



## Lesson 5

### The Impartial God

#### Romans 2.1-16

*“For there is **no partiality** with God.”*

**Romans 2.11**

## **But, I’m Not Legalistic!**

Being charged with legalism can be very perplexing. After all, I don’t think I can earn my salvation. I don’t think that if I were baptized 100 times it would earn my entrance into heaven. Nor do I think that worshipping without instrumental music, fellowship halls and recreational facilities merits God’s approval. I firmly believe that I am saved by grace through faith. Yes, faith is obedient, but I would never argue that my works earned God’s grace toward me. I really don’t know anyone who would make such an argument. So, why do we sometimes hear the charge of legalism?

That charge is sometimes made not because any of us (or we collectively) believe that we’ve earned God’s favor by our actions, but that we belong to the right group. In other words, our identification with the RIGHT church that teaches the RIGHT gospel and that interprets the Scriptures with the RIGHT approach to authority makes us God’s people. All others, since they aren’t RIGHT must be WRONG.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** do not interpret the preceding paragraph to mean that the church you worship with, the gospel that is proclaimed or the approach to authority are not important. **THEY ARE!** However, reliance on those things leads to a mind-set that can be described as legalism: I’m part of the right group, hence I’m saved. You’re part of the wrong group, hence you’re lost. Such a mind-set can lead one to gloss over his own failings/struggles because he’s part of the right group. Likewise, good deeds and faith in others is discounted because, after all, they’re in the wrong group.

It was this brand of legalism that was practiced by the Jews. They were part of the right group, they had the Law, they were God’s people. The Gentiles? They were lost, and deservedly so! After all, those things Paul laid out in Romans 1:18-32 were deserving of God’s wrath. The Jews were the RIGHT group. The Gentiles were in the WRONG group. (Note: The Jew-Gentile tension that Paul addressed is not an apples to apples comparison with the differences between the church and denominations. However, it’s the attitude that I’m seeking to address)

It is this attitude that Paul destroys in our text. God would reward or punish each person (not each group) based on their reliance on Him and following Him. This was true for “the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

## The God Who Renders To Each Based On What He Has Done (Vss 1-11)

Romans 2:1–11 (NASB95)

1Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.  
2And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.  
3But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?  
4Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?  
5But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,  
6who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS:  
7to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;  
8but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.  
9There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek,  
10but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.  
11For there is no partiality with God.

1. While the Jews are not specifically addressed until vs. 17, it seems that Paul has Jewish bias in mind in these verses. They had passed judgment on the entire Gentile world. And given how that world is described in Romans 1.18-32 weren't they deserving of that judgement?
2. However, Paul charged them with practicing the same things! It is doubtful that Paul meant they were guilty of all the sins found in 1.18-32, although several sins such as "arrogant," "boastful" and "unmerciful" would certainly have applied to the Jews. But recall that the great problem of the world was that man had reversed the rolls of Creator and creature. That was Adam's sin, a sin the Gentile world continued in with their depravations. The Jews had done the same in making the Law the mark of salvation and "barring" the way to the Gentiles.
3. If the Jews knew that God's wrath would come upon Gentile iniquity, why did they think that it wouldn't come on them? It would! (vs. 2).
4. However, as we've already seen, the gospel is God's power to salvation to all (1.16-17). Rather than judging the Gentile world, the Jews should have embraced that God desired that all respond in obedient faith. The Jew should have recognized that God's call to repentance was to all! (vs. 4)
5. Tragically, the Jews had been known for their "hard hearts" in the Old Testament (Jer. 4.4;

Ezek 3.7; Deut 10.16). Paul will later say that the true “Jew” is one whose heart is circumcised (2.29). A stubborn, hard heart can only result in God’s wrath! (vs. 5)

6. Because God is impartial! (vs. 6-10) This quality of God is stated throughout the Scriptures (Deut 10.17; 2Chron 19.7; Acts 10.34-35; Col 3.25; Eph 6.9). Thus, He will always reward the righteous. He will always punish the wicked. It does not matter which group (Jew or Gentile) you belong. What matters is whether you follow God.
7. NOTE: Calvin’s doctrine of predestination cannot stand up to this passage. More about that in another lesson.

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## **But What About The Law? (Vss 12-16)**

Romans 2:12–16 (NASB95)

12For 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;

13for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

14For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves,

15in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,

16on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

1. Again, Jewish assurance of salvation was based on possessing the Law and being the people who followed God’s Law. But, as we will see later, Law defines what is right and what is wrong. Violate Law and you perish with the Law. Sin against God without the Law and you perish without the Law!
2. Because the Law was not simply something to be read and heard. It was meant to be followed! Deut. 30.11-14.
3. Furthermore, the Gentiles kept many of the precepts of the Law. No, they did not keep the Law as the Jews had it delivered by Moses, but given that basic morality is basic in all cultures, the Gentiles had all along been keeping aspects of the Law.
4. Paul’s point: a day is coming when God will judge all. God will be impartial. God will punish those who sin, reward those who do good. This would be true of those who had the Law (Jews) and those who did not (Gentiles). Law will not save you.