

## Inexcusable – Romans 2:1-16

### I. INTRODCUTION

#### A. *Black Velvet*

1. A young couple walks into a jewelry store & leans over the display case holding the diamond rings.
2. After several minutes they call over a salesperson & point to one of them.
3. He opens the case, takes out a ring, then pulls a piece of black cloth from his pocket.
  - a. Placing it over his palm, he then sets the ring in the center of that cloth.
  - b. He positions his hand in just the right place to catch a beam from 1 of the lights in the ceiling.
  - c. The diamond sparkles like fire.
  - d. And it all looks the more beautiful because it's sitting in a sea of black
4. The jeweler knows the gem will appear all the more radiant because it's displayed against that dark background.

#### B. *The Gospel Diamond*

1. The Apostle Paul has a glorious, gorgeous gem to show the church at Rome; the Gospel of Grace.
2. Before he does, he first lays out the black background of humanity's spiritual condition.
3. That's what we find in these first chapters.

#### c. *So Far*

1. In ch. 1 Paul charts the human race's rejection of God & pursuit of evil.
2. In ch. 2 he moves to include ALL people in that indictment.
3. He knows some of his readers have followed him so far & nodded their heads in agreement on how bad OTHERS are –
4. But they think of themselves as good, upright, godly folk—not numbered among the evil-doers he's listed so far.
5. They need to understand they too fall short of what God requires. So -

### II. TEXT

#### A. V. 1

**Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.**

1. Paul knew as people read the vs. before this they'd be agreeing vigorously with his review of the wickedness of others.
2. So he turns his pen & points to his readers, including them in his indictment of evil.
3. The prophet Nathan did this years before with King David.
  - a. Following David's affair with Bathsheba & murder of her husband Uriah,
  - b. David thought the conspiracy had been kept secret & that he'd gotten away with murder.
  - c. So Nathan went to David with a report of a rich man who'd stolen his poor neighbor's only lamb, the family pet, and served it as a meal to some friends.
  - d. David was outraged at this, jumped to his feet & declared his judgment, "That man shall surely die!"
  - e. Nathan then pointed at David, & said, "YOU'RE THE MAN!"
  - f. Indeed he was, and in rushing to judgment on another, he was in fact judging himself.
4. That's exactly what Paul is saying here.
5. When we judge others, we are in fact judging ourselves.
6. You see, whenever we judge someone, we're saying there's a standard by which they can be judged.
  - a. And we're assuming this standard is something they & everyone else ought to agree with.

- b. When we judge someone, we're not saying we alone find what they're doing wrong.
  - c. What makes it wrong is that it ought to be obvious to everyone it's wrong.
7. Now, we may apply different standards to ourselves than we do to others, but even then, we're still claiming there's a universal standard others ought to abide by.
- a. The key word there is "OUGHT".
  - b. There is in every person a deep sense of oughtness, of right & wrong, good & evil.
8. The problem is, we apply that standard inconsistently.
- a. We want others to live by it while we don't & give ourselves a pass when we don't.
  - b. We think we have an exemption from what ought to be.
  - c. We want to write ourselves an excuse while docking everyone else who does precisely the same thing.
9. Paul says our penchant for judging others leaves us without excuse regarding our own sin & moral failure.
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10. The problem is this: Who said MY standard, the one I use in passing judgment on others – is the right one?
- a. All judgment assumes some right & wrong.
  - b. What makes my standard & judgment THE right one?
  - c. Just because it's mine; because I said so?
  - d. That's not good enough because a little thought would make it clear that as individuals we all have our own standard, & what's to make yours better or more right than mine?
11. Here's what we'd discover if we were to sit down & hash this out: Because we're all created in the image of God, there is deep within us a profound awareness of right & wrong.
- a. As fallen men & women, the image of God is marred & broken. That's why we struggle & fail.
  - b. But there is still a residual presence of that image that points our moral compass toward Truth.
  - c. Throughout history, societies have given different expressions to this inner moral compass by making different rules, laws, & valuing different virtues.
  - d. Skeptics love to point to these differences as proof there is no ultimate right & wrong, good & evil.
    - 1) They use the example that people have differed on when it's okay to take someone's life.
    - 2) They've disagreed on how many people you can be married to at one time.
    - 3) They've varied on what constitutes beauty.
  - e. All this is true, but it doesn't prove there's no absolute, ultimate right & wrong.
  - f. On the contrary, dig a little deeper & you discover that while societies have placed more or less value on human life,
    - 1) And some have justified killing in situations others disagree with -
    - 2) NO society has ever said it was good or even permissible to take the life of another at any time for just any reason.
  - g. Yes, people have believed polygamy was acceptable & have had multiple husbands & wives. But NO one says you can have anyone you want, at any time or place.
  - h. Sure, different eras of history have considered beauty differently.
    - 1) During the Middle Ages, the woman who was plump & pale was considered a babe because it meant she was wealthy enough to eat well & didn't have to work in the fields.
    - 2) Today we prefer slender & tanned because it means the free time to exercise & lay out in the sun.
    - 3) So yes, fashions of beauty change, but not ultimately because there are some things everyone universally recognizes as just plain ugly & not right.

- 4) It doesn't matter if a person is plump & pale or toned & tanned, if an arm is coming out of the side of their head & a leg is growing out of their back, no one says – "Now that's nice!" NO ONE!
- i. No culture honors cowardice, disloyalty, deceit, theft, or brutality.
- 1) Some of these may be grudgingly permitted in the pursuit of something noble,
  - 2) But by themselves they're shunned & shamed.
12. Paul says -
- You are without excuse whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.**
13. We excuse the sin WE do while condemning the same when we see it in others.
- a. We do this because we know they're wrong --
  - b. But give ourselves a pass because dealing with the guilt we put on others is too difficult & painful to deal with ourselves.
14. I know vegetables are good for YOU & that you really ought to eat them regularly.
- a. But I don't like vegetables; don't like the way most of them taste.
  - b. It's hard to get them down, so, don't.
  - c. But You! You should eat lots of vegetables because they'll help you stay healthy longer, which means you'll not need Medicare & medical costs will drop, which is going to help my taxes.
  - d. Don't you stop eating your veggies because if you do that will cost me.
  - e. But don't expect me to eat more vegetables because I don't like them.
  - f. It doesn't matter if YOU don't like them, eat them anyway.
15. Here's what's bizarre, I can hold both those ideas side by side in my head and see nothing wrong!
16. Consider traffic laws. We want everyone else to obey them, but for me it's different.
- a. When we approach a Stop sign, I want you to stop, even if I run it.
  - b. If you run it before I get a chance to, you'll hear & see my wrath!
  - c. Speeding's different. I don't mind if others speed on the FWY because it means there's less likelihood I'm going to get singled out & pulled over by the CHP.
  - d. But when I'm sitting at home & my family's driving the FWY, I want EVERYONE to go no faster than the posted limit for safety's sake.
17. This is hypocrisy.
18. You know what a hypocrite is, right? A hypocrite is someone who complains there's too much sex & violence → on his DVD player.

## **B. V. 2**

**But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.**

1. God's judgment isn't like ours, bent as it is toward self-justification.
2. God's judgment is perfect, unaffected by favoritism.
3. His judgment is based in utter truth.
  - a. He has perfect understanding & application of what's right.
  - b. He possesses perfect knowledge of all the circumstances, even our heart & motivation.
  - c. He knows the minute details of the entire thought process or lack thereof that went in to every decision.
4. Because of advances in DNA research, dozens of past court decisions are being overturned as it's being discovered people who were found guilty could not have committed the crime. The DNA evidence proves their innocence.

5. With God, we never need be concerned that one day new evidence will come to light that will reveal His judgment was flawed. His vision, knowledge, & judgment are unimpeachable.

### C. Vs. 3-4

**3And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? 4Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?**

1. In light of God's perfect judgment, Paul asks a couple important questions –  
First → Do we really think we're going to wiggle our way out of judgment?  
Second → Do we think the delay of judgment means God approves our sin?
2. Paul's point is that people are without excuse for their sin.
  - a. That we judge others proves we all possess an innate sense of right & wrong that even we don't live up to.
  - b. But while we're so good at applying judgment to others, we somehow think we're exempt.
3. What adds to our moral confusion is to mistake God's merciful delay in judgment as His approval.
4. For the most part, God doesn't thump us as soon as we sin.
  - a. He waits, & sends the Spirit to work on us to bring the conviction that moves us to repent.
  - b. For when we repent, confessing our sin for what it is and asking God to forgive, He does.
6. You see, just as God's judgment is perfect, so is His love & mercy.
7. This would seem to place God in a dilemma: How can He remain perfectly just, with the need to punish sin, while at the same time holding out mercy & love to those who deserve wrath?
  - a. That's what the cross is all about.
  - b. No one gets off free – someone has to pay for sin. Justice must be satisfied.
  - c. On the cross, Jesus took on Himself all the righteous judgment of God for our sin.
  - d. WHAT Jesus did on Calvary accrues TO us when we admit our guilt & believe when Jesus died, He paid our moral & spiritual debt.
8. God's delay in pouring out on us the punishment His justice requires is for one reason – to give us time to repent so we can escape that punishment.
9. Look at it this way: Our sin must be punished – justice demands it.
  - a. Either we will suffer that punishment in the future on the Day of Judgment.
  - b. Or Jesus has already suffered fully for it at the cross.
  - c. It's one or the other – and while God has made it possible to avoid future judgment by providing the past judgment of the Cross, we decide which day will be ours.
10. Please don't mistake God's delay of judgment as His approval of your sin.
11. If you do, then what comes next is for you.

### D. Vs. 5-11

1. Vs. 5-10 are one sentence I'm going to break down into phrases & work through quickly.  
**5But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,**
  2. If we don't use the delay of judgment to repent, but remain hard & unrepentant, then all we're doing is adding more hurt to the seething cauldron of wrath that will be poured on us in the final judgment.
  3. Story of Wells Fargo guy who took one silver dollar a day & stored in attic.
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4. This next part is a bit tricky - Paul quotes Psalm 62:12 -  
**6who "will render to each one according to his deeds": 7eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; 8but to those**

**who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, 9tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil,**

5. What makes this passage difficult is that there's no mention of the Gospel here.
    - a. There's no salvation by grace,
    - b. There's no mention of forgiveness of sin
  6. It looks like Paul is saying salvation comes as a result of good works.
  7. But that's NOT what he's saying.
  8. Remember his point in all this – this is the dark background against which he wants to set the beauty of the Gospel.
  9. His theme is that man is without excuse.
  10. He's proving that there IS NO HOPE FOR MEN & WOMEN APART FROM CHRIST.
  11. Because God's judgment is perfect He will render to each one according to his/her deeds.
    - a. If they've done good, they'll be rewarded.
    - b. If they've done evil, they'll be punished.
    - c. Because God's judgment is perfect, this is the way it has to be. Paul is just stating the obvious.
  12. The point is – NO ONE does good – not really!
    - a. Sin is so insidious it's infected every aspect of who & what we are.
    - b. While we may be good in comparison to one another, we're no where near good in relation to what's required by God's righteousness.
  13. Even the best among us aren't without failure, error, & sin.
  14. How much sin does it take to ruin us?
  15. Well, let me put it this way – here are some cookies.
    - a. They're made with flour, butter, eggs, baking soda, some vanilla extract, chocolate chips.
    - b. Oh, & some rat poison – not much, just a smidgen. Want one?
    - c. Of course not, because you know it only takes a little of lethal poison to ruin them.
  16. It only takes the tiniest bit of sin to ruin us.
  17. God's judgment is totally righteous; He rewards good & punishes evil.
  18. The problem is, there's evil in all of us. As Paul will later say-There is none good, no, not one.
  19. So, if you think you can come to God on the basis of your works, you're only headed for a world of hurt.
  20. You can't come by works. You have to come by faith.
  21. Listen, IF eternal life COULD be gained by works, then Jesus never would have come.
    - a. He wouldn't have needed to.
    - b. The Father would have said, "There's no need to send My beloved Son to suffer the agonies of the Cross, because they can make it here on their own."
    - c. The cross is proof we can never earn heaven through our works.
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22. Then Paul says -  
**of the Jew first and also of the Greek; 10but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 11For there is no partiality with God.**
23. All of this applies equally to both Jews & Gentiles.
  24. The Jews thought because God had given them His Law, they had a leg up on everyone else.
    - a. They thought just having the Law made them better & earned them eternal life.
    - b. They didn't understand that God gave the Law as a way to show that the route of works to heaven had been washed out by Sin.

- c. Instead of seeing the Law as a high wall that barred them from eternal life, they made it into a ladder by which they could climb in.
25. Paul warns the Jews being religious & knowledgeable about what God requires isn't enough.
26. They are no better than those who hadn't received the Law because it's not about works.
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27. Here's how we can apply this today; Do you consider yourself a good person?
- Is your view of how you're going to get into heaven, that you'll stand before God & He'll pile your good on one side of a set of scales and your bad on the other, and because you're a good person, the good will outweigh the bad, so God will give you a pass you'll then take to St. Peter & he'll let you in to heaven and have an angel show you to your new home?
  - That's not the scene you headed for. There are no scales, no such accounting.
28. Listen, maybe you are a good person, a moral standout, in comparison with others.
29. No matter how good you are, you're not good enough.
30. Even 1 sin disqualifies you from heaven.
- But let's be honest, you have way more than just 1 sin.
  - Even if you've been a good person all your life, you've committed hundreds of sins.
  - For sin isn't counted just by what you do you shouldn't have; it's counted by what you didn't do you should have!
31. And just like the ancient Jews who clung to their self-righteousness & missed out on eternal life, your clinging to yours will result in your being kept out of heaven.

### **E. Vs. 12-16**

**12 For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law**

1. Jump on down to v. 16. Vs' 13-15 are a parenthesis we'll come back to.

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

- In the final judgment, God will judge based on all the facts.
- The hearts of men & women will be exposed & it'll be seen that they willingly chose to sin, knowing it was wrong, but choosing it anyway.
- It will then be absolutely clear to everyone why the Gospel was necessary,
  - Why Jesus had to go to the cross to pay for our sin.
  - Because no one gets to heaven by being good.

**13 (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; 14 for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, 15 who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them)**

- The Jews thought they were special because they'd received the Law.
- Paul says that even without the Law of Moses, people have an intuitive sense of right & wrong
  - They also know they've failed to stay right.
  - They know they've done wrong & feel guilt for it.
- It's not enough to just know what God requires; you also have to do it.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

**A. What Does God Require? Faith In Jesus because works will never get you to heaven.**