

You Had Better Settle Out of Court

Romans 2:6-16

May 18th, 2008

You have probably seen on TV, or read in the newspaper, or perhaps had someone in your family has experienced a person awaiting their trial in a court of law. They are either in jail or out on bond. The charges have been clearly made. The evidence has been collected and it seems overwhelming. There is a minimum and maximum sentence if found guilty. Generally, a person awaiting their day in court will say they are not guilty of the charges. Sometimes they will say they cannot tell their side of the story yet, but when they have their day in court, the truth will be known. Sometimes, right before it goes to trial, you hear they have settled out of court. As we read Romans 2:6-16, you will see a lot of language that is taken right out of the court of law in Paul's day.

Scripture

“He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality. For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. For when Gentiles,

who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.”

God’s Judgment

This passage clearly deals with people who are outside of Christ. It teaches there is a day of wrath coming when God’s righteous judgment is revealed. On that day there will be a charge against everyone who is outside of Christ, and the charge will be that we are sinners. The evidence that will clearly be brought against us will be our own works. The witnesses will be the light of revelation we have received. If we are found guilty, the sentence that will be handed down will be wrath, fury, tribulation, and distress. In other words, there will be eternal separation from God. Let me say clearly from the beginning; if you are outside of Christ, you do not want your case to come before God as judge. You want to settle out of court. You want to stand before God, not as your judge, but as your Savior.

We will see that there are four aspects of God’s judgment:

1. God’s judgment will be according to righteousness and truth.
2. God’s judgment is according to works.
3. God’s judgment is according to impartiality.
4. God’s judgment is according to the light received.

- **According to Righteousness and Truth**

We covered the first aspect in Romans 2:5. Every witness will tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. God is righteous to judge His creation.

- **According to Works**

According to the Apostle Paul, when we stand before the judgment of God as a person outside of Christ, our judgment will be according to our works. We will not be judged as a group of people, but each one outside of Christ will give an account for each work that is done. God will examine each work, and He will render payment for each one. You will not be judged based on what someone else did. That is awesome news! God is very just and fair in His judgment.

This text falls in line with other Scriptures. John the Revelator, in Revelations 20:11-15 says:

"Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

Do you see why Paul calls this a day of wrath? Can you imagine standing outside of Christ before a holy and just God on the Day of Judgment? This day is so holy, so terrifying, that John says the earth and the sky fled from the presence of God! When God's creation flees from the presence of God, there is nowhere for you to go. Imagine you are standing outside of Christ and you see this enormous library of books. Suddenly, you realize as the books are being opened that every one of your works is written in those books. God has been very truthful and meticulous and He has recorded each and every one of them. Things you have completely forgotten about and have not crossed your mind in years are suddenly brought to your remembrance as these huge books are opened. Then you see another

book and you understand that is the Book of Life. You see that the sea has given up her dead. Death and Hades has given up their dead. The dead here stands for people outside of Christ. You are not by yourself; there are multitudes of people with you, standing outside of Christ. Now you step before God and the books that contain your works are opened, and you are judged by God according to what you have done. This is fair, is it not? You are not getting something you do not deserve; you are getting exactly what you deserve according to what you did. Then, the Book of Life is opened and your name is not there because you are outside of Christ. After being judged for your works, God casts you into an eternal lake of fire.

Many in the Church do not like this thought, but the Bible tells us in Revelations 13 that our names have been written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world. What a God! A God, who knew me before I ever was, wrote my name in the Lamb's Book of Life. If my name was not written in the Lamb's Book of Life before the foundation of the world, when I stand before God on the Day of Judgment, He will judge me according to my works and I will be cast into an everlasting fire. We live in a day in which people want to say that our God is archaic and that it is not true. It is true, and I understand why man in sin wants to hide from it. I understand why churches do not want to proclaim it. Who wants to go to a church that proclaims that we serve a God who one day is going to judge man? Yet God's judgment is righteous according to the Bible. He will only give to a man according to what he has done.

Now, outside of Christ, if you decide to take your sin to God's court and stand before Him in sin, there are only two verdicts. You will either be pronounced guilty, or not guilty. There is no other verdict.

In verse 7 of Romans 2, it says:

"To those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life."

People want to say God is not just, but He is very just. This word, "*patience*", is the word perseverance. It is the word for a soldier who goes to battle and he just keeps on persevering, no matter what is happening to him. As a soldier, he always does the right thing. If you continue doing the right thing from the moment you were born, you always sought glory, immortality, and honor, then He will give you eternal life. How can you say God is not just, how can you say there is not fairness with God? God is saying He will give you eternal life.

Verses 8 and 9 say:

"But for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress..."

The truth is the light you have been given. "*Wrath*" here means "to swell." *Fury* means "to boil." "*Tribulation*" means "to be squeezed to the pressure point that you are crushed." "*Distress*" means "to be in a cramped space with no room to move so that you are uncomfortable."

"...for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek."

Romans 1:16 tells us that salvation is for the Jew first, then the Greek, or Gentile. So the Jew thought God would judge the Gentile first and then them. Paul is telling them that God will judge the Jew first because they were the first to hear the good news.

According to verse 10, God will give glory, honor, and peace to those who continually does good. The verb phrase "*does good*" is a present tense verb, meaning continually, or always does good. Do you get that? Can you bring a life before God that when every detail is examined, He can say you have never sinned and therefore you are not guilty of the charges brought against you in Adam? Is there anyone who could say that? If you wait and have your sin brought before the law court of God, you will be found guilty of being a sinner and you will be condemned to eternal separation from God because He is just in His judgment of you. He is righteous in His

judgment of you outside of Christ, and it will be your own works that condemn you.

- **According to Impartiality**

Verse 11 says:

"For God shows no partiality."

This word, "*partiality*", literally means "to receive the face." I might get into trouble for saying this, but there have been times when my daughter or my wife have been pulled over by the police and the officer will look into their face and just give a warning. When I have been pulled over, the officer looks into my face and I get a ticket! The reason is because human authority is partial. There is partiality. They look into a person's face and they make a judgment.

When I was 17 years old I received my first speeding ticket. I was going 47 in a 35 MPH zone in my little Camaro. I had a court date at 1:00 p.m. It was FFA day at school that morning, so I wore my FFA jacket, a tie, and black pants. I was supposed to be first on the docket, but at 2:45 I was still sitting in the courtroom waiting for my case to be pled before the judge. I was going to plead guilty because I was guilty. I did not really know how fast I was going, but I am sure I was going as fast as they said. I could tell the person right in front of me was probably a rebel by his hair, by the marks on his body, and by the clothes he wore. He was a rebel in action when he stood before the judge and he faced the judgment of the judge. After he sentenced that young man, he looked out and saw me and said, "young man you have been sitting here all afternoon, what are you here for?" I told him that I got a speeding ticket. He told me to come there, asked for my name, and started looking at the papers for the charges against me. While I was getting out of my seat and going to the front, the judge said, "Now look at this young man, he is the total opposite of the young man who just stood before me. Look at his FFA jacket; he is a man of honor and integrity. This is a good man. This is a young man, I

promise you, who is respectful.” He asked me if I did it, and I said yes. He told me he was only going to charge me for the court cost. Do you know why I got off? It was because there was partiality with the judge. He looked at my appearance and made a judgment about me. I had done the same thing the guy in front of me had; I had broken the law too. But there was partiality.

Celisa’s grandmother, Memish, had a man trim her trees a few years ago. About a year later, he murdered a man. It was pre-meditated. After they heard, the family was tore up to know that he had been on Memish’s property and trimmed her trees. When Memish heard, her first reaction was to say that he did not mean to do it. If you think you will stand before God and give an excuse, if you think He will look at your face, or your family, and then believe He will be partial to you, you are wrong! On the Day of Judgment, you will stand before God with the books opened and the only thing that will be brought against you are your own works.

- **According to Light Received**

Verse 12 tells us that on the Day of Judgment your works will be judged according to the light you have received. Now this is crucial.

“For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all those who sinned under the law will be judged by the law.”

You have two different judgments here. You have a person who did not have the light of law, (the Law of Moses) and you have a person who does. Now, when the person who sinned and did not have the Law of Moses perishes, he will perish without law. In other words, his judgment is going to be based on the light he had received. This guy did not have law, but he sinned.

The word, “*sinned*”, is not a present active participle, it is an *aorist* tense. It is punctiliar action, not continual action. This verse says the person who sins occasionally, or from time to time, will perish. This person is a sinner, and sin reveals your nature. Here is a man who was born a sinner and

does not have law, and he sinned anyway. He will still be judged and he will perish.

Those who sin under the law will be judged by the law. This is teaching that those outside of Christ will be judged by the light they have received. And if they do not measure up, they will be separated from the presence of God forever and ever. Verse 13 tells us that the Law of Moses will judge the Jew:

"For it is not the hearers of the law are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified."

Too many times we misinterpret Scriptures that we do not understand because we do not let them stand on their own. We try to interpret in light of other Scriptures that we do understand. Do not read this passage in light of grace through faith. Read it in light of the teaching of judgment by works, and that no person who has ever heard the law has been justified by hearing the law. The Jew can only be justified if they do the law. Paul says a person who has the light of the law and lives up to that light, and does not sin against it will be justified. A Jew thought because he was a Jew he would be exempt from judgment. The Jew loved to hear the Word, but his problem was that he did not do the Word. He thought he was justified because he was a hearer, he did not realize he had to be a doer.

Romans 3:20 says: *"For by the works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight."*

Galatians 3:10 says:

"For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.' Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for 'The righteous shall live by faith.' But the law is not of faith, rather 'The one who does them shall live by them.' Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'—so that in Christ Jesus the

blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith."

If you are going to try to come before God under the Law of Moses, you are cursed because you have to keep every one of the laws. You have to do every Law of Moses perfectly right, from the day you were born until the day you die, or you are cursed. James 2:10 says:

"He who keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it."

This means, if you are a person who will try to stand before God and let your works speak for your life outside of Christ and you have broken one of God's laws, He will throw the whole book at you.

If you believe your neighbor who is outside of Christ is a good person, you are wrong. The book of Romans says there is none righteous, no not one. There is none who understands, there is none who seeks God, and there are none good, no not one. You may think a person outside of Christ is good because you are judging by the light of you, not of God. In light of man, there are a lot of good people out there. In religion and sometimes in the Church, there is a tendency to think that God will grade on a divine curve. So if you can just get close enough to where everyone else is, you will be alright, you will get in. You see, a lot of people think the light of the Law and natural revelation is not fair.

I was in a class one time and the teacher gave a test that the class thought was not fair. The teacher handed out the graded tests, and she started out from lowest to the highest grade. I usually talk of teachers with high respect and do not criticize, but this teacher did something really bad. She walked around and called the grade aloud as she placed the tests on the desks. All of the scores started from 39 and went up to 68, with one paper remaining. I was the only person left in the class. The teacher said, "As I was grading these papers I thought about grading on a curve, until Ricky made 100." Can you imagine how I felt? I thought wow; my classmates will

stand up and cheer me! No!! They moaned, and after they quit moaning, they booed. When class was over, they called me a teacher's pet and curve breaker.

If you bring your case before God as a sinner, you will discover there was a curve breaker, and He was Jesus Christ. When He received the light of revelation from God, He perfectly lived up to that light. When He did, He revealed that God was just to judge us in sin, even those of us who have the light of special revelation.

But we are not worried about the Jews; we know they have the Word of God. The people we long for are those people in the jungle, those who have never heard the name of Jesus Christ. But the Bible says in verse 14:

"For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them."

We have learned from archaeology and anthropology that every tribe and community that has been discovered had a sense of community and a sense of right or wrong. That is what Paul said. He said, though Gentiles do not have the Law of Moses, they were born with a moral consciousness because God has revealed Himself to everyone under the light of general revelation. They have the work of the law written in their heart and they are a law to themselves. The Jew will be judged by the light of the Law of Moses, but the Gentile will be judged by the light of his own law. In other words, he makes the rules. He has a conscience that also bears witness against him. His conflicting thoughts are how he will be judged.

How can you say God is not fair? How can you believe God is not just? The Church has been wooed to sleep to believe that God will not hold the people who do not hear the gospel accountable for their sins. Yes He will! They will either be in the court of Law of Moses, or the court of law of their

own conscience. When they plead their case before a holy God, He will pronounce them guilty of being a sinner. On that day when God judges the secrets of men, He will cast them into everlasting eternity where He is not. It will not just be the works or actions of men, but the secrets of men. Even those secret things will be revealed if you stand outside of Christ.

In my mind, the evidence is overwhelming. This is why I plead with you to settle out of court. Paul wanted to preach the gospel because he knew that all men would be condemned, but he knew the good news that Jesus is our advocate, our defense attorney. He actually went before the Judge and said I will die in their place. We discover that it was God's will before the foundation of the world. The One who is representing us and knows everything about us said *I took your sin on the cross and I died in your place and the Judge has good news! He will not pronounce you "not guilty" because you are guilty. But He will acquit you of all charges if you will turn from a life of sin and put your faith in Me. He will accept My righteousness as payment for your sin. His wrath will be averted and you can not only be forgiven, you can go free. Take the deal and settle out of court...*