

Paul's Gospel to the Romans - Week #4

Last week we came to an understanding of the first of the groups to which the Book of Romans was addressing. The Intellectual Greeks. This group could well be characterized as the world at the door of the church. Looking into the windows in wonder. Trying to understand the teachings of Jesus. Their intellectual curiosity was driving them to find more to add to their life. Undoubtedly, they were having an impact on the Roman church because, in deference to their habits and lifestyle, God needed to become more than an intellectual pursuit.

Tonight we trying to peer through the ages and using both history and scripture the characteristics of the second group Paul speaks of in Romans 2:1-16. This new group was without excuse. They were in the church. They were a part of the heavenly throng. They knew the holy handshake and all the symbols to scratch on the ground to find their way to the meeting places in the hidden world that was Christianity in first-century cosmopolitan Rome.

If you attended one of the Christian home church gatherings you would not be able to pick them out from the devout. When this letter to the Roman church was read, it would not be immediately recognized. They would not even entertain the thought that they were being talked about.

As we read this portion of scripture, be well aware that you could be a part of this group. The YOU group.

Change in pronouns!

Last week's description of the Intellectual Greeks, Paul's use of pronouns was all about the "Other", those who were on the fringe. Paul used them, their, they, and all. It was about the separation from the devout. They could see themselves as a part of the church. They had an intellectual belief and understanding of Jesus, but it was not enough to change their lives. So Paul used pronouns to set them apart.

Now in Chapter Two the pronouns have changed. Paul uses you, man, yourself, those, themselves. The use of these descriptors points to inclusion. They were more integrated into the church. They were more acceptable to the church as a whole. They were seen as an asset to the overall viability of the local church.

The church was happy to love and accept with open arms the members of this group. The church itself had a terrible blow to attendance when Emperor Claudius banished all the ethnic Jews from Rome. The church was struggling to find its way. To understand the words of Jesus passed down from person and fragments of writings distributed along the Roman road system.

As this new group started to show up, they were welcomed with open arms. They were given hugs and kisses. Beyond just acceptance came a natural gravitation to leadership. They belonged to a better class of people than the Pagan Intellectual Greeks. They were a higher-up in society. This group can well be titled "**Roman Cultural Christians.**"

Romans 2:1-5 The what of Roman Cultural Christians.

- 1 Therefore you have no excuse, every one of **you** who passes **judgment**, for in that which **you judge** another, **you** condemn **yourself**; for **you** who **judge** practice the same things.
- 2 And we know that the **judgment** of God rightly falls upon **those** who practice such things.
- 3 But 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?
- 4 Or 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?
- 5 But 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,
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One of the characteristics of these **Roman Cultural Christians** was their judgmental nature. The **Roman Cultural Christians** lived their lives under the rule of the Emperor and harsh Roman law. It was a law structure that was broad and harsh. Because of this higher stature, it was easy to set themselves as the giver of judgment. These **Roman Cultural Christians** set themselves up as judges of everyone else. They saw the error in all that was done. They pointed out the faults of everyone. They used their social stature to set themselves up to be better than everyone else. Whatever the standard this group had, it was always higher than what was being attained by the rest of the church. They were the great watchers of the church. They were always on the lookout for any want of conformity, for any rebellion, for any shortcomings, for any falling shorts.

The problem was the standard they set for judgment was not uniform. It was arbitrary. It depended upon the culture of the day. It depended upon the whim of the Roman Government. It conformed to the class system that was higher than their own.

Worse than any Pharisee. Worse than any judge of the Old Testament. If you looked up the word judgmental in the dictionary you would see the face of these **Roman Cultural Christians**. And they were proud of it.

Romans 2:6-11 The result for Roman Cultural Christians.

- 6 WHO WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS:
- 7 to **those** who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;
- 8 but to **those** who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.
- 9 There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of a **man** who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek,
- 10 but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
- 11 For there is no partiality with God.

These moralists were so set in their judgmental attitudes they were laying up a poor harvest for their own just punishments. Remember here God's judgment is perfect. NO PARTIALITY. The **Roman Cultural Christians** point of view everything was partial. Their judgment was based on self-knowledge. It was all measured by their current understanding and interactions with the culture of the day.

Romans 2:13-16

12 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**;

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

14 For 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,

15 in 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,

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

It must be noted that when Paul uses the word Law in this section it is referencing the general principle of the law of the land. It may well include the Mosaic law but it was not used here as in exclusivity.

LAW: νόμος

Thayer

1. Anything established, anything received by usage, a custom, a law a command
2. A law or rule producing a state approved of God
3. The observance of which is approved by God

Strong

1. From a primary word νέμω nemō (to parcel out, especially food or grazing to animals);
2. law (through the idea of prescriptive usage),
3. generally (regulation),
4. specifically (of Moses [including the volume]; also of the Gospel),
5. or figuratively (a principle): - law.

Mounce

law, regulation, principle

When Paul uses the word law, does he always mean the Law of Moses? _____

Morals and Ethics

Ethics and morals relate to “right” and “wrong” conduct. While they are sometimes used interchangeably, they are very similar. Yet used in the study of sociology they have differences. The word “ethics” finds its meaning in the Greek as “ETHOS” meaning character. Ethics refer to rules provided by an external source, e.g., codes of conduct in workplaces or principles in religions.

- Ethics are often fluid. Changing depending on who you are with.
- Ethics are driven by the external social system.
- Ethics are easily corrupted by the judgment of others.
- Ethics try to get along.

Morals come from the Latin “MOS” and refer to an individual’s own principles regarding right and wrong. Usually, they are set early in life and are very difficult to change. It is the internal compass of life.

Ethics refers to the rules that a social system provides us with. What “ought to be.” How people should behave according to accepted norms and values.

Morals are our own thought-out and accepted principles. What “is”.

For our study tonight we must determine where we get our proclivity to judge. For this group, it was not based upon the standard of LOVE and being in Christ Jesus.

Most of the time we do something, we try to act according to what society or culture believes is right, or correct. More often, we listen closely to what we believe or hold sacred about right and wrong. If these differ, the choice is much more difficult to ascertain.

Characterize these statements and determine what the behavior is being controlled from: Law, Morals, or Ethics.



- I attend church because I am a Christian _____
- I attend church because there is a need _____
- I attend church because of Scripture _____
- I attend church because I am part of a church _____
- I attend church because others do _____
- I attend church because it honors my creator _____
- I attend church because fulfills an obligation. _____
- I attend church because I am blessed by it. _____
- I attend church I escape condemnation _____
- I attend church because I avoid a curse. _____
- I attend church because it is consistent with my life. _____
- I attend church because I avoid a curse. _____
- I attend church because it is consistent with my life. _____
- I don't tithe because it doesn't matter to me _____

Is truth an Ethical, moral, or Legal idea or construct? Explain _____

Definition of a Moralist

1. A person who leads a life with Morals as the highest level of decision-making. His morals have been examined and accepted as the ruler of life. A Moralist believes in his basic understanding of good and evil. A Moralist may understand the ethics of others but they do not affect his actions.
2. A person who researches, muses, writes, and sometimes teaches his accepted moral understanding of life.
3. **A person who is concerned about the ethics and morals of others, to the point of regulation and judgment of others who do not agree with their morals.**

What this group of **Roman Cultural Christians** was setting themselves to be was the Ethical keeper of the Morals of others.

- Do what I say and don't look at me.
- The very act of judgment was part of the culture in which they lived. It was an ethical decision that really was a MORAL decision.
- Their moral decision to judge was as bad as the acts of other's ethics.

What is the right word to describe someone who tells others what to do and then doesn't do it himself?

In all three of these verses, we see judgment: Man's judgment and God's judgment. What I want you to pay attention to is what the judgment of God is in response to. Notice God is responding to godlessness, wickedness, stubbornness, unrepentant hearts, and rejecting Jesus as the savior.

A simpler way of putting it is God's wrath is in response to man's sin.

Is God Just in this anger? _____

God stands as the judge of all mankind.

Each of us will have to give an account of what we have done and how we have lived. God gives us the freedom to make the choice in how we will live. What remains is that whatever decision we make we must be aware of the consequences of those choices.

Scripture Questions:

2:1 Why is important to learn of God's judgment? _____

2: 5 Why is your judgment storing up God's wrath? _____

Does vs 6, 7, 8 teach work as a base for salvation? _____

2:9,11 Why does Paul, after writing “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” say there is no partiality with God?

2:13 Can a person justify themselves by doing the law perfectly? _____

2:14 If you do not know the law can you keep it? _____

Next week Study # 5 – Romans 2:17-3:8 – The third group!

Group 2 – Moralistic Latin Christians Romans 2:1-16

Identity – Spoke Latin, the language of Roman politics and Greek. They were the Roman middle class and low-level Roman bureaucrats. They could hold a few household slaves. They were people of high morals in both social and political environments. They found a home in the church with others of their class. They were in a constant conflict between Roman hierarchy and Church egalitarianism, i.e. “How can we all be equal in the church, when in the real Roman world it is all about what class you were in?”

History – They had become Christians because of the social nature of the church. A place of meeting to enhance stature. They were a very transient group. Constantly coming into the church but not staying very long. They were the church hoppers of the day.

Orthodoxy – Love of your fellow man was the extreme edge of belief. Outside of their own class, their concerns for others were minimal. Love was reserved for those in the same class as them. They knew God, but they did not see a need to glorify or give thanks to him. They struggled with the belief that there is one God because the Roman Emperor proclaimed himself a god.

Issue – They saw themselves as above the rabble. They would tolerate the Greeks and the Jews but would view them as lesser than themselves. They lived on the periphery of the church. Not anti-faith but just enough to get you in.

Sin – Sin is a moral issue. They would say, “My job is to set the standards for everyone else and then judge you when you even get close to bending my code.” Morals are set by the culture and context of the situation, therefore, sin is bad but only bad according to my accepted standards.

Works - Works are a fruit of moral belief structure. I do what I do because they are a part of my personal moral understanding of who I am. Works are the scale that tips the favor of God in my direction. I am justified by weighing down my side of the scales. Belief without works is dead and sometimes without belief.

Salvation – You are saved by belief **and** works.