

96-03-08b

Okay, as we resume now after our break, I have put on the board a summary of these things in chapter one to make it a little more clear and perhaps break it down in a way that will be helpful. There's basically two things. When you look at this and if you study it closely and break it down, there are two basic things that happen and some of them are restated.

The idea of not glorifying God when the knowledge appears and not being thankful, instead exchanging that away is stated in verse 21, it's stated in verse 23, and it's stated in verse 25. And these are all basically different ways of talking about the same fundamental lack of response to God's revelation of Himself. And so what is it that the person has done? They have failed to glorify God when this knowledge was present.

They have failed to be thankful. They have taken this great revelation of something that is eternal and incorruptible and undefiled that fadeth not away and have said, I'm not interested. I'd rather have something earthly and temporary and mundane that is here for the moment.

I'd rather have one in the hand than pie in the sky, if you want to mix your metaphors a little bit. And there are results that are then given of these things interspersed in those verses. The results that are given are that they become vain or empty in their thinking.

They are darkened in the hearts. They are given over to depravity, slavery to physical forms of evil. They become enslaved to physical passions.

They cannot help themselves, whether it's homosexuality or it's amazing the high incidence of what you might term an addiction to pornography that is running in Christian circles. A lot of the students at seminaries are in for counseling because they are hooked on pornography. They can't stay away from it.

They are just unable to control their insatiable need for this kind of thing. Why is that there? Why can someone get to the point of not having control over physical passions? This scripture tells us why. It is a result of rejection of the truth of God because that's where we're set free from the law of sin and death is in Christ.

And this is absolutely true for an unbeliever. There's not the prayer of a hope if God comes and reveals himself and that's rejected. You're going to be enslaved to these things.

Then the second section that we started talking about in verse 28, it says, And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, they're not interested in retaining that knowledge. Not only do they not respond to it, they don't even want to keep thinking about it. This is where you get your atheists.

I don't believe there's a God. I don't believe there's an absolute standard. I don't think that you

can come in here and tell me that something is right or something is wrong in my life.

I have my own standards to judge by. They don't like to retain God in their knowledge, so God gave them over to a debased mind. And now we're talking about the mental and the spiritual results of this rejection of God.

And if you look at the grammar in this second section here, starting verses 28 through 32, the results of this rejection are bracketed. They don't think the knowledge of God is worth retaining. And right there at the last part of verse 32, they practice these things knowing that they're deserving of death.

They know that that's the judgment that comes on these things. And yet they do them and they approve and encourage other people who do them. They band together and try to make each other feel like, hey, we're all doing this and this is okay.

That's why you have marches and gatherings of people that represent some depraved lifestyle. They know the righteous judgment of God. Notice, this is what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit, isn't it? When He comes, He will convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment.

God, the Holy Spirit, when He comes and uses what's available in creation and so forth, not only does He make us aware of our sinfulness, but we also know that there is a righteous standard. There is a righteousness that's out there that we don't have, that we need, and that there is a judgment because of the great gulf between our sinfulness and that righteousness. And all of this is communicated without any intermediary.

There's no necessity for a believer to come in and preach. There's no need for us to try to be someone's conscience. There's no need for us to step in and elbow the Holy Spirit out of the way and try to do a better job than God Himself at revealing God.

These are things that God reveals. God has made that His territory, His responsibility, and we should not try to elbow Him out of the way and try to browbeat someone or try to ourselves convict someone of sin or scare them into the kingdom by talking about all the horrible pain of the lake of fire and so forth. That information is already there.

The good news is what we bear, and that's the good news of Jesus Christ. And the issue for an unbeliever is one, Jesus Christ. That's the only thing.

We don't need to get distracted. What about the heathen? We don't need to get distracted about, well, are there hotter and cooler places in hell? Are there any of the other myriads of things that people want to get distracted with? The bad news has already been delivered. God made them aware of it.

We have the privilege of bearing the good news to those who have responded to God's revelation, and that's what we should focus on and not let ourselves get distracted by peripheral

things. But the consequences, the results of having exchanged the knowledge of God, having given it away, didn't think it was worth retaining, these people, it says, having been filled with unrighteousness, evil, greed, and wickedness, there's a vacuum in the human soul that is shaped like God, and if we don't let God fill it, it's going to suck in whatever else there is in the universe, everything that is not God and isn't a part of God, and that's unrighteousness, evil, greed, and wickedness. And having been filled with those things, these next three categories of things are going to be a result.

And if you've studied the scriptural view of sin and evil in the past, you will see that there are some familiar groupings or categories here. Having been filled with unrighteousness, evil, greed, and wickedness, they are full of envy, murder, deceit, and malignity. And, of course, this is murder not in the sense of being chronically having means, motive, and opportunity with malice aforethought of dusting someone out of the current time continuum.

This is the murder that's a part of hatred. This is the murder that's a part of wrath and anger. This is a mental attitude, sin.

I'm sorry, I should restrain myself. This is not plugging someone with a .45. This is hating them. This is seeking to destroy them, seeking to pull the rug out from under them, seeking to diminish them in the eyes of others.

It is character assassination, if you will. It's seeking to make someone's life not worth living. Deceit and malignity.

These are mental attitudes that result from being full of these kinds of things. The second one is fairly obvious. These are verbal sins, sins of the tongue, whispering, slandering.

We already have had these people described as being irreverent, impious, godless. But a God-hater, this is from the viewpoint of how this person presents themselves. I am an atheist.

I am an agnostic. I think the whole concept of God is a weak, lame crutch for people who don't have enough starch in their shorts to stand up and get through life on their own. People who rely on these Hebrew myths.

They're superstitious. They're primitive. They're backward.

They're ignorant. All of which will be opinions that people have about us because we believe the scriptures and we believe that there is a God. There is a heaven.

There is a lake of fire. There is a return of Jesus Christ. And people say, oh, you've got these old, tattered Hebrew manuscripts and you're sucked in.

You're weak. Why can't you stand up and take life like a man instead of having to pray and be humble and all of this? That's a God-hater and that's a verbal presentation of oneself. Insolence.

Boastfulness. These are all verbal presentations. This person is justifying themselves, raising themselves by cutting everyone else down.

And then finally, we have some that Paul appears to focus on the effects on young people. If you make this decision early in life, you're going to be an inventor of wickedness. Isn't it interesting that it seems like every other week, somebody finds a new thing to inhale? It used to be model airplane glue and the most bizarre things, like carburetor cleaner and PAM, the nonstick cooking aid.

People grind up poppy seeds because they've heard that that's where opium comes from. And there are some new things. They call them huffers now.

Teenagers, it's a widespread thing. They're called huffers. They get something that's got aerosol propellant.

It doesn't matter what it is. It can be spray paint. It can be hairspray.

It can be anything with an aerosol propellant. They spray it into a bag and then stick their face in the bag and inhale it. And by cutting off all oxygen to their brains, they obviously hallucinate.

But of course, many of them also are permanently damaged by that. But they invent new ways to be wicked. Disobedient to parents.

Complete lack of response to parental authority, which, of course, leads to a similar attitude in other areas of authority. Undiscerning. Can't tell the difference between what's good and what's bad, what lasts and what doesn't last, what's important and what's not important, what will make a good wife or good husband and what won't.

Complete lack of discernment. And we see this throughout the, and I'm sure people who were adults when our generation was youth looked at us and said the very same thing. And it seems to be whatever generation is currently in their youth phase, especially if we haven't turned to Christ, this is the thing we tend to do.

We're undiscerning. And we don't have any interest in someone telling us what has value. It's down with the establishment, so forth.

Faithless, heartless, and ruthless. This is one place where I like the translation of the NIV. Faithless, heartless, and ruthless.

And when you look at the problems we have with gangs, you look at the problems with teen suicide, you look at the problems with substance abuse and early pregnancy and people deciding that they're just going to dispense with the whole concept of marriage or family or anything else among young people, this is a result. And we say, well, it's so hard to reach these young people with Christ because look at the generation they're growing up in. That's a backwards attitude.

The generation is the way it is because of rejection of Jesus Christ, because of rejection of God's self-revelation. And if you reach that point and make that decision early, a youth like this is the result. Now, does that mean that you can never turn and never be changed? Obviously not.

But that's what's going to characterize the generation. That's what's going to characterize the society, especially when society tolerates and even encourages a lack of respect for God, to not even allow an objective decision to be made in our schools and in our culture and our literature and so forth. People won't even let people make up their own mind, their intent upon abolishing God, upon abolishing spiritual things and dismissing and denigrating and treating people as fools if they have any interest in God.

And these are going to be the results. Now, we've listed these out because we want to see Paul's point here in chapter 2. Paul says, Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge. For in whatever you judge another, you condemn yourself.

For you who judge practice the same things. Now, this is obviously illogical if you say that, well, the only people who judge are people who are insolent, boastful, whispering, slandering, murdering, deceitful, maligned, depraved homosexuals. That's just not the case, is it? Lots of people who are perfectly moral and upright and have no visible manifestations of immorality judge.

But the reason that seems to not make sense to us is we don't understand and it's clearer if you think in Greek and speak Greek to understand what Paul is saying. He says the people who do these things, what is it that they did in chapter 1? These things were results. What they did is they failed to glorify God.

What they did is they failed to be thankful that God had revealed Himself in grace and made deliverance and a meaningful life available. What they did was exchange the incorruptible for the corruptible. What they did was not think the knowledge of God was worth keeping, not worth having.

Let's trade it away and get a thrill. They know that there is judgment for making this decision, but they do it anyway and they encourage and approve other people who do it. These are the things they did.

So, in chapter 2, when Paul says, you who judge are doing those things, what does that tell us? If we judge, and we need to get a good definition of judging here, but for now, if we judge, that's what we're doing. We are not glorifying God, we're not being thankful, we are exchanging the truth of God for a lie. We're throwing away the standards of God and using some other standard.

We're throwing away the instruction of God and the mandate of God, the commandment of God, and substituting something else. We are doing the same thing. And many of these same symptoms and syndromes will creep into our life.

And we say, well, I'm not going to be an idolater, I'm not going to be a fornicator, I'm not going to be a homosexual, I'm not going to be a murderer. But remember what Jesus said, if the motives exist in your heart and you encourage them, and you clutch them to your bosom, and you mentally enjoy these things and pursue these things, it doesn't matter if you commit it on the outside. It's your mental life, it's our mental lives that are on trial.

It's our toleration for these things in our own souls that's on trial. And what's going to happen? If we do these things, we're going to know that there's something wrong, just like these unbelievers know that there's something wrong. They know that there is a righteous judgment on these things.

But what do they do? They do them themselves and they look around for other people to approve and to flock with and to approve one another and to be in the same group with for peer approval and peer support. And that's what we're going to do. We are going to wind up looking around at other people and trying to make ourselves feel better by saying, well, he's not so holy, he's not so righteous.

Look at that person over there. In other words, if you get down to the nitty-gritty, whatever motivates us to get engrossed in what somebody else is doing, in evaluating somebody else's method of operation, somebody else's results, estimating someone else's motives and someone else's thinking, and passing judgment on it, why would we care about what anybody else is doing? The motivation is we've already got a problem in our soul. We've got this kind of problem in our soul.

We've already abandoned the truth of God. We're not looking at His glory anymore. We're not being thankful to God for what He has done and looking at ourselves before God.

We're looking at someone else before us or we're looking at someone else before the group or we're looking at someone else and how do they measure up to my standard? And we say, well, my standard is, I mean, I can tell that that's wrong and so forth. Why are we busying ourselves with that? Do we not have our hands full with our own lot in life before the Lord? Don't we have our own hands full making sure that our thoughts and intents of the heart are acceptable in God's sight, that the words of our mouth and the meditations of our heart are pleasing to God? That's a full-time job. So what we need to do is stop and take a look at what this judging means and it's going to become clear, I think.

First of all, turn with me over to 1 Corinthians. The Corinthian church is probably one of the spiritually weakest churches that Paul wrote a letter to and it's going to be the most likely to have this problem. And so we're going to find that there's quite a lot said in 1 Corinthians, oddly, about judging.

Paul doesn't spend near as much time chastising them for the evil that they're committing as he

does talking about what motivates them and the fact that they judge one another. Look at 1 Corinthians 4. 1 Corinthians 4, right there in verse 1. It's going to be hard to read it out of Romans, I guess. 1 Corinthians 4, Let a man so consider us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Moreover, it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. But with me, it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. But in fact, I don't even judge myself.

I don't know of anything against myself, but I'm not justified by this. He who judges me is the Lord. Therefore, judge nothing before the time until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts.

Then each one's praise will come from God. So this reminds us of what's being said in Romans. The judgment is going to be based on what's going on in the heart.

We can't tell often what's going on in the heart. Jesus Christ can. And when he comes and judges, he will reveal what's going on in the heart.

He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness. And he will reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

So, first of all, we're not qualified to pass judgment because we can't accurately evaluate the thoughts and intents of the heart. We can sometimes estimate it. We may think we know what's going on, but that is at best an estimate.

But notice that as a result of judgment, people are going to get praise from God. There is going to be a consequence of this judgment. And this is the essence of judging.

What's the difference in judging and discerning? These words are actually used somewhat interchangeably, even in the New Testament. And that's why there's been some confusion on this point. Just back a few pages in Romans chapter 14, verse 3, Paul uses the identical same terms in addressing this same subject.

He says in 14.3, talking about people who believe that they can eat anything and other people who think they can only eat certain foods. There's a difference in operation. Some people think, well, you can eat everything.

And other people think, no, you can only eat certain things. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat. Let not him who does not eat judge him who eats.

Why? God has received him. Who are you to judge another servant? That servant to his own master stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand for God is able to make him stand.

One person esteems one day above another. Another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully

convinced in his own mind.

That's our mandate. Rather than worrying about whether someone else eats or doesn't eat or observes a day or doesn't observe a day, we need to be fully convinced in our own mind that what we are doing is based on Scripture and will stand on the day of judgment before the Lord. And the principle here in judging isn't simply looking at someone and saying that's good or that's bad.

In fact, we're going to see we are commanded to do that. Judgment goes beyond discernment into setting and inflicting a penalty. We say because this person observes days, because this person eats or does not eat, that's wrong.

I am going to create some consequences for this person. I will talk about them to other people. Oh, look at so-and-so.

That's so silly. Look at what they do. I don't understand why they do that.

Don't they understand how bad that is? And we start talking about that person. And what are we doing? We're diminishing them in the eyes of someone else. We're making them pay a penalty.

We're saying you're going to suffer the penalty of loss of honor, loss of esteem in the eyes of anyone that I can talk to about you. I will diminish your reputation by pointing out your flaws. That's judging.

There is nothing wrong with looking at someone in our periphery and deciding whether what they're doing accords with our understanding of what God wants us to be doing. But when we go beyond that, if we go beyond noticing or go beyond evaluating, saying, well, that's good or that's bad, and inflicting a penalty and saying, well, I think that's bad and they're going to pay for it. Most of the time we don't say that.

I'm going to make them pay. Let me go out and make them pay. We do it almost unconsciously.

We just go out and diminish their reputation. We let it be known. Oh, do you know what I saw so-and-so doing the other day? I saw so-and-so staggering home after a long day at the office and I don't think they were filling up the car.

I think they stopped at Joe's Bar and Grill and it was more bar than grill or whatever. And we just let it be known. We happen to be in a position to observe some flaw and so it slips into conversation.

Oh, well, you know, I would have been here sooner, but I was helping old Joe up the steps. He couldn't seem to navigate a straight course. Oh, really? You know, it just comes out.

And we think, well, you know, this really probably ought to be known. I shouldn't keep this to

myself or whatever. We make them pay a penalty.

That's judging. God is the one who will decide if there's going to be a penalty. God is the one who will decide if there's going to be praise.

God is the one who has authority to judge. This same principle is over in Colossians. When we study Colossians, we saw it in Colossians chapter 2. Paul tells the people in Colossae, Don't let anyone judge you.

Colossians 2.16 Let no one judge you in food or in drink or regarding a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. And so, not only are we not to judge, but we aren't to let someone judge us.

Now, here's a challenge for you. Somebody, perhaps in your family or in your periphery, is constantly taking notice of what you do and being critical of it and lets everyone else know it. So, how are you going to stop them? The Bible says, Let no one judge you.

How are you going to stop them? Are you going to crack them over the head? What does this mean when it says, Let no one judge you? What's he really talking about? He's saying, Don't take that into account when you make your decisions. Don't let the fact that someone is judging you change the way you operate. Don't let it take away your peace.

Don't let it take away your happiness. It should be as though they didn't judge you. The fact that they're being critical, the fact that they're making noise, the fact that they're trying to backstab you or undercut you or make your life miserable or make you low in the eyes of others.

Don't let anyone judge you. Don't let anyone do that to you. Don't let them change the way your mind is working, the peace and the happiness that you enjoy in Christ.

Make it as though they had said nothing. And of course, the most frustrating thing for someone who's really trying to get at you is when it has totally no effect, when it's completely ineffective. And they'll sometimes even become more bold and more obvious because they're hoping that you're going to somehow react and panic and fall apart.

And when it completely rolls off of your mental attitude, it's a dull game. What's the point of talking about this person? He doesn't care. Apparently, human opinion has no effect on this person, so why should I run around trying to ruin it? So that's what it means when it says, do not let anyone judge you.

Don't let the fact that someone is judging you have any effect on you, is the essence of that. In 1 Corinthians chapter 6, we have the concept where Paul tells them, why do you go to court and sue each other? Why do you go to court and try to get the court to decide who's right and who's wrong? And this is another passage that comes up when we talk about judging. And when we look at this, there's a seeming contradiction.

Paul is saying, don't judge and don't let people judge you. But now in chapter 6 of 1 Corinthians, he says, how dare you go to law before the unrighteous and not before saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge these smaller matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life? So now Paul's got the shoe on the other foot, and he's saying, you ought to be judging these things yourselves. You ought to be deciding who's right and who's wrong.

You ought to be determining these things and not having to submit it to a court of unbelievers who have no righteous standards before the Lord. He says in verse 4, if you have judgment concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? You've got the truth of the word of God. You've got the enlightenment that comes from God.

You're taking these important matters to be decided by people who are in the darkness, who are in the grip of all these things we have listed on the board. He says, I say this to your shame. Is it so that there's not a wise man among you, not even one who will be able to judge between his brethren? You might make a note of that verse when people start crying the blues about believers and judge not lest ye be judged and so forth.

We are commanded to judge. A wise man will judge between his brethren. He can figure out who's right and who's wrong.

But the difference is that decision is made for benefit. That decision is made for good, to resolve a dispute, to resolve an argument, not to create one. It's designed to build up the body, not to tear it down.

It's designed to keep the group of believers moving in a healthy direction and not leave something unhealthy, unresolved and unaddressed. And that's a proper use of discernment. And there are times when we go beyond discernment and we make a decision.

Something bad will happen in a church. Some believer in the church will malfunction in a gross way. The elders in that church are commanded to evaluate that and make a decision.

You have to judge. And it goes beyond perception to implementing a decision. But again, everything in the Christian life goes to motive, the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Why are you taking on this unpleasant task? Is it that you want to wreak revenge and make this person pay? Some people may be doing it for that reason. And if they are, they risk the wrath of God. Because they're doing the very same thing as these people on the board.

They're failing to glorify God. They're throwing away the truth that tells us what that judging is

supposed to be for. They're exchanging it for a lie that somehow inflicting a penalty on this malfunctioning person benefits the church and benefits people and somehow raises the judger in the esteem of others or whatever.

The thoughts and intents of the heart are all foul in that. And that's why Paul says when you judge someone with that kind of heart, you're in this category right here. You're doing the very same thing that these gross homosexuals and pernicious thieves and liars and murderers are doing.

Because the thought and motive in your heart is the same. You've exchanged the truth of God. You've exchanged the incorruptible for the corruptible.

And so that's why he tells the Corinthians these things. You remember when we studied Galatians 2, we talked about Paul confronting Peter because Peter had fallen back into legalism. Peter was up there in Gentile country and he used to eat with the Gentiles.

Then some men from James came and all of a sudden Peter got finicky and wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. Paul looked at that, judged the situation and he stood up and made a speech. And he said, he pointed this out.

But what was his motive? Paul had a burning desire that the Gentiles not be trapped in legalism. And Peter's example was doing the exact opposite. It was giving legitimacy to the idea that there must be some merit in the law for Jews and for Gentiles.

And so Paul looked at this situation, took action and actually confronted an elder publicly which is what we're told in Timothy we should do. Elders, leaders in the church, are to be disciplined publicly so that others will be warned and benefited from it. And that's exactly what Paul did.

So it isn't even as clear cut as saying, well as long as you don't inflict a consequence on somebody, it's not judging. The real criteria between discerning and judging is what's your motive. Are you tearing down or are you building up? Do you have at the core of your motivation a desire to please God or a desire to please yourself and get some satisfaction? And so Paul did that.

Finally, let's look at Philippians 3.17. This is an important instruction for us. Philippians 3.17. Paul says, Brethren, join in following my example and note or mark those who so walk as you have us for a pattern. Paul's saying, look, you need to judge.

See who's following the example and who's not. Discern it. Figure it out.

Many walk, of whom I've told you often and now tell you weeping, they are enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction. Their God is their belly and their glory is in their shame because they set their mind on earthly things.

These are people in the church and these are believers. That's who Paul is talking to in chapter 2 of Romans. He says, if you judge and if you set your mind on earthly things, you're in the same

category.

And lest there be any doubt, the final verse I will commend to your attention is 1 Corinthians 2.15. We know that the Bible says, Judge not lest ye be judged. But 1 Corinthians 2.15 says, He who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged by no one. And what does that mean? We don't let anyone judge us just like it says in Colossians.

We are judged by no one. Now, plenty of people may be judging us. In fact, many times the closer you live to the divine standard, the more people are going to be critical and misunderstand and impugn motives and attack us with the attacks that they attack Jesus Christ Himself with.

It doesn't mean that no one is going to judge us, but in the sense of not letting anyone judge us, we are judged by no one. He that is spiritual judges all things. He discerns all things, applies the divine standard in his soul to everything around him and makes decisions on that basis.

And he doesn't make decisions based on what people are saying or what people are concluding. Now, that includes going on the defensive, doesn't it? If we think someone is drawing a wrong conclusion about us, our first knee-jerk gut reaction is to go on the defense, to justify ourselves, to explain ourselves, to offer plausible reasons and excuses. And, well, it just seemed that way.

It really wasn't that way. Here's the way it was, and I had good reasons for doing what I did. And we wind up making worse fools of ourselves than if we had remained silent.

It is God who judges. It's the divine evaluation that's the only one that counts. And if people think we are fools, we can be like the Apostle Paul and be fools for Christ.

The only judgment that counts for he who is spiritual is the judgment of God. Ultimately, that is the judgment that will separate all people on the planet. So, that's Paul's launching point here in Romans chapter 2. And so, we understand when he says, you who judge, he's talking about the judging that is illegitimate.

He said, what did the Jewish believers do? And what did a lot of the early Gentile Christians do? When they were proselytes to Judaism and they joined the great righteous ranks of those who were leaders of the blind and fine, upstanding moral examples and so forth, they started taking pride in that. They started trying to preserve their status as a holier than thou. And that led them to judge others and point out the flaws and the inconsistencies and so forth.

And so, when they judged, their motives were false. It's easy for them to look at these people in chapter 1 and say, oh, the righteous wrath of God ought to fall on them. And yet, Paul says, look, just because you're moral and just because your actions are above reproach, if you're judging them, that indicates that you've got the malignity in your soul that they've got in theirs.

You've exchanged the truth of God for a lie. You've exchanged the incorruptible for the corruptible. You've exchanged the eternal for the temporary.

You're living in the world. You're doing the same things. It's not the manifestation that God is judging.

It's the attitude of the heart. So now, in Romans chapter 2, as we go forward, you are inexcusable. You are without excuse.

What did he say about the unbelievers? They are without excuse because they had the truth and they traded it away. You, believer, are without excuse when you trade away the truth of God and spend your time looking at others and judging them. We know that the judgment of God, verse 2, the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.

It's God who will ultimately judge. It's God who will decide where everything stands. Verse 3, do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? You think that the divine standard of the motives of the thoughts and intents of the heart is not going to be applied to you? That God is just going to look at your moral actions and say, well, you weren't immoral, so you're in? Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to a change of mind? The reason God hasn't already dispensed justice.

Isn't this an interesting thing? In chapter 1, it says that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against these people. How would you say the wrath of God has been revealed against all of this wickedness we have on the board? Most of it is self-induced misery, isn't it? By separating ourselves from God, we make ourselves miserable. We trap ourselves in our passions.

God isn't actively out there inflicting additional misery. He just gives people over to what they've chosen, and what they have chosen afflicts them. But it says the wrath of God is revealed.

Where is it revealed? God the Holy Spirit reveals it. Sin, righteousness, and judgment. The pages of Scripture reveal it that the wrath of God will be revealed on the day of judgment.

It's revealed as a future event. It's revealed as an ongoing policy and attitude of God in the present that God will not respond in blessing. God will not respond in a positive way to people who reject Him.

And in the same way, He says, look, God is being patient with you believers that are keeping this evil inside and are using this as a basis for judging others. The goodness of God is His patience and His grace is supposed to be motivating you to be thankful and to glorify Him and to change your mind. But in accordance with your hardness, this is skleros or skleronomia in Greek, which is the hardness, the callousness that builds up over time.

It's the same concept that we saw when we were talking about porosis, callousness and perpetuation of a pattern. Your hardness and your unrepentant or impenitent heart, you are

treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Now, this is addressed to the second person, isn't it? This is addressed to you.

This is addressed to believers. There is a day of wrath. There is a day of judgment.

And if we disregard the truth of God and if we tolerate and pursue these ungodly things, wrath is coming to us in the day of judgment. We tend to think Jesus is going to come back and we're all going to put on white robes and have golden harps and eat manna and have a great time. There is a day of wrath and a day of judgment coming to believers.

This is by no means the only passage that teaches that. And over the course of our study of Romans, we will go to nearly all of the passages that talk about what is in store for believers in the future. And we have been kidding ourselves and we have allowed ourselves to be lulled into a false sense that there are no consequences for failing to get with the plan of God in this life.

There are dire consequences for believers who don't wake up and smell the coffee in God's plan. This is addressed to believers in verse 5. If we have a hard and impenitent heart, we are treasuring up for ourselves wrath in the day of judgment. Wrath in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God who will render to each one according to his deeds.

Now, let's step back and say, well, suppose we didn't do all of our homework and suppose we thought that maybe this was talking about salvation. What's the basis of salvation? Is it deeds? The decision about whether or not someone goes in the lake of fire is based on whether or not they've accepted Christ. Christ is the issue.

And without the standing before God that comes through Christ, we go to the lake of fire. But that judgment is not based on deeds. Salvation is by grace through faith not of works lest any man should boast.

This is a judgment based on deeds. Therefore, this is not the great white throne judgment. Whatever else you want to say, this is not discerning believers and unbelievers because this is a judgment based on deeds.

This is a judgment for believers. Now it says eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality. Now this has caused more confusion in the doctrines of salvation because it says eternal life and we think, oh, well, this is deliverance from the lake of fire.

This is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord for believing in Christ. But we will see, you'll have to take it more or less on faith at this point, but when we get deeper into our study, we're going to see that like salvation, this word eternal life, this phrase, talks about a lot more than just deliverance from the lake of fire. Eternal life is our portion.

It's our lot and our inheritance. It is the reward that we can gain or lose by what we choose in this

life. And it doesn't mean that if you don't get this eternal life that's here in verse 7, you're going to the lake of fire.

What it means is that all of those things that belong to it, you know what it's like in wartime when somebody steps on a grenade or a thermite thing goes off or white phosphorus shell impacts and they're burned over 99% of their body and their legs and their arms are gone. And we start thinking about quality of life. They're alive, but we start wondering is that really life? You know, skin grafts and all of these terrible things.

And from a human point of view now, I'm using a very crude analogy, but we say, well, they're alive, but is that a life that really embodies everything that we look for in life? Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness and the healthy normal things that go along with what we consider to be life. This is the issue that people face when they look at infants that are born severely, severely deformed. What kind of life will they have? And of course, this is the basis that some people use to say that we'll just snuff that life out, which is wrong.

But the point I'm making here is we distinguish when we say life between the mere biological fact that you're alive and the quality of that life. And the same thing happens here in this phrase, eternal life. All of us as believers have eternal life in the sense that we're not going to the lake of fire.

But the quality of that life is going to vary greatly in the eternal future. It doesn't mean that, well, I skate through by the skin of my teeth, but I'm miserable and I kind of wish I'd just gone ahead and gone to the lake of fire. But what it means is there's going to be tremendous loss of opportunity.

There's going to be tremendous loss of the privilege of reflecting the glory of Jesus Christ. Loss of reward. Loss of function in God's plan in the eternal future.

We will have squandered our attention and our energies on things that are temporary, a part of the corruptible world. And when it comes to the incorruptible things, we're not qualified. We're not there.

We're not ready. We're not prepared. We don't know.

We have no practice in the previous life in being ready for those things. Have you ever been in a situation where you just felt like I've never been in this place. I've never done this thing.

I'm helpless. I wish somebody would give me the book or explain to me how it works. I'm just lost.

Many believers are going to wake up in the kingdom of Jesus Christ with that feeling. They're saved and they're not in the lake of fire. And it's great to be there.

And here's the wonderful presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. But in terms of what's going on, they won't have a clue. The presence of Jesus Christ will almost be a frightening thing to them in His

righteousness and in His holiness the way John saw Him in Revelation.

It will be unfamiliar and scary and it won't have the blessing that is the fullness of eternal life that Jesus wanted us to have. He said, I've come that they might have life and have abundant life. So, this is what we look for as believers.

Our goal is eternal life because we are pursuing glory, honor, and immortality. God has promised that abundant eternal life to those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for those things. But to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, there will be indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish on every soul of man who does evil.

Notice it doesn't say destruction. It doesn't say the lake of fire. It says there's going to be disappointment.

There's going to be anguish. We'll see later there's going to be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth by believers who are going to wake up and realize the opportunity that they missed. God put it in our hands and we traded it away.

That's what happened with Esau when he traded away his birthright. Later on he sought it eagerly with tears but he'd already made his choice. He'd already traded it away.

So, that's where we're headed. When we pick up next time in Romans chapter 2, we will go into a little more detail on this eternal life and on this judgment that is coming for believers based on our deeds. But we've covered more than enough to stimulate our thinking for a few days.

So, let's close at this point in prayer. Father, we thank You for the truth that You have encapsulated in Your Word. We thank You for the privilege we have of being ministered to by Your Spirit to comprehend things that are incomprehensible to the human mind and to our frailties and our flesh.

We thank You that we have a spiritual identity and that You have given us spiritual resources that lift us out of this present evil age and give us the opportunity to lay hold on the incorruptible and eternal things that are a part of Your plan and Your person. We pray that the Spirit will continue to stimulate our thinking in these areas and that we will see the way that it works itself out in our lives as we seek to establish priorities that are pleasing to You, as we seek to make decisions and allocate our time in ways that reflect recognition of our purpose here in this life. We ask all these things in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ and for His glory.

Amen.