

Good Guys Go To Hell

Romans 2:1-5

Intro: “Good guys & Bad guys”

Let me ask you a question... When you are watching a movie or reading a book, how can you typically tell who the good-guys, and who the bad-guys are? What are some of the more obvious ways of telling the two apart?

Now... keep thinking... because I want to ask you a bit of a tougher question. Let's assume we're not talking about the old & obvious... let's say that rather than thinking this question through in the context of an old “Cowboys & Indians” or “good” cowboy (white hat) vs. “bad” cowboy (black hat) scenario... What if the movie or book were a classic spy novel or espionage movie? How do you figure out who the “good guys” and “bad guys” are then?

Think about it...

How do you tell the good guys and bad guys apart?
and

When (if ever) do you usually figure out whose who?

Hmmmmmmm.....

Hang on... I don't want to stop there....

Are you ready to go from the frying pan into the fire?

What do you do when the main characters and the primary plot involve “secret,” “double agents” - you know, those people that look like lovers but live like liars. Think about it... How is one to know who the true good guys and bad guys are???

When we take those questions out of the hypothetical realm and place them in the context of real-deal, real-life... the importance is no longer in line with a “game,” or some set of trivia questions... it becomes a matter of eternal life or eternal death.

That's where God and His Word come in... today.

Let me explain...

Last week, as we spent time with God and His Word, you may recall that in the second half of Roman's chapter one, Paul confronts and describes what we would all call “the bad guys.” In short, sin was exposed as “unbelief” that is most obviously evidenced in the form of both, ungodly and unrighteous living. Think about it... God used words like: God-hater,

gossip, slanderer, greedy, wicked, evil... unloving, unmerciful, & untrustworthy... The bottom line is that Paul painted a picture of what we would typically call “the bad-guys...” And, as we all saw, there were no real surprises. The message of Romans 1:18-32 was (and is), notwithstanding the gospel’s offer of forgiveness and grace... the message of Romans 1:18-32 is: **“Unrepentant, “bad-guys” get God’s wrath!”**

Now today... Romans chapter two picks up right where chapter one left off... God is continuing to reveal the reality of His wrath... and helping us to understand its righteous justification.

Only this time... there’s a twist...

Picking up on **Romans 3:23**’s universal truth...

We all begin as bad guys deserving God’s wrath:

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Last week we saw that the universal “bad news” *can be overcome* by THE “Good News” of Jesus, the Christ...

...which guarantees, under the power & promise of God Almighty, that every “bad guy” that truly accepts the gift of saving grace, by personal, all-in, totally trusting, faith in Jesus as Lord & Savior, (assuming that one’s faith is coupled with genuine, biblical repentance) can be rescued and transformed, by the grace & power of God.

In short...

“Bad guys become God guys” - in Christ Jesus. Amen!

Some of you are still with me... and you’re asking yourselves:

“Okay... that IS the Good News... Where’s the “twist?”

HERE’S THE TWIST....

Whose to say who is or is not truly saved? Answer = God

How can you KNOW then? Answer = You can’t KNOW...
(the best we can do is evaluate “fruit”)

Then..... thinking back to the “secret, double agents”

This is a very dangerous problem that has to be dealt with...

For both the double-agents themselves...

and those victims that follow & fall after them...

WELCOME TO ROMANS 2:1-5

This passage will blow the cover of some double-agents, make others squirm, and I pray.... make ALL of us check our hearts... to make sure that if we are truly children of God, that we're not living like bad-guys.

John MacArthur on Romans 2:1-5

Even (lost people heading to hell) have the basic knowledge of good and evil built into them. Consequently, many people today recognize and seek to uphold the moral standards of Scripture and profess to be Christians. But... **because they are not true believers in God**, they lack the spiritual resources to maintain that divine morality in their lives and are unable to restrain their sinfulness. They trust in their baptism, their church membership, in their being born into a Christian family, in the sacraments, in high ethical standards, in orthodox doctrine, or in any other of a number of outward ideas, relationships, or ceremonies for spiritual and even eternal safety.

But no one can understand or appropriate salvation apart from recognizing that he/she stands guilty and condemned before God, totally unable to bring him/herself up to God's standard of righteousness. And **no person is exempt**. The outwardly moral person who is friendly and charitable but is self-satisfied, is in fact, usually harder to reach with the gospel than the (obviously ugly, lost sinner) who has hit bottom, recognized his/her sin and given up hope. Therefore, after showing the immoral pagan his lostness apart from Christ, Paul proceeds with great force and clarity to show the "moralist" that, before God, he/she is equally guilty and condemned."

Today God's Word speaks to:

- A Those spiritual "double-agents,"**
- B Those who follow in their footsteps, and**
- C Those who would act like double-agents...**

T/S: Let's read Roman 2:1-5 together and then we'll come back & unpack it...

The Impartiality of God

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. **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...

Throughout history, various nations, people groups, religions, & denominations professing to be Christian have all thought and/or taught that the world's "good guys" go to heaven.

Now, before we really get into our study of God's Word, let's take a quick look at that premise (that the "good guys" go to heaven)... It sounds good... right? Makes sense... right? I mean... can we all agree from the onset that it's the good-guys that go to heaven???????

Let me ask you....

Who would or could possibly disagree with the "good news" that "good guys go to heaven?"

ANSWER: Every biblical Christian should disagree!

Why?

Genesis 2:16-17 & Romans 6:23...

= God says "ALL sin is a capital offense."

Because the Bible says so...

...and **Christians are not the "good guys"...**

they are "God's guys" (and girls)

This is a HUGE issue... this is a heaven or hell issue!

And the truth of the matter is that this might just be one of, if not **the most, tricky snares & slippery slopes** that lead to hell in Satan's entire satchel of sin!

Consequently, these first 5 verses in Romans chapter 2 are amongst the most...

IMPORTANT
CONVICTING
REVEALING
LIBERATING
GRACE-FILLED

...the most important, convicting, revealing, liberating, grace-filled TRUTHS...
IN ALL OF THE BIBLE!

I want to warn you... depending on where your heart is...

THIS IS GOING TO BE EITHER A LOVE OR A HATE THING...

Because... when it comes to God's truth, love, righteousness, & grace...

THERE ARE 3 QUESTIONS THAT YOU NEED TO ASK:

Have I truly received God's saving grace?

How did I receive God's saving grace?

What does saving grace mean?

Those that have a biblical understanding, commitment to, and appreciation of "saving grace" will love this passage... While those who "miss the mark" on grace, no matter how much they may think they "get it" - will hate this message, unless the Holy Spirit quickens their spirit and softens their hearts to receive His truth in love...

Listen to how Matthew Henry put it when telling others about Romans 2:1-5...

Qt: "Nothing speaks more terror to sinners, and more comfort to saints, than that Christ shall be the Judge. (Because) Secret services (a.k.a. Christ-likeness in action) shall be rewarded, (while) secret sin shall be then punished, and brought to light."

- Matthew Henry (Puritan Pastor)

LET'S JUMP IN...

***1**Therefore 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.*

God tells the self-righteous sinners that they know better... (v.1)

"Therefore" = pointing back to 1:18; 19-31; & v.32... emphasis on 18 & 32!

v.18 = For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness

without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God (vv.31c-32a)

v.32 = ...that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

"you (also)"

= pompous Jews... think superior to gentiles...

= churchy religious people... think superior to "heathens"

"have no excuse"

= you have no "wrath-pardoning" excuses...

= you who know better... (see Romans 1:32)

= you hold NO GET OUT OF JAIL FREE CARD... period!

" everyone of you who passes judgment,"

= every judgmental person (EVERY ONE)

"EVERY" means EVERY!

This includes (and is specifically targeted at) those self-righteous hypocrites who look churchy & religious but who, on the inside, measure themselves against the people of 1:18-32 vs. against the holiness of God.

"Judgmental" needs to be defined...

*** It is measured in the heart with the criteria being explained in the Bible...

"Discernment/Shrewdness"
requires evaluation...

Discernment from & for God is a fruit of righteous wisdom and it builds the body of Christ.

Judgmentalism, by stark contrast, is for & from Self and Sin... it is a poison from the pit of hell and it tears down the body of Christ.

Paul's point is simple and direct... self-righteous people just don't like it!

" for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself..."

= Since you are judging & condemning others, you claim to know the truth of God's Word...

Consequently, that makes you doubly responsible to live it!

= The more you know of God's truth, the more accountable you are

*** Read **Hebrews 10:26-29**

*For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, **27**but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. **28**Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. **29**How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?*

James 3:1 spells this principle out in black and white... Teachers will be held to a higher standard... so it is for one who professes to be representing God in either action or attitude...

Compare & Contrast the proud, self-righteous... with Jesus' teaching & Beatitudes

Self-righteous say: "I did not sin" but Jesus says: "Yes you did... in heart/mind..."

Self-righteous do not realize/accept that they are blind to self-sin

"Hell will be full of judgmental goodie-goodie people." - R.Kent Hughes

"I am never as miserable as when I am judging another person." - Hughes

"There is nothing more destructive to the spread of the 'good news' than.. a self-righteous spirit... you will bring, not life, but death to others!"
- Hughes

Self-righteous see themselves as above "them" (other sinners).

Self-righteous see God's patience & mercy as an endorsement of their sin vs. a merciful gift encouraging them to repent of that sin and become more Christ-like...

They've gotten cocky, complacent, & cancerous with God's mercy & grace....

Don;t assume upon your comfort...

"God calls people thru sunshine as well as thru rain" Hughes

Both the grace-perverting "libertines" & their counter-balancing cousins, the

self-righteous “pharisees” will skip into hell, handcuffed together... each thinking they are simply escorting the other to the gates of hades (as God’s way of confirming that they were right all along). When both realize they are destined for eternal damnation... it will be the truth of **Matthew 7:21-23** lived out

“There are many in hell who understood the doctrine of faith but who did not believe.” - Charles Spurgeon

“Yet, hell has not burnt even a single hair from the head of ANY who rightly believed & received Jesus as Lord” - JDP

Ps. 139:4 = God knows your heart & attitude even before your mouth speaks...

Pride comes before the fall... (God hates the proud)

T/S: Okay... get ready... here comes the hook!

Here comes the net that catches the self-righteous, hypocrites...

“ you condemn yourself;”

The self-righteous condemn themselves through two grave sins/errors:

- 1) They underestimate God’s standards of righteousness
(Sermon on the Mount: this is the theme of that sermon!)
(They think their outer morality covers their inner sins)
- 2) They underestimate the depth & damage of their own sin
(Fall man usually maximizes other’s sins & minimize their own)
(Read Matthew 7:1-3 = Parable of the “speck” vs. the “plank”)

*** Clean cup on the outside... filthy cup on the inside...

*** Pharisees vs. Tax Collector...

*** Jesus eating with the Pharisees... and the girl with the good heart

Four characteristics of the self righteous person (per Rick Warren)

1. He accuses others and excuses himself.

1) We label our own sin. We don't gossip, we're just sharing a concern. "I'm not critical, I'm discerning. I'm not lazy, I'm mellow." We relabel our sin. "I'm not negative, I'm realistic. I'm not unreliable, I'm flexible." We take what we judge in other people, but when it comes to ourselves we say it's not wrong, it's just our characteristic, "just the way I am". How many respectable do you know that do that?

2) We conveniently forget our own sin. "The person who thinks he has a clear conscious just has a poor memory." A lot of times we think there's nothing in our life, but we may not have thought enough about it.

2. He measures other people by the wrong standard.

He compares others to himself. "I'm the arbitrary standard. I'm better than" We contrast that with the way God judges because God judges based on the truth. The problem is we are blind to the truth. All of us have blind spots, areas of weakness we don't see. I don't see my own weaknesses. You don't see your own weaknesses. Many times we don't see where we're at fault but we only see where other people are at fault. It's ironic but we tend to judge in other people what we dislike in ourselves. If you have a problem with pride you're going to be very quick to judge people who are full of pride. If you're very lazy you'll be very quick to judge people who are lazy. It's just our nature. When we start to judge things, we have the tendency to judge the things we dislike about ourselves the most.

3. He thinks that judging others puts him in a better position.

The reason we like to judge others is it makes us feel better, superior, like we're not so bad. We think by judging others, we're put in a better position, that we're going to escape judgement. God doesn't grade on the curve.

4. He misinterprets God's blessing on his life.

A self righteous person... presumes on God's goodness. They take it for granted. It's the attitude of "Everything is going great, therefore God must think I'm great. Everything is going smooth, therefore I must be in with God. He must think I'm special, a chosen person."

The self righteous person thinks he deserves God's blessing.

"for you who judge practice the same things."

*** Think about it... the "rich young ruler" was doomed the second he told Jesus that he was basically "good enough," that he had done everything that was required to go to heaven... hence his sinful, lying, and delusional confusion... and apparent destruction.

Even after Jesus made things crystal clear... he left, because

what he really wanted was God to endorse his sin... to say that it's okay to treasure someone or something more than Jesus, the Christ.

You can and will be given a green-light on that in many circles & churches... But NOT HERE!

Why?

Because the Bible calls that SIN.

Why?

Because while that kind of endorsement might lead you to come back... it will also lead you to hell.

Why?

Because that puts you on a pedestal while spitting on our crucified Christ.

Why?

Because endorsing someone in their condemnation is not loving... No! To say it's okay to do what will lead you to hell, is to hate you.

"If one has enough knowledge to judge others, he is thus self-condemned, for he has enough to judge his own true condition." - John MacArthur

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?

God tells the self-righteous sinners the truth about His judgment... (vv.2-3)

"And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things."

"know" in Greek = "the obvious," "common knowledge"

Paul's point is that even the evil-doers of chapter 1 (see vv.29-31) "know" that God's righteous judgment says that sinning against God is worthy of death...

Consequently, Paul here states, surely then, those who claim to be spiritually enlightened people would “*know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things*”

Paul says in 1 Cor. 4:3-5... Paul says he's not even in a position to make a proper judgment of himself, let alone someone else. Paul says, when it comes to looking into another person's heart, leave it to God. The Lord will bring everything into the light when He returns.

NOTE: that is not to say that you accept, condone, or look away from known or damaging sin.

Read: **Matthew 10:16**

Titus 1:11

Numbers 25 (Phinehas & his spear)

The secret hope of the hypocrite is that God will somehow choose to judge him the way most others judge him... from the outside.

But the truth of the matter is shared in **1 Samuel 16:7:**

One of the most important Scriptures in ALL the Bible!

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Self-righteous hypocrites bring more judgment down on themselves than they could ever imagine befalling the targets of their tantrums...

Such men are what Jesus called: “white-washed tombs”

Matthew 23:27:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

Hebrews 2:2-3 (the hypocrite has no place to run or hide...)
*For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, **3**how will we*

escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,

God and His Word are clear... nothing but the blood of Jesus (his loving, sacrificial death) can put us in “good enough” standing with God the Father. Jesus took biblical believer’s sins to the cross and gave them His righteousness. As a result, anyone who comes before God on their judgment day with even the slightest hint of their own self-righteousness still in them, will be called out as a counterfeit, for the righteousness of Christ cannot co-mingle with the righteousness of man... any more than light can co-exist with darkness.

Such would be tantamount to living life as if Christ was not truly needed...

The self-righteous feel that they were “good enough to get in...” or at the very least, they were good enough to pay at the door when they get to the gates of eternity.

Tragically, the concept of “paying when you get there” is right on... but the assumption of the destination is way off.

Only those carried by the nail pierced hands of Jesus will enter heaven’s eternal glory.

Illustration: Russian nomadic tribal-leader from centuries ago...
Highly esteemed for his exceptional strength, wisdom, integrity, and command over the countries choicest hunting grounds and natural resources...
His reputation for fairness & impartiality strengthened his power.
Rash of thefts broke out within the tribe...
Tribal leader commands punishment of 10 lashes for the thief...
Thefts continue, thief not found, punishment raised to 40 lashes...
Everyone knows only the chief could survive 40 lashes...
Thief turns out to be the chief’s mother...
Does he satisfy his love for his mom, or satisfy his integrity.....
He does both by taking her 40 lashes...
...in an infinitely greater way, Jesus took the penalty of His children’s sins upon Himself... on the cross!

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...**

God tells the self-righteous sinners they are eternally guilty... (vv.4-5)

Illustration: Like a bank account into which you are making deposits throughout your entire life. Only this bank is hell and your account is saving up all your sins. And instead of “retiring” some day and taking all of your money out of the bank to go have fun with.... In this instance, everything that you’ve been saving is not for “retiring” but “YOUR re-FIRING in the furnace of hell” - Your sins have been saved up like cords of wood for the eternal fire that will consume you. That’s what God’s Word says about the self-righteous, the religious judges, the churchy creeps that say they speak for Christ, but DON’T (see seven Sceva brothers)...

“There is in every willful sin a contempt for the goodness of God.”-Matthew Henry

Hosea 11:1-7 = The more mercy God gives, the more ugly & ungrateful fallen man becomes...

“Sin unrepented, reproduces sin.” - JDP

We’ve all taken God’s kindness, tolerance, & patience for granted... the question is, have those times (or do these times) represent “our oops” or “our always?”

Do you take double portions of God’s mercy & grace...
But begrudgingly presuppose a thimble’s portion upon others?

Until God’s divine and ultimate, eternal judgment, His kindness, tolerance, & patience are showering all of mankind.

Why? Answer: LOVE! God’s love = patience, tolerance & kindness!

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

God's Kindness = His blessings He bestows

God's Tolerance = His judgment He withholds

God's Patience = the amount of time He allots for both...

Visible Illustration:

Two arms/hands extended to front and back...

Back = God holding off His judgment

Front = God extending His blessings & gift of grace

Suddenly, without notice... both hands will drop!

Perspective shapes perception, and as is often said (incorrectly, I might add), "Perception is reality."

What we do know is this... people are shaped by what they believe.

When it comes to God... most people don't believe God is truly, all loving, all good, and all powerful. If he were so, many contend, there would not be such calamity, pain, & suffering in the world...

Such logic and conclusions, while rational, are not real.

Let me explain...

First, let's lay a little bit of biblical ground work... I will offer one verse where countless others could also be used...

Psalm 145:9

The LORD is good to all & His mercies are over all His works.

"Rather than asking why God allows bad things to happen to seemingly good people, we should ask why God allows seemingly good things to happen to obviously bad people." - John MacArthur

Think about it...

God waited 120 years of ark-building & warning before the flood

God waited 800 years before sending His people into captivity

God could cause the earth to swallow up the counterfeit Church like He did Korah and his followers in **Numbers 16:25-32**

God could strike down and instantly and publicly kill people for their sins (even Christians), like He did Ananias & Sapphira in **Acts 5:1-10**

Why doesn't God do more of this?

Answer: A) *"the kindness of God leads you to repentance"*

God's Kindness points to repentance...

Sadly, too many go the other way...

In the end, they will get what they want!

Answer: B) **2 Peter 3:9** (see above... loving patience)

Answer: C) **Romans 9:22-23**

*"What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? **23** And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,"*

God brings all of this to a crystal clear head in **Romans 2:5**:

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...

The person who, because of stubbornness and an unrepentant heart, presumes on God's kindness, tolerance, and patience is simply storing up wrath for himself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

Greek for "stubbornness" = literally "hardened" (from which we get our word "sclerosis")

*"Hardening of the arteries may take a person to the grave, but hardening of his spiritual heart will take him to hell."
- John MacArthur*

Read **Hebrews 3:8; 3:15; & 4:7**

v.5 = no more inference... Paul/God tells it like it is (like Nathan... "you're the guy..." "You're the BAD GUY")

As a result... storing/treasuring up wrath...

v. 5 (Hughes) = Total impartiality = NOTHING about you can/will save you from God's righteous wrath... His damning judgment will rest on every soul that does not trust and rest in His grace, AND ONLY HIS GRACE! If you feel ANY sense of superiority, then you are looking down from a platform of sin, no matter how much you have convinced yourself it is a shelf of grace. That is the point of Romans 2:1-5

No "status" or "position" can/will help... In terms of "saved" or "lost," "heaven or hell," your Bible knowledge, your church attendance, your good deeds, neither your sincerity or intentions, nor your confidence or convictions... mean a thing. Without a right standing (which requires a right understanding) of God's grace & sacrificial atonement for your sins, you will inevitably give yourself credit for what only Christ can do.

That would make you a "Self-ian"... NOT a Christ-ian...

Selfians follow and trust "self" - they live life their way.

And no "selfians" get saved from the wrath of God...

BUT, by grace, ALL biblical Christians are adopted, protected, heaven bound children of God - Amen!

...the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God refers to when the lake of fire will be filled with all the evil people of all time... all the "bad guys" that chose not to accept God's gift of grace. (Rev. 20:10-15)

The crucial question to ask is NOT: "Why do bad things happen to good people?" but rather, "Why do any of us get to live even another second?" (Luke 13:1-5)

PRODIGAL “Big Brother”

Romans 2:1-5 = “Critic” (not Christian)

Ironically, critics condemn themselves as critics while criticizing others...

Note: fine line between a righteous, unwavering witness & a truly self-righteous critic... the line is drawn in & by your heart!

2 challenges:

- A) 99% of the time the sinners being addressed will accuse the person addressing them as “self-righteous, judgmental critics and/or hypocrites... Thus... active sinners make poor judges.
- B) 99% of the time hypocritical critics are blinded to their self-righteous judgmentalism... Right “facts” do not = righteousness.

Read: **Rev. 2-3**... self-righteous ends... (Sardis = dead & Laodicea = luke-warm)

PRODIGAL “Big Brother” summarizes the passage...

“Your sin is YOUR sin but my sin is not sin.” - JDP (on Romans 2:1-5)