

96-03-22b

Okay, we're going to pick up here after our break in Romans chapter 2. We've seen the five statements that are made about this second person pronoun, you, that has showed up here in chapter 2. And once again, this is addressed to believers. And we've seen that the basis for this is the idea of being declared righteous. This is not the declaration of righteousness based on the work of Christ on the cross that enters us into union with Him and into the family of God and establishes our salvation.

This is the declaration of righteousness related to our life as believers. One of the constant pictures of this in the New Testament are the garments of white linen that are spoken of, for example, in Revelation. One of the churches when Jesus Christ is talking to the angel of the church and he says, you have some there who have not soiled their garments.

What does that mean? It's talking about spirituality. The guest at the wedding feast that is cast out, he doesn't suffer the fate of the people who refused the invitation to come. He accepted the invitation and came, but he doesn't have the garment.

Because he lacks the garment, he is excluded from the feast. He's cast outside and he has apportioned his lot with the hypocrites. What's the lot of the hypocrites? Loss of reward, loss of opportunity.

They're outside that place of celebration. Doesn't mean that they're miserable for all eternity. It's a picture of loss.

It's a picture of not having maxed out the potential. And so this idea of righteousness at the judgment for believers, sorting out those who will be first and those who will be last. You recall in Matthew several places Jesus says, many who are last will be first and many who are first will be last.

Well, you're talking about one group. Anytime you sort a list, that list comprises people that all have a common characteristic. And your list is either going to have all believers or it's going to have all unbelievers.

You can't say, well, because you're on the bottom of the list, you're not saved anymore. So last being first and first being last is all talking about the same group. And it's interesting to see where Jesus mentions that phrase.

For example, the one who is cast out of the wedding feast and some of these things where people's disappointment is expressed by weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth. This is not necessarily a picture of no salvation and going to the lake of fire. This is darkness, which is compared to the light of Christ's immediate presence.

This is expressed in Revelation chapter two and three as one of the rewards. To him that overcomes, I will grant to walk with me in white. This is presented as a reward.

Some believers will and some believers won't in this age. Well, does it mean that if we're not walking with the Lord in white, we're not saved? No, it's a picture of special privilege, special opportunity. This is something that comes as a reward.

It's a degree of closeness to the Lord that some other believers haven't taken advantage of and haven't seized the opportunity to exploit. And walking with Christ in white expresses closeness, proximity to him and that white garment. The same thing with the name that no one knows except the Lord and yourself.

And the white stone and the hidden manna and all of the other things that are presented to overcomers. And you'll see a lot of people that construe this and say, well, everyone is an overcomer. Look in first John, this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.

And that's salvation faith, therefore, everyone's an overcomer. Well, it causes the letters to the seven churches to make no sense because these are letters to the churches. And they are designed to motivate and encourage believers to get with the program and max out the potential.

And he says, to him that overcomes, I will grant. Well, why doesn't he just make a blanket statement and say that these happen to all believers? Because they don't. They're privileges, they're opportunities, they're rewards that come to believers who allow God to do his work in them.

And this is the encouragement that Paul is putting forth in Romans chapter two. Let's not get so concerned about foisting righteousness on others. Let's not look around to see where God is at work and seek to join him in his work.

Let's concentrate on being a place where God can do his work. God is at work within you to will and to do his good purpose. Scripture tells us.

And we need to be the place where God is at work. And Paul says, if you're judging, what are you doing? You've got your eyes on people. You're ignoring the truth.

You're rejecting the revelation that God has put in front of you. And you're doing the very same thing in principle that the unbelievers are doing. God revealed truth to them and they ignored it and went their own way.

You as a believer, how can you sit there and judge other people and say they're righteous or they're not righteous when you're doing the very same thing that you condemn? God has revealed the truth of how the Christian life works and what your opportunities are. You've rejected it and you're busy judging other people and focusing on trying to put righteousness on them,

trying to get them to keep the law. You yourself are doing the very same thing.

And it's a very stinging rebuke and a stinging indictment. We have the opportunity to grow and to become the kind of person that God can use to accomplish these other things. At the point that we quit trying to convert the world and concentrate on letting God convert us in an experiential sense, God will work in us and through us to accomplish all of these other things.

Sharing the gospel with someone who isn't saved is the most natural and unconsciously eloquent thing when we have a close personal relationship with Jesus Christ. If someone comes up to you, if you're married and you love your spouse, and someone comes up and says, well, I've never met your wife or I've never met your husband, what are they like? How hard is it to talk about your spouse and to talk about their qualities and talk about the things that attracted you to them and how you met and all of the good times that you've had together in your marriage? It's very easy. Why? Because you're intimate with that person.

You know them inside out. You have a great appreciation in your soul for that person. And it doesn't put you in an awkward spot and you don't feel like, oh gosh, how can I put the best foot forward in talking about my spouse? It's very natural and you can relax because it's something with which you're intimately familiar.

That's how it should be with Jesus Christ. If we concentrate on letting God transform us by the renewing of our mind, if we come to know Jesus Christ because we know what Scripture says about him, and if he comes to dwell within us through faith, as Scripture encourages us to let him do, evangelism will be unconscious. In many cases, it will be nonverbal.

People will look at us and we will have a reputation just by the way we live. We're excited about the fact that Christ is returning. We live our life anticipating the next life instead of worrying so much about this one.

And people will see something in us that they desire because they've come to a consciousness of God and they are seeking that information. And rather than going out in human strength and trying to put the gospel in front of someone and encourage them and exhort them and drag them kicking and screaming into the kingdom, by living as a citizen of the kingdom, people will be attracted to it and God can use us without our efforts and without our very weak and inefficient ideas about how to impress someone with Jesus Christ. We saw in Romans chapter 1 that God has revealed himself to every man by what he has made, by what he has created.

If we become that new creation in Christ and if we live as a new creation, God will reveal himself in the same way. Creation doesn't come and try to beat us over the head and evangelize us, does it? The trees don't whack us with a limb and say, look, look at the design, look at the complex chemical photosynthesis that's going on here. Doesn't this tell you something? The trees just stand there and they are a tremendous testimony as is everything else in God's creation.

That's why the New Testament doesn't stress evangelism. It stresses personal growth. It stresses personal transformation because when we are transformed like the rest of creation, we will reflect God and we will shine forth the existence of God, his eternal power and deity.

And that's what God is after. And that's why Peter told him, he said, be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you. Well, why is anyone going to be asking us about the hope unless that's something that's a part of our nature? It's a part of our life as believers.

And people say that person just seems to be optimistic. They've got a joy and a peace that is unnatural. It seems to not be based on circumstances.

It isn't based on environment or anything else. Where does that come from? Why are you that way? And it's going to be the most natural thing in the world. So Paul is addressing believers in Rome and he's saying, look, don't be sitting there judging others and trying to foist a standard of righteousness on them.

And this has application for us, doesn't it? Because we tend to want to fall into this and it's in more subtle ways. We don't try to get people to keep the Mosaic Law. But isn't it interesting that we find ourselves concerned and praying for if we see someone in our periphery who, let's say they have an alcohol problem and they become an alcoholic and we get very concerned, oh, this person, if they could get in touch with God and get their spiritual life cranked up, this alcoholism would go away.

Well, there might be some other person that's very upstanding and moral and doesn't have any obvious antisocial behavior and problems. Why do we not pray as fervently for that person who may have the same distance from God and the same distance from spiritual things? But we have a standard of righteousness that's almost unconscious. And we say, well, this person has a problem that makes them antisocial, that causes them to stick out like a sore thumb.

They've got a substance abuse problem or they have a wife or husband abuse problem or they're not doing right with their kids or there's some morality issue or there's some social issue that brings them to our attention. And so we pray the roof down for that person. But what's the root problem? It's distance from God.

It's not being active and responsive in the area of spiritual things. Lots of people fall in that category and we don't tend to think about them because they don't have some obvious symptom. And Paul is saying, look, stop trying to foist righteousness on someone, getting them to conform to your idea of what's healthy and normal.

Concentrate on letting God do that inside. It's the beam and the moat idea. So we saw these things that this person who is judging assumes about himself.

You are called a Jew. You rely on the law. You make your boast in God.

You know His will. You approve the things that are excellent. You're instructed out of the law.

You can quote chapter and verse. You're confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the morphos, the form, the appearance of knowledge and truth in the law. And then he asks the hard question, you who are teaching another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? And of course, preaching the Mosaic Law, this idea of stealing would be the obvious thing.

You broke into someone's house. You took their stereo type of thing. And you can get up on your righteous high horse and say, that's terrible.

Look at society today. Look at all of the stealing and theft that's going on. Somebody broke into the jewelry store just a couple of blocks from here and tried to shoot the owner for a handful of gold jewelry.

And in the inscrutable plan of God, their semi-automatic weapon misfired three times in a row. And the owner's wife, just right here at Spring Valley and Plano Road, the owner's wife grabbed a nine millimeter and plugged the thief and sent him to meet his maker. That happened just a week ago today, right here.

And we look at this and we deplore all of this thieving and so forth. And Paul is saying, look, you can stand up there and say that all of this theft is terrible, but do you steal? And of course, he's not talking about believers going around committing thefts so much as spiritual theft. What did Jesus tell the people that he was talking to? Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and render to God the things that are God.

If God is not receiving the things that are due Him, who got them? God requires and deserves the love that comes with all of our heart, all of our soul, and all of our strength. He is to be above everything else in our list of priorities. Pleasing Him comes ahead of pleasing people, comes ahead of pleasing ourselves, comes ahead of any other thing.

If we deny that to God, we've thieved it. We've stolen it and taken it for ourself. Or we have given it to some false target.

We've put something else ahead of God. Well, you know, I give as much lip service as I'm comfortable giving, or we don't ever tell ourselves lip service, but you can see the idea here. It's possible to commit spiritual theft by depriving God of the things that He demands and that He deserves.

And we're going to see that Paul is going to make this explicit in this passage a little bit later on.

He says, you who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? And this is stealing in the spiritual realm. You who say do not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? We don't have time to explore all of these in detail, but I do want to take this one on adultery because scripture has a lot to say about this.

And so let's just see what these people had on hand. These people who said that they were schooled in the law and they were a light to the blind and so forth. Let's look at the scriptures that they had available and see what scripture had to say about this, about adultery, committing adultery.

Look in Judges 2, verse 17. We know what the physical act of adultery involves. This Greek word here is moicheia, m-o-i-c-h-e-i-a.

But he says, you who preach against committing adultery, do you commit it yourselves? And he's not talking about the physical act. Look in Judges 2, 17. Actually, in 16, he's talking about the days of the judges.

Nevertheless, the Lord raised up judges who delivered them, the Israelites, out of the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked in obeying the commandments of the Lord.

They did not do so. And this is declared to be playing the harlot. This is spiritual adultery.

You can see the same thing a few pages over in Judges 8, verse 27. This is in the days of Gideon. Judges 8, 27.

Gideon made it. He's talking about the chains that were around the camel's necks and so forth, all the plunder that they got from this battle that he won. And it says, Gideon made it into an ephod and set it up in his city, Ophrah.

And all Israel played the harlot with it there. It became a snare to Gideon and to his house. This thing that Gideon had set up as a memorial to a victory that God had given them became an object of worship.

And it says they played the harlot with it. And this obviously is not literal adultery. This is putting it ahead of the things that they should have paid attention to.

And of course, if you think about it, this occurs all through the Old Testament. You might put with this other passages such as 1 Chronicles 5, 25. I'll read this to you right quick.

1 Chronicles is talking about different conquests that take place. This is in the days of the judges and before the monarchy is spoken of. It's talking about the Israelites.

And then 1 Chronicles 5, 25 says, they were unfaithful to the God of their fathers and played the harlot after the gods of the peoples of the land whom God had destroyed before them. So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul, king of Assyria, that is Tiglath-Pileser, the king of Assyria. He carried the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh into captivity.

He took them to Hala, Habor, Hara and the river of Gozon to this day. And this is talking about the northern kingdom and the Assyrian captivity that took place. And why was that? Because of spiritual adultery.

Why is it adultery? Because these people represent believers. We've seen many times that one of the most helpful principles of Old Testament interpretation is understanding that Israel coming out of Egypt under the blood of the Passover lamb represents the believer. They are the saved.

And the way that God deals with Israel in the Old Testament is the way that God deals with the believer. When they drop in the wilderness, go and read Hebrews chapter 2, 3, 4 and 5, it talks about that the promises of God were not mixed with faith in them that heard it. And this isn't salvation.

This is spirituality. There was a rest for the people of God and they failed to enter that rest and God declared, they shall not enter into my rest. And that rest was a place of fruitfulness, a place of reflecting the glory of God and accomplishing His purpose after salvation.

And boy, has that been messed up. People talk about crossing Jordan and going into Canaan and that that's death or that that's salvation and it's not. It's entering into the place of fruitfulness in God's plan.

And they did not enter in because of their unbelief. And this was the unbelief of believers. It seems like an oxymoron that the unbelief of believers, but that's the picture that we have.

And so this spiritual adultery are people who had made a commitment to God, pictured in the marriage commitment and had forsaken that commitment, had gone against it and played the harlot with other gods. We don't tend to set up little graven images and do that today. We do it in the spiritual realm in more subtle ways.

And so Paul's exhortation here as he talks in Romans chapter two, he says, you who preach and say, do not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? When you're trying to force this standard of morality on people and you get all upset because they're not respecting their marriages and they're committing adultery, are you doing the same thing in your spiritual life? This is a consistent pattern of comparison that began in the middle of chapter one in Romans. He says, look at these unbelievers. You, oh man who judge, you're doing the same thing.

You're worried about the literal sin that you see in the world. And yet in the spiritual realm, you're following the same principle. And that continues all the way through this chapter.

In addition to the passages I've already mentioned, and you might turn to this one, Psalm 106, beginning at verse 34 and going through verse 43. Psalm 106, 34. This is one of those Psalms that launches into a review of the history of Israel.

And this was in the form of a song. What a great way to teach children the things that had happened in the past and to encourage them to not repeat the mistakes that have been made in history. Psalm 106, it's talking about Israel in the desert.

They angered him in verse 32 at the waters of strife. It went ill with Moses on account of them because they rebelled against his spirit so that he spoke rashly with his lips. They did not destroy the peoples concerning whom the Lord had commanded them, but they mingled with the Gentiles and learned their works.

We've seen this in our study of 2 Samuel that this is one of the things that David tried to correct so that temple worship could be established. In 2 Samuel, God said, you're not going to build the temple because you haven't driven out the enemies. You haven't established the obedience that has to come before you can do the dwelling place of God among you.

That has to come first. Go back and read the law. Go back and look at Deuteronomy chapter 12.

Central temple worship doesn't take place until you eradicate the enemies. And that's why David wasn't allowed to build the temple. God said, your job is to fight the wars that will drive these people out and your son will build the temple.

And this is mentioned here. They did not destroy the peoples that the Lord had commanded them. They mingled with the Gentiles and learned their works.

They served their idols, which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons and shed innocent blood. The blood of their sons and daughters whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan and the land was polluted with blood.

Thus they were defiled by their own works and played the harlot by their own deeds. Spiritual adultery. Therefore, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against His people.

Notice, this is not people that don't belong to God. The wrath of the Lord was kindled against His people so that He abhorred His own inheritance. And He gave them into the hands of the Gentiles and those who hated them ruled over them.

Their enemies oppressed them and they were brought into subjection under their hand. Many times He delivered them, but they rebelled in their counsel and were brought low for their iniquity. And it reminds us of what Paul has mentioned in the middle of Romans chapter 2. If we make this mistake in our life, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against those who suppress the truth and unrighteousness.

And that can include believers. We don't suffer the wrath that unbelievers suffer, but there can be loss of reward, loss of opportunity, loss of blessing. We won't be at that intimate place of walking with Christ in white.

We'll be at some distance removed. And there is going to be variation in the millennial kingdom. There will be variation.

Paul talks about this in Corinthians when he says in the resurrection, look up in the sky. You see how the stars differ. Star differs from star in brightness.

So shall it be in the resurrection. And some of us will be dim bulbs in the incoming days because we didn't take advantage of the potential that we have in this life. All of us have the potential to go as far as the power of God will carry us.

And that's quite a distance. The word of God and the spirit of God. But it's up to us to keep that as a priority and not commit spiritual adultery as Israel did.

You who say do not commit adultery in Romans 2.22, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? Now, here's an interesting thing. This has been a difficult thing for a lot of folks who have tried to analyze this passage to try to figure out. And I don't claim to have the answer because the idea of robbing temples, what did that mean to the people that Paul was writing to? In what sense were people who were keeping the law and depending on that for righteousness, how did they rob temples? This is temples in the plural.

It doesn't say rob the temple. So what exactly was being talked about here? It seems to be something that is expected to be the opposite of abhorring idols. And yet it must be something similar.

So this tends to suggest somehow robbing Gentile temples. And the suggestion I would make is that in preaching against idolatry and looking down their nose at the pagans who were involved in worshiping Artemis and Diana and all of these other Greek gods and so forth, somehow they were taking into themselves money that had formerly gone to pagan temples. For example, when they made proselytes out of the Gentiles, the Gentiles used to give an offering to their pagan gods just like the Jews did to the God of Israel.

And so when they would make proselytes to people who used to put these offerings in front of the pagans, now these Judaizers, these people who kept the law, were taking that income and taking it for themselves and teaching these people, well, whatever you were giving to the pagan temple, just give it to us. Contribute it to our religious system here. Bring it into our form of temple worship here or our synagogue.

And that rather than encouraging people who came to Christ and who became believers to not grudgingly or out of necessity, but to be a cheerful giver and the proper understanding of worship,

they were anxious to get this material gain and to channel funds that had formerly gone to pagan worship into their Judaistic worship. And they say, well, you don't be giving God any less than what you gave the pagans. And if you were giving X amount of gold a month to the pagans, well, you just plop that in here at the synagogue.

And so you who abhor idolatry and say, get away from those idols, are you robbing temples? Are you taking money that had gone to those temples? I offer that as a suggestion. I don't claim that that's... But it's a difficult thing. In what sense were they robbing temples? I don't really know.

But you can tell in the spiritual realm what is the idea here. You can deplore worshiping a God other than the God of Israel. And yet in some facet of your own operation, you are doing the very same thing.

In a spiritual sense, you are taking to yourself, you're almost making an idol out of yourself. You're robbing temples. The stuff that went to temples, you're diverting it to yourself.

You're making yourself into an idol for people to support and worship. You can make yourself an object of worship instead of the God of Israel. And you say, don't be worshiping something other than the God of Israel.

And that you turn around and in practice, you make an issue of yourself. And this goes back to what he's referred to earlier. You're a guide to the blind.

You're a teacher of children. You set yourself up as an icon. You can see this in some areas of religion today.

The reverence that is given to someone like a pope or a bishop or a pastor in some churches where the person achieves sort of a demigod status. He is the channel through which we leverage our spiritual life to God. It's attached to and tied to this person.

And we can put that person in the position of an idol, functionally speaking. And people can actually encourage this kind of thing and not try to get rid of it when it happens because it is very appealing to the ego to be thought of as on a pedestal and above and someone on a high spiritual plane. So that's the idea here.

You're preaching against idolatry, but you are taking something that is normally given to temples. You're robbing that. You're taking it to yourself.

Verse 23, You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? Now, the interesting thing about verse 23 is that in the Greek, this is not a question. This is a statement. The others are formulated as a question, but this is a statement.

And it says, You who make your boast in the law, are dishonoring God by breaking the law. And he's talking about those passages that we looked at earlier. What does God require of you? What

is the genuine fulfillment of the law? To do justice, to love mercy, to walk humbly with your God.

Samuel told King Saul, God desires mercy and not sacrifice. God desires obedience more than the smoke of these offerings. Obedience from the heart.

And so he makes the flat out statement. You who are boasting in the law, you are dishonoring God by breaking the law. And he concludes this section in verse 24.

The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you, as it is written. And this is a reference back to really two passages in the Old Testament. One is in Isaiah and one is in Ezekiel.

And this is something that had been a problem in Israel for a long time. And the reason Paul quotes the Old Testament, he's saying, look, I'm not bringing up something new. This has been a problem in Israel from the beginning.

You're supposed to be a light to the Gentiles. And instead, the name of God is ill-spoken of among the Gentiles because of you. You're doing diametrically opposite of your purpose.

Now he says an interesting thing in verse 25. He says, circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law. Wow, what age are we in here? I thought this was the church age and the law was out.

Circumcision, Paul says in another place, it isn't circumcision or uncircumcision, but what's going on in your heart that counts. And yet here he says circumcision is profitable if you keep the law. But if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

Keep in mind the time in which this is written, the context in which it is written, there are people who grew up and may have even become believers in the age of Israel. This is circa 50-something A.D. Some of these folks have been around a while. Christ was crucified and went to be at the right hand of God the Father around 30 A.D. So this is some 20 to 25 years after the time of Christ.

Well, some of these people, you know, you've got people that have been in the church for 45 or 50 years and so forth. These people might have started out in the synagogue, come to Christ. The disciples are all still roaming around as apostles now except for James and one or two others that might have been martyred.

And so you're in a transition phase here. And a lot of people who began worshiping God through the forms of the law, it's possible to do that in a legitimate way. Paul the Apostle himself, as near as we can tell when you look at Acts, continued to observe the feasts.

We notice as he travels from place to place, Luke will say, after the days of the feast were completed, we packed up and we went to another place. Well, why did they wait until the feast

was over? Because they were keeping the feast and they're church age believers. And now we say, oh, what happened to the law? I thought the law was, the law is not a bad thing if you worship in this transition period at least, if you understand what the law is doing and you don't see it as a means of your spirituality.

It can be a great observance. You have Messianic Jews today who will observe the Seder, the Passover Supper, and they see in it all of the pictures of Jesus Christ and His work. And there's absolutely nothing wrong with that, as long as they don't believe that that somehow gives them a special in with God or that that's something that is a part of all worship in this age.

And then if you don't do that, there's something wrong with you. But it's a wonderful thing. It's a reflection of the Word of God and it can be a good thing.

And someone who started out and was circumcised and understands the covenant that God made with Abraham and everything that that means, that can be a healthy thing. There's nothing intrinsically wrong. Romans 7.14, I believe, is where Paul says, we know that the law is spiritual, he says.

And he says in several places, the law is righteous and holy and good. It came from God. It's not intrinsically evil.

But he's making a point of the issue. And the issue here is that you've got to be keeping the law for that to be valid. And this applies to all the things that we've talked about.

Evangelism is a wonderful thing. Ministry is a wonderful thing. Morality is a terrific thing.

Not being an alcoholic and not being a social misfit and not being a kleptomaniac or inflicting pain on other people is a wonderful thing. But the point is, what is that coming from? Is it coming from an external set of bonds that someone has placed on you? Or is it coming from the heart because of inner transformation? And whether or not you're keeping the law in the true sense, if you're a breaker of the law inside, keeping these external forms, all your morality is worthless. You can be as moral as the day is long, but if you're doing it because you think it makes you righteous instead of from inner transformation, it doesn't count.

And so he goes on and explains that if you're uncircumcised, but you keep the righteous requirements of the law, justice, mercy, and so forth, your uncircumcision counts as circumcision because that's the real issue. Verse 27, the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, he will judge you. You're sitting there judging these uncircumcised Gentiles and saying they ought to become Mosaic law keepers.

They're going to stand up on the day of judgment and judge you. Why? Because even with the written code and circumcision, you're a transgressor of the law. You have the revealed truth of God and you're disregarding it.

You're doing what we talked about in Romans chapter one. You've got responsibility higher than the Gentiles because you've had more truth revealed. You ought to be better at it than they are.

And in fact, you're worse. He is not a Jew who is one outwardly. Circumcision is not outward and in the flesh.

He is a Jew who is one inwardly. Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not the letter, whose praise is not from men, but from God. This goes back to that judging theme.

You don't live so that people will look at you and judge you righteous. You want to try to live in a way so that your praise comes from God. So these are terrific arguments and a terrific source of rebuke and correction and instruction in righteousness for believers.

This is a terrific chapter for believers if we recognize that it's addressed to us. And that's one of the great mistakes that we've made as we come to Romans is we tend to say anything that has to do with wrath and judgment must be talking about unbelievers. That can't apply to us.

We're saved. We're in Christ. It's going to be harps and streets of gold for us.

And this challenges us to examine ourselves and to make sure that each day of our life counts that we are spiritual on the inside and let the results flow from that. And we can take this to heart the way that Paul intended it and the way that God the Holy Spirit intends it so that on that day when the righteous judgment of God takes place we will stand and we will have borne fruit and that fruit will remain. And one of the ways that Paul is motivating us is reminding us that there is the possibility of being very chagrined on the day of judgment.

We can suffer tribulation and anguish on that day. What must it be like to stand before Jesus Christ and have been given so much and have accomplished so little on behalf of the Lord that purchased us with his own blood? It's going to be very embarrassing. There will be tears shed.

There will be teeth gnashed on that day when we realize why didn't I wake up? Why didn't I take advantage of the tremendous opportunities that God gave me in that life? I frittered it away. And we'll be like the people that dropped in the wilderness and never saw the promised land in that area which is reward and opportunity in the millennial kingdom especially. It doesn't mean that we're going to be abject and miserable and wish that we didn't have eternal life because we're suffering so badly but this is relative.

If you've got the chance to be among the first why settle for being among the last? Because it is the praise of God. It's the glory of God that is at stake. This is an opportunity for God to be glorified.

So what a tremendous challenge it is. What a tremendous opportunity it is. It's consistent with everything else that Scripture tells us and it's something we can think about every day.

Am I so busy looking at others that I have failed to judge myself? How will I stack up based on that internal evaluation that God is doing on the thoughts and intents of my heart? Well, that's the challenge that we have. We're going to move forward and find out the advantage of having the truth of God revealed. What is the advantage of being a Jew? What is the advantage of having more truth revealed? Is there an advantage or might we just as well be like the Gentiles that don't have that heritage? That's what we'll see next time when we start chapter three.

Chapter three of Romans is a great chapter. You remember the things that we've memorized out of it. We're going to see exactly what it means to sin and fall short of the glory of God when we go through this chapter, and that's going to be a lot of fun.

But let's close now in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for the truth that You've revealed in Your Word. Thank You for the grace that You have expressed toward us and the tremendous potential that You have placed before us as believers in Jesus Christ, being alive in this age with the resources of Your Word that is alive and powerful, with Your Spirit that gives us divine enablement to be transformed and to be equipped for every good work.

We pray that these truths will remain with us, that God the Holy Spirit will prod us and prompt us and encourage us with these things and that we will see the opportunities to put them into practice in every area of our lives. We pray that we will not be blind guides, that we will not be blind to our own areas which need improvement, but that these things will, like a sharp sword, lay us open and eliminate those things that are nonproductive and bring us into conformity with the image of our Savior, Jesus Christ. We ask it in His name.

Amen.