

PARADISE LOST

"ALL IN THE SAME BOAT"

ROMANS 2:1-16

Humanity, we have a problem! We humans all know something's seriously wrong with us and with our world, so much so that we can't stop talking about it. Two police officers are shot in Ohio after responding to a domestic violence call. Two Baltimore police officers tasked with ridding the streets of guns use their authority to rob suspects of drugs and money. Senior aid workers and officials of Oxfam, one of Britain's largest aid agencies, hire Haitian prostitutes and sexually exploit underage girls. Adriana Kukors, former champion swimmer, says her coach sexually abused and exploited her for several years beginning when she was 16—#MeToo. The Turpins keep their children, aged 2 to 29, captive in their California home, some of them shackled to their beds with chains and padlocks. Chemical weapons are used in Syria. And that's just the tip of the news iceberg.

Compare the headlines from India: A Bengaluru businessman kills his wife and burns her body. A fourteen-year-old kills his two-year-old neighbor for releasing his pigeons. A Mumbai cabbie breaks a passenger's leg with a lug wrench for puking in his cab. A man dies after being thrashed by his friend for not giving him Rs 10 (\$0.16) to pay for lunch. An Indian scholar critical of idol worship is shot dead on his doorstep by right-wing Hindu sympathizers. The headlines from Spain are much the same: A Muslim woman wearing a hijab is beaten by a group of young boys. A baby calf is repeatedly stabbed and tortured to death in a Spanish bullfighting fiesta. An eleven-year-old girl gives birth to baby, fathered by her older brother, after being admitted to hospital with stomach

Equally hateful to God are the ungodly man and his ungodliness.

– Wisdom of Solomon 14:9

pains. Two brothers are arrested for trafficking Romanian women. Sure, these are extreme examples, and yet all-too-common examples of humanity's godlessness and wickedness.

We find some of these examples simply disgusting and others especially horrific. But in every case something in us cries out for justice. Surely, God knows wickedness when we see it, and if we cannot simply ignore it, how much less can he? According to Paul, he doesn't; instead, he reveals his wrath against it by turning people loose to do what their hearts desire only to suffer the dire consequences of their self-destructive choices. And in the future, God will reveal his wrath against it in "the day of his wrath when his righteous judgment will be revealed" (Ro 2:5).

Fortunately, God reveals his righteousness, too, "a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith' . . . This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Ro 1:17; 3:22-24).

This Week's Core Competency

Humanity – I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

We all find it easy to condemn in others what we condone in ourselves. As one commentator rightly observes, "The plea of 'special circumstances' and worthy ends can be used to excuse all sorts of unsavory actions" (James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 38a, *Romans 1-8*, 90).

Christians in Rome likely nodded in agreement as they listened to the first chapter of Paul's letter being read. What's more, the Jews among them no doubt

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enthusiastically applauded his condemnation of idolatrous Gentiles. The Wisdom of Solomon, an apocryphal book that reveals the attitude of first-century Jews toward idolatry, declares: "For all men who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know him who exists, nor did they recognize the craftsman while paying heed to his works; but they supposed that either fire or wind or swift air, or the circle of the stars, or turbulent water, or the luminaries of heaven were the gods that rule the world . . . But the idol made with hands is accursed, and so is he who made it; because he did the work, and the perishable thing was named a god. For equally hateful to God are the ungodly man and his ungodliness, for what was done will be punished together with him who did it. Therefore there will be a visitation also upon the heathen idols, because, though part of what God created, they became an abomination, and became traps for the souls of men and a snare to the feet of the foolish" (13:1-2; 14:8-11).

The applause must have died down when the congregation heard Paul say, "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 things*." Referring to the list of "what ought not to be done" in 1:29-31, twice Paul says, "you do the same things" (2:1, 3). His indictment is reminiscent of Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount: "In the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. 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? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye" (Mt 7:2-5). There are indecent sinners, and there are decent sinners. Truth is all sin and fall short of the moral perfection God demands (Ro 3:23).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Romans 2:1-16

1 You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment *do the same things*. 2 Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. 3 So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? 4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

5 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 judgment will be revealed. 6 God "will repay each person according to what they have done." 7 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. 8 But for those who

are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. 9 There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; 10 but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 11 For God does not show favoritism.

12 All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. 14 (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.) 16 This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle "you," "your," and "yourself" in vv. 1-5.
- * Box "therefore" indicating *result* in v. 1.
- * Circle "excuse" in v. 1.
- * Underline "do the same things" in vv. 1, 3.
- * Bracket "based on truth" in v. 2.
- * Bracket "day of God's wrath" in v. 5 and "the day" in v. 16.

- * Circle "righteous judgment" in v. 5.
- * Circle "eternal life" in v. 7.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 8, 10.
- * Bracket "first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" in vv. 9, 10.
- * Highlight "declared righteous" in v. 13.
- * Circle "consciences" in v. 15.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. *Contrast* the type of people Paul refers to by "you" in chapter 2 with the type he refers to in chapter 1.
2. Explain why the people addressed in chapter 2 "have no excuse."
3. Are unchurched people you know more like chapter 1 people or chapter 2 people? Explain.
4. People who do the same things they condemn in others show contempt for God's kindness. How so?
5. "The day of God's wrath," what day is that?
6. Paul says God will give eternal life to people who persist in doing good (v. 7) and those who obey the law will be declared righteous (v. 13). How can it be?
7. What does the phrase "First for the Jew, then for the Gentile" indicate?
8. Explain how people who do not have the law can be "a law for themselves."
9. **Discussion:** Talk about the implications of what Paul says for sharing the gospel.

day 3 **EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

In Romans 1:18-32, Paul argues that Gentiles who reject the truth of God revealed in creation are "without excuse" (v. 20). Furthermore, their intentional suppression of what they know to be true about God invites his wrath, in that he turns them loose to pursue their self-destructive behaviors, which bring dire consequences. He acts to give those who exchange the truth for a lie, namely those who choose to worship other than Creator, over "to impurity" (v. 24), "to shameful lusts," and "to a depraved mind" (v. 28). Their morally defective mind produces its tainted fare, "every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity" (v. 29), and the food poisoning that results from it.

Chapter two picks up where chapter one leaves off by identifying another group that has "no excuse" (v. 1), those who incriminate themselves by condemning in others what they condone in themselves (v. 1). Put the other way around, they "do the same things" they pass judgment on, and in so doing, they clearly show, in contrast to God's judgment, that their judgment is not righteous! On the one hand, they concur with God's righteous decree that people who do such things deserve to die (1:32), and yet, on the other, they do the very same things with impunity. Paul warns them that they are "storing up wrath against [themselves] for the day of God's wrath when his righteous judgment will be revealed" (v. 5). Judgment day is coming!

Paul's opening words in 2:1 entail a change in style. He confronts an implied reader directly, repeatedly using the second person pronoun "you," which raises the question: Who is he addressing—a morally superior Gentile or a self-righteous Jew? Commentators are divided, and fortunately, in either case, what Paul says in 2:1-16 applies to both.

About God's righteous judgment, the apostle says first that it's based "on truth," namely, facts rather than speculation (vv. 2-5). Paul uses two rhetorical questions to make the following points: It's wrongheaded to think that you can pass judgment on others and yet do the same things without facing God's judgment yourself. What's more, in doing so you only show contempt for God's kindness meant to lead you to repentance. One commentator puts it this way: "Those who have practiced the same sins as those listed previously, though perhaps not in the same way, should not think they will escape judgment (v. 3). Rather than acting like judges of the outwardly immoral, these people should view themselves as sinners subject to God's judgment.

They should not misinterpret God's not judging them quickly to be an indication that they are blameless. They should realize that God is simply giving them time to repent (v. 4; cf. Jer. 18:6-11; 2 Pet. 3:9)" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Romans," 2017 ed., 36-37, www.soniclight.com).

Jews in particular could be very presumptuous. After a long expose of Gentile idolatry, the Wisdom of Solomon reads: "But thou, our God, art kind and true, patient, and ruling all things in mercy. For even if we sin we are thine knowing thy power; but we will not sin, because we know that we are accounted thine" (15:1-2). One commentator explains: "The literature of intertestamental Judaism tended to highlight Israel's favored position to the extent that its security in God's judgment was virtually unassailable" (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 133). However, Paul's words in verses 9 and 10 fly in the face of that Jewish assumption by asserting that Jews are no better off than Gentiles in the judgment. Besides, those who show contempt for God's kindness "are storing up wrath against themselves for the day of God's wrath" (v. 5).

About God's righteous judgment, the apostle says next that it's based on works (vv. 6-11). "The second principle of God's judgment is that it will deal with what every person really did (v. 6). It will not deal with what we intended or hoped or wanted to do (cf. Ps. 62:12; Matt. 16:27; et al.)" (37). Paul says so twice in somewhat different ways, using somewhat different words (vv. 7-8; cf., vv 9-10), repeating his main point in verses 6 and 11. God will judge everyone equitably; he "will give to each person according to what he has done." And God will judge impartially; he "does not show favoritism." That being the case, the repeated phrase "first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" makes perfect sense. Jews have no advantage over Gentiles in God's judgment. God's judgment is impartial. The thought of obtaining eternal life or being declared righteous by keeping the law is precluded by the fact that human sinfulness, which makes perfect obedience impossible.

About God's righteous judgment, the apostle says last that Jews will be judged by the law (v. 12), and Gentiles will be judged by the "requirements of the law written on their hearts," witnessed to by "their consciences" (v. 15). The first makes perfect sense; the second needs some clarification. According to one commentator, "Paul assumes that sometimes some Gentiles fulfill some of the requirements of the

law, just as Jews do. This does not mean they always do so, or do so perfectly, for Paul will go on to call all sinners. It does mean that there is some obedience to the will of God among those who are not Christians, with Gentiles in focus here" (Ben

Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 83). This judgment will take place "on the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed" (v. 5), the same day he "will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ" (v. 16).

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

The Message of the Passage

Decent people are also without excuse because they condone in themselves the very things they condemn in others thereby showing their contempt for God's kindness and inviting his righteous judgment in the day of his wrath.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the message of Romans 1:1-7 and your response to it.

Based on what Paul says, do you agree with the following statement: "People are not as bad as they might be, nor as good as they ought to be." Explain.

Explore some implications of the fact that decent people need to hear the gospel.

Identify a few decent people you need to share the gospel with.

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **you** "Paul utilizes here, and sporadically throughout the letter, a literary style called diatribe. Diatribe style, which is attested in several ancient authors as well as elsewhere in the NT (e.g., James), uses the literary device of an imaginary dialogue with a student or opponent" (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 125). "Paul now switches from third person plural [i.e., they] to second person singular [i.e., you], swinging around, as it were, in good diatribe style, to confront an imaginary onlooker . . . Presumably his readers would imagine someone listening to the polemic of 1:18-32 and heartily joining in its condemnation of idolatry, homosexual practice, and the rest" (Dunn, 89). Whether an imagined Gentile or Jew is debated. "Paul is dialoguing with an imaginary morally superior Gentile" (Witherington, 76). "Although some application to self-righteous Gentiles cannot be entirely removed from what Paul says in 2:1-11, it is clear that Paul's main target is the Jew (see the introduction to 2:1-16)" (Moo, 126; cf., Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 10:28).

v. 1 **excuse** Cf., "You, therefore, have no defense" (NEB).

v. 1 **do the same things** "Paul has in mind someone who actually does at least some of 'the same things' (vv 1, 3) or 'such things' (vv 2, 3) as those listed in 1:29-31, but needs to be reminded of it. That is to say, he seems to be aiming at an attitude that can condemn such things in others but somehow ignore or excuse them in oneself" (Dunn, 90).

v. 2 **based on truth** "This has no reference to the truth of the gospel, but simply means that the judgment is reached on the basis of reality, on the facts of the case, not on the basis of appearance or of a man's pretensions" (Harrison, 28).

v. 5 **day of God's wrath** God's wrath is being revealed (1:18) and will be revealed (2:5). The "'day of wrath' is quasi-technical biblical language for the time of final judgment. This strongly suggests that Paul is looking here at the climactic outpouring of wrath at the end of history; and the Jew [or Gentile] who refuses to repent is even now accumulating the wrath that on that day will be revealed. Also to be revealed on that day, claims Paul, is 'the righteous judgment of God.' This word also continues a central theme of this section of Romans: the reality of God's judgment and the fact that this judgment will be absolutely just (cf., v. 2)" (Moo, 135-36).

v. 7 **eternal life** "Others argue that the promise of eternal life for those who do good is fully valid, but that the power of sin prevents anyone from doing that good to the degree necessary to merit salvation. Verses 7 and 10 set out the condition, apart from Christ, for salvation; Paul's subsequent argument shows that no one is able to fulfill those conditions . . . Paul sets forth the biblical conditions for attaining eternal life apart from Christ. Understood this way, Paul is not speaking hypothetically. But once his doctrine of universal human powerlessness under sin has been developed (cf. 3:9 especially), it becomes clear that the promise can, in fact, never become operative because the condition for its fulfillment—consistent, earnest seeking after good—can never be realized" (Moo, 140-41, 142).

v. 9 **first for the Jew . . .** "Here becomes explicit what has been implicit since 1:18, as 1:23 in particular made clear, that Paul's description of God's wrath has in view mankind as a whole (Adam)—everyone, Jew as well as Greek" (Dunn, 93). Note the chiasmic arrangement of verses 6-11:

- A. God will judge everyone equitably v. 6
- B. Those who do good will attain eternal life v. 7
- C. Those who do evil will suffer wrath v.8
- C'. Wrath for those who do evil v. 9
- B'. Glory for those who do good v. 10
- A'. God judges impartially v. 11

"The main point of vv. 6-11 occurs not at the center but at the beginning and the end (vv. 6, 11): God will judge every person impartially, assessing each according to the same standard—works" (Moo, 136).

v. 13 **declared righteous** Cf., "justified" (ESV); "put right with God" (GNT). "Paul is here simply setting forth the standard that must be met if a person is to be justified. This verse confirms and explains the reason for the Jews' condemnation in v. 12b; and this suggests that its purpose is not to show how people can be justified but to set forth the standard that must be met if a person is to be justified" (148).

v. 15 **consciences** Paul uses the word "in the sense of an independent witness within, which examines and passes judgment on a man's conduct" (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Romans*, TNTC, 91). "It is usually viewed as a reflective mechanism by which people can measure their conformity to a norm" consisting in "the mixed verdict of one's thoughts" (Moo, 152, 53).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Oldest son - "Mom, Noah had his eyes open during prayer!" Me - "How do you know?" Oldest son - "I was watching to see if he opened his eyes." Me - "So, your eyes were open too?" Oldest son - "No, his were. I was just looking to see if he obeyed." Me - "First of all, praying with your eyes open is not disobeying and you were doing the same thing." Oldest son - "But you said close your eyes and he didn't." Me - "Ok, good point. But it doesn't change the fact that your eyes were open too." I get it. I do the same thing sometimes. I look at my thoughts and actions and rationalize them. It's so easy for us to point out the sins of others and not recognize our own. Kids are masters at this! In early elementary school, tattletale syndrome begins. It's all in an effort to get the attention off of ourselves and focus on someone else's shortcomings. This is a diversion tactic that might work with others but doesn't with God. He sees our hearts. He knows the hidden things. We all stand equally condemned before Him. We can make a choice. We choose to pursue the path of the just - those who have trusted Jesus to be their righteousness. Or, we choose the way of the sinners that leads to destruction. As parents, we have the great responsibility of helping our kids choose the way of eternal life, glory and honor. Be diligent in your training this week!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Romans 2:1-16

1. Why do we have no excuse according to verse 1?
2. Read verse 6. What will God give to each person?
3. Fill in the blank. "God does not show _____."
(v. 11)

What Do You Think

Sometimes we think it would be better to live in a world without rules so we can do whatever we want. What might be some advantages and disadvantages of that? Talk to your parents about it.

What R U Going To Do

Look up the 10 Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17. With your parents' help, list the commandments in your own words. God was kind to give us rules to live by that honor Him and help us love people.

Core Comp

Humanity - I believe God loves everyone and we all need Jesus as Savior.

Memory Verse

Romans 2:7 - *To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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