as being tolerable, and mine are usually tolerable. But God is not impartial like that. God's judgment, he says, is based on truth. That's why in Romans 2:11, God does not show favouritism. And so, my first point is that God's judgment is impartial.

2. God's Judgment is Internal

Now, the second emphasis that Paul brings out in this chapter, it's a God's judgment is internal. This is in Romans 2:12-24. In this section, Paul speaks in particular to those who he describes in Romans 2:17, "Those who call themselves Jews." If you call yourself a Jew, if you rely on the law but brag about your relationship with God." Now he turns generally from the moralisers,

when he says, “You are guilty as well of the same things,” and now talks specifically about the Jews. Now why does he speak about the Jews? I mean, he's writing to the church in Rome. Rome was not a Jewish city. It was the capital of the Roman Empire. There was a very large Jewish community there, but the church was made up of Jew and gentiles. But the reason why he suddenly talks about Jews is because the Jewish people were prone to the very same problem the Christian people become prone to, and it's this: The Jews would say, “Because I'm a Jew, because I'm one of God's favoured people, I am now somehow above the judgment of God because I'm already included as being on God's side. And therefore, as a consequence, basically, I can live more or less as I please.”

Now, says Paul, this is exactly the problem that many Christians have. You brag about your relationship with God, he says in Romans 2:17. You say, “Listen, this doesn't apply to me because I'm already a Christian. Therefore, because I'm already a Christian, I am already forgiven. I am already declared righteous. I'm already on the side of God. Therefore, how I live is not so crucial anymore because it's not about works anyway; it's about faith.” Does that ring a bell, that kind of reasoning? That's what Paul identifies here. He says that as the Jews would applaud God's judgment on the gentile world, Christians may applaud God's judgment on the pagan world. Paul tells them to wake up and realize his judgment is on you to.

You see, the problem Paul says about the Jews is that having correct language had become a substitute for correct living. Why do I say that? Well, look at these verses like Romans 2:17, “If you call yourself a Jew” — that's language. If you brag about your relationship with God, that's the right language.

He says in Romans 2:19 if you're convinced that you are a guide to the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth, you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing: do you steal? You who say people should not commit adultery: do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols: do you rub temples? You who brag about the law: do you dishonour God by breaking the law? As it is written, God's name is blasphemed among the gentiles because of you, you Jews (Romans 2:24). Now, he says, you have adopted language. You say the right things. You instruct, you teach, you guide, you brag. But, he says, this has become a substitute for the way you live. And, you know, that's one of the biggest dangers in the Christian life. It's far easier to learn the right language than to live the right life. We can all learn the language. We can all talk the language.

Their problem is that their position as God's people has become a substitute for their condition as holy people. "Because I'm in the right position, it doesn't matter about my condition," is the reasoning. The external ritual in which they had engaged had become a substitute for the internal reality which God was concerned about.

That's why he says Romans 2:16 that "God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ," because it's not the outward performance is the inward reality that God is looking for. Now, the Jew says, "Look, I'm a Jew. I've been born in the right family. I am part of the covenant relationship with God. As a male Jew, I was circumcised on the right day, the eighth day. I'm a citizen of the right nation. Isn't that enough?" And Paul says in Romans 2:25, that circumcision

has value if you observe the law. Circumcision is only the symptom, the symbol, the tip of the iceberg, if you observe the law. If you break the law, you become as though you had not been circumcised. Then in Romans 2:28, “A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor circumcision, merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he's one inwardly, and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the spirit, not by the written code.”

Now he says, ‘Listen, the outward performance is okay, but the real thing that God is concerned about is the inward reality which that performance is designed to portray.’ Now, Jesus brought this out very clearly in the Sermon on the Mount. You will know, the Sermon on the Mount is — by and large — about the law, and Jesus interprets the law in a large section of that. At one stage, he said this: “Have you heard it said, ‘You must not kill. You must not murder.’” Now, imagine the crowd saying to themselves, ‘Yes, we've heard that one. We keep that one. We're good at that one. We don't kill anybody. ‘I say to you,’ said Jesus, ‘If you're angry with your brother, you are already guilty of murder.’ (Matthew 5:21-22) Even though you'd never put a knife into his back, you'd never have the courage to put a bullet between his eyes. But if you're angry with him, you're guilty of murder. You say, “What, what in the world are you talking about?” Because murder is only a symptom, it's an effect. It's an activity of which the cause is the attitude of anger. And he says, “Look, you may not have murdered simply because the law won't let you get away with it. And so of course, you keep the rules, but your heart is full of murder.:

He then said, “Have you heard it said, ‘You must not commit adultery,’” and they probably said, “Yes. We know about that one. Most of us keep that one.” “I say to you,” said Jesus, “If you look at a woman and you lust after her, you have already committed adultery with her in your heart,”

(Matthew 5:27-28) even though you may not even know her name, even though you never take the time to find out where she lives, and you never have the courage to go knock on her door. You are guilty already of adultery', And they probably said, "What in the world are you talking about?" You see, the act of adultery is only a symptom. It's an expression of the attitude, the cause, the attitude of lust. And Jesus said, "It's not that God isn't concerned about adultery; it's the causes of it. And the righteousness of God and the penetration of God's justice goes right to the heart."

You see, we can be satisfied with outward activity. But as Jesus said to the Pharisees in Matthew 23:25-28, "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but on the inside are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee. First, clean the inside of the cup and dish and then the outside will be clean. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You're like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way," says Jesus, "on the outside, you appear to people as righteous, but on the inside you're full of hypocrisy and wickedness." And I'm adding, "What happens on the outside may impress your neighbours, it may impress the folks in the next pew, but it never impresses God because he's looking on the inside, at the heart.

And so, he's saying the judgment of God is not only impartial. The judgment of God is internal; it goes right into the heart of our lives. You see, we can all play religious games. You can call it Christianity if you want, where you learn to jump to the right kinds of hoops that satisfy everybody else and impress them, you're doing okay. But once I step and jump through those

hoops, the rest of my time is my own and I can live as I please, basically, as long as I keep jumping through the right hoops. And it becomes a game, and God's requirements go right to the heart.

3. God's Judgment is Inclusive

The third thing is God's judgment is inclusive. Now this is in Romans 3:1-8, because he asks the question there, "What advantage then, is that in being a Jew?" or "What value is that in circumcision?" So you say in this case, Paul, a Jewish protester sort of jumps up at this point and says, "In that case, what is the advantage in being a Jew and in being circumcised?" We equate that, "What's the advantage of being a Christian if I'm still under the judgment of God?" You see, I imagine some of these folks are feeling very indignant at this point. They're saying, "If I'm a Jew, I thought that meant I was already 'in' with God. I'm already secure, so it doesn't really matter quite as much how I live." "I felt that if I was a Christian, I'm already in with God, so it doesn't matter quite so much anymore how I live." So, is there any advantage in being a Jew? And Paul says, "Yes, much in every way." But they were perceiving the advantage as being, "Now that I am in relationship with God" as a Christian might say, "Now I'm a Christian, the consequence of my guilt has been dealt with, therefore now I can live as I like."

We don't know all the rumours that were going around about Paul. We know there were rumours that were negative and that he was writing this letter, among other things, to explain clearly to the Roman Christians what his message would be when he came to them because there had been so many rumours that had distorting what Paul stood for. But one of the things that he tells us in

this chapter, that he is slanderously reported as saying, and that's what he says in Romans 3:8: If you're a Christian and God is righteous, and you want to bring out God's righteousness, then go and enjoy your favourite sins, and if you live in those sins, your unrighteousness will simply, in contrast, exposed God's righteousness all the more.

What an amazing excuse for sin. So people say, “listen, Paul tells us, ‘hey you're a Christian, you can live as you like, because the more sinful you are, the better it chose God up to be.’” Paul says that he is being slanderously reported as saying this. I mean, he raises the question again in Romans 6 when he talks about the grace of God; God dealing with us and giving us what we do not deserve. And he says now that because God gives us what we do not deserve, can we go on sinning so that grace will abound? Because that was again, what was being said about Paul. Paul, they said, preached the gospel that taught, “Once you're safe, you're totally secure, sin as much as you want, it doesn't matter so much.” And Paul says, “Not at all.” Because that's going to come a judgment of God.

Now I believe in eternal security. I believe in the eternal security of the believer, because it seems pretty obvious to me that's what the New Testament teaches us. But that does not exempt from the judgment of God. If you look at first Corinthians 3:12-15, he says there that as a believer now, as a Christian, you build on the foundation of Christ, but be very careful how you build. He says, “If anybody builds on this foundation using gold, silver, precious stones or wood or hay or stubble straw, his work will be shown for what it is because the Day will bring it to light. It'll be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he

built survives, he receives his reward. If it is burned up, if it doesn't survive, he will suffer loss. Now, he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping into the flames.”

He says you’ve got to be careful how you build: you can build with gold, with several of precious stones, or with hay and straw. But the Day is going to come when everything that you've done is going to be tried by fire, he says. No if he talks about gold, silver, precious stones and what hey and stuff, but we know that in the fire, it's the wood, the hay, the stubble that is going to disappear very quickly. And by the way, wood, hay, and stubble all grows on the surface, it's all external stuff. Gold, silver, and precious stones have to be mined for. They are deep down stuff. That's the stuff that survives. That's the stuff that lasts. The integrity of your heart: that lasts. But he says on the Day of judgment, these will be burned up and you’ll end up with nothing. He says that you'll escape through the flames. He himself, he says, will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. But as we explained a couple of weeks ago, that this book of Romans teaches us that salvation is not primarily a salvation from hell to heaven. That's a wonderful consequence, that isn't the purpose of salvation. It's from and righteousness to righteousness: that's the purpose of our salvation. That once again we're equipped to live as God created us to live in the first place. Living as we were created to live is living with integrity and holiness of life before God. And so, he says, God's judgment is inclusive. It's going to include everybody, no matter how long you think you've been a Christian, or how long you’ve been a Jew. He uses this to illustrate the stance we may take as a Christian.

But the fourth and last thing, he says, is that God's judgment is irresistible. It is impartial. It's not just 'them,' it's you. It is internal not about our activities, but the inner heart. It's inclusive: it includes those who are gentiles, those who are Jews, those are believers, those are not believers.

4. The Judgment of God is Irresistible

But the final point is this judgment is irresistible. Romans 3:19 — let me read you this verse. “Now we know the whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.” What struck me as I read that section this last week was that phrase, “Every mouth is silenced.” That is, there's nothing to say, no excuse anymore to offer.

When I was at school, I was in trouble quite often with my teachers. I remember one teacher. I'd forgotten the situation, but I had an explanation for it, as I always did, of course. And in the middle of my explanation, he said, “Shut up and listen to me.” And that's a paraphrase of Romans 3:19. I didn't quote it to him because I didn't know it in those days. Every mouth is silenced and held accountable to God. You see, our purpose in understanding the diagnosis that is given here is that we understand the solution.

We'll never understand the cross of Jesus Christ, - which we are going to look at next week - we'll never understand the cross of Jesus Christ until we understand the cross is the place where God's wrath and where God's judgment is most clearly demonstrated. The cross of Jesus Christ is a picture of judgment. But you see, until you understand the diagnosis, until we understand the

state of my own heart, I'll never understand why the cross is so necessary. It will seem to me to be an extravagant gesture. Why in the world did Christ have to die? Was it just a symbol of something? No. He was addressing the wrath and the judgment of God, as we're going to see next week, very clearly, I hope. And Paul, in these verses here in Romans 3:9-12 rubs in again, if he's not done it sufficiently already.

He says in Romans 3:9, "What shall we conclude then we any better? Not at all." I've already made the charge that Jews and gentiles alike at all under sin. Then, he adds in Romans 3:10, "There is no one righteous, not even one." He says in Romans 3:11, "There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God." He says in Romans 3:12, "All have turned away. There is no one who does good, not even one."

Notice the all-inclusiveness here. These summary statements, we haven't time to look at them, but you can read them where he summarizes what sin is and what sin does. And he says that it's all very well to him at the wrath of God on 'them.' I expect you to cheer me on. You do not feel uncomfortable talking about the ambiguous, 'them' — the 'them' out there somewhere. "But now" he says, "I want you to know, It's about you. Whether you're Jew or gentile, whether you're a believer or a nonbeliever."

We stand before a God of integrity, who is a God of justice, who is a God of judgment, because as I said in the beginning, judgment is necessary and logical in any civilized society. It is necessary and logical to God. And the law of God exposes us. We haven't time to look at that,

but that's there in Romans 3 as well. And he says, "For all have sinned. And fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

I said at the outset this morning, when you go to visit your physician, two things are necessary: First, your doctor has to make a right diagnosis, and everything depends on that diagnosis. The second thing I said was that the patient must accept the diagnosis, and Paul makes the diagnosis here: we're all under sin. This is the diagnosis you and I have to accept. And you know how you know when you accept it? Your mouth is silent, there's no more protest. I accept it.

But there's a third thing, very quickly. A doctor must make a right diagnosis and the patient must accept the diagnosis, but the doctor must then prescribe the solution. The purpose for which you go to visit your doctor is not to find out what's wrong with you. Your purpose is to put it right, but to put it right, you've got to find out what's wrong. The gospel is not just an exposure. If I send you home this morning saying, "This is the message. Sorry about that, but you're under the judgment of God," this isn't going to help anybody. We need to know we are under the judgment of God, and we need to know that sin is serious. But a diagnosis is never made in isolation from a solution unless it's an autopsy, and this is not an autopsy. There is a future. There's a hope. And that's why, in Romans 3:21 he says, "But now a righteousness from God apart from law has been made known to which the law and the prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe."

And that little word 'but' to which he begins that statement is one of the biggest 'but's in the whole Bible. Because I'm talking about the wrath of God and the condemnation and the

judgment of God. But he says 'but there is a righteousness which , by nature, have fallen short of. There is a righteousness that is now available, it's through Jesus Christ!' And next Sunday, we're going to explore that. And I believe, and I am praying that there'll be many of you next Sunday who may enter into an assurance of your salvation, your reconciliation with God in a new way, because we're going to understand how it is possible now instead of the judgment and wrath of God being channelled towards you and me, it's diverted to Christ, and how His cross addresses God's wrath, and resolves his judgment.

We're going to explore that clearly the next time, but you don't have to wait till next week. You see, I mentioned that Pharisee who said, "God, I thank you, I'm not like other men are especially like this tax collector over here." And meanwhile, this tax collector cowering in the corner cried out just a one sentence prayer. "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." And Jesus said, "That man went home justified. The Pharisee didn't."

Because you can come this morning and say, "Lord, I may not fully understand everything. I may not fully understand the solution, but I do understand is the diagnosis. I know something's wrong. I know I'm a sinner. I know that my sin is all encompassing, and it brings me under the judgment of God. But God, be merciful to me, a sinner." And he will meet you exactly where you are. If God has been speaking to you and you're saying, I am looking into this book and I'm looking into a mirror. And although it's addressed to first century Rome, it's about 21st century Toronto and 21st century Canada as well. And I want to leave aside the 'them', the 'them', the 'them' and I want to understand the 'you,' and the 'me.' This is about me, it's about my need, it's

about my heart, it's about my condition. And I come and say, Lord, be merciful. Thank you. Forgive me.

I want you to come next week, very much in prayer, that God is going to work in lives in such a way that will totally transform some of you here because next week we'll explain what we do about the judgment and the wrath of God. And we'll discover there is a salvation. That you can be saved. Let's pray together.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, we're so grateful this morning that your word is honest. It doesn't flatter us. It tells us the truth because the diagnosis has to be accurate, and we pray that as the Holy Spirit may have driven your word into the hearts of some of us in particular here this morning. We have sensed God speaking to me. We pray Lord Jesus, that we will understand that you never expose sin in order to condemn us, or to humiliate us, or to embarrass us. But you expose our sin always in order that you may liberate us from it. That we may come to a merciful God and be forgiven and cleansed and renewed. And I pray, Lord Jesus, that many of us who are not certain of that will become very certain of that as we do business with you.

For we pray it in Jesus' name,

Amen.