

All you judges have no excuse

Today is the third time you have studied the book of Romans. Therefore, you may have forgot why Paul wrote the book of Romans and what the problems of the Roman church were. To help you remember, let me briefly repeat. The congregation of the first Christians in Rome at that time was made up of the chosen people of Jews and Gentiles such as Greeks. Among them, there were Christians of Jewish origin, who respected the Law and criticized the Greek Christians who ate the food prepared in the Temple and were not circumcised. And the Gentiles, in their own way, were criticizing the Jewish Christians for sticking to the old law and customs while believing in the new gospel. Hearing this situation of mutual criticism, the apostle Paul clearly taught about the gospel: Romans 1:16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation to everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."

First, look at verse 1. "You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgement do the same things." The word "therefore" here takes all of chapter 1.

The last month, I mentioned all the sins of mankind, especially those who do not know God the Creator like the Gentiles. Today, it is listing the sins of God's chosen people, the Jews. For example, two children are quarreling at home. First, the parents scolded the younger son, who was clearly misbehaving. The eldest son, who is a smart and polite boy, sees his younger brother being scolded and secretly laughs, saying, 'Look at that! Shame on you!' However, righteous parents would see right through his cold-hearted eldest son and advice him. Parents want to mediate quarrels between siblings so that they can deepen their understanding about each other and be restored to a loving relationship. Paul treats the sins of Gentiles and Jews equally in this way, and he wanted them to recognize that both were sinners and under God's judgment, but that they were saved by Jesus' grace. Chapter 2 is easy to understand if you think of it this way.

The Jewish Christians were judging the Gentile Christians, but shamefully they were committing the same sins as the Gentiles. So what were the sins of the Jews?

The sins of the Jews

Hypocritical behavior (committing the same sins as the Gentiles)

False sense of the chosen people (thinking they are exempt from God's judgment)

Lacking of God's mercy for others (lack of repentance)

Verses 3-4 refer to the sins of the elect Jews, including the hypocritical act of "doing the same things as the Gentiles even though they know it is a sin", and the "false sense of the chosen people" when the Jews think that they themselves are exempt from God's judgment. Verse 4 points out their contempt towards God's kindness and patience and their lack of repentance. The Jews who was chosen by God easily thought that since there was a law, they would be saved if they kept the law.

But look at verse 2. "Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth." Paul is saying that no matter how the Jews are chosen, they will not escape God's judgment, and God will judge them righteously. Why? Verse 5 says, "But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed." The Jews, who had criticized the Gentiles for acting contrary to the Law, were piling up God's wrath against them for not repenting of their sins. And they will be judged on 'the day of God's wrath' that is 'the day of the second coming of Jesus Christ.' The Jews in Roman church were saved by faith, but their understanding of the gospel was not right, and they instead judged their brothers and sisters in the church because they didn't follow their Jewish law. And they also were committing the same sins as the Gentiles, but they thought that the elect would not be judged, and they did not repent of their sins.

The Bible teaches about God's judgment in many chapters of the Bible including Psalm 9 and Ecclesiastes 3:17 and so on. See Matthew 25:31-32. "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him and he will separate them the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." Jesus, who was crucified, has risen and sits now at the right hand of God the Father in the heaven. Jesus Christ, who came to earth first as a suffering servant, will come with authority as the Judge at His Second Coming.

What then is God's judgment like? God will reward each one according to what they have done (v. 6). He will give eternal life to those who do good with persistence and seek

glory, honor, and immortality (v. 7), but wrath and anger to those who are rejecting the truth and following evil (v. 8). Here you all need to understand correctly about "those who do good" and "those who are rejecting the truth and following evil." Here 'good' is written in the singular in Greek, not the plural. This "good" refers to 'faith in Jesus Christ'. Whether or not you have this faith will be required at the time of the final judgment at Jesus second coming.

God's judgment that will come in the future is righteous for all people. God does not favor the Jews or the Gentile (v. 11). Both Jews and Gentile will be given tribulation and suffering if they do evil which means if they have no faith (v. 9). But they will receive glory and honor if they do good which is having faith in Jesus Christ (v. 10). It does not matter whether you are the chosen people the Jew or the Gentile. Grace and judgment are given in the same way, depending only on whether one has faith or not.

Verses 12-15 say that Gentiles, who have no law, will be judged by their conscience without the law (v. 15). But the Jew, who have the law, will be judged by their laws. When the Jew heard this, they might wonder if they would be judged for keeping the law. But if they only hear the law and do not do it, they will be judged (v. 14).

In verse 16 it says. **"This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares."** Let us consider here that 'men's secrets' will be judged. Speaking of the secret of people, we sometimes talk about the immoral acts of politicians and religious leaders. Most people are doing good but some people have misdeed and are cleverly hiding their sins with their power, honor, and wealth. But when they are exposed, the public is greatly shocked.

In verses 17 through 23, the sins of the religious leaders at that time were revealed. The Jewish religious leaders were proud and felt secure in the Law (v. 17). They were convinced that they are a guide for the blind and a light for those who are in the dark. And they had a confident as an instructor of the foolish, and a teacher of infants (vv. 18, 19, 20). But the Jewish religious leaders, while preaching "Do not steal! Yet they steal, and do not commit adultery! Yet they abhorred idolatry and grazed on the things of the temple (vv. 21, 22). They boasted of the righteous of the law, but they acted contrary to it (v. 23).

Luke 18:9-14 shows that the religious leaders of the time thought of themselves as righteous and looked down on others, even to the point of praying, "Thank God we are not like tax collectors." Paul cautions that this mindset remains even after one becomes a Christian.

It has been four months since Russia began its invasion to Ukraine. The other day, Rie san said. "I was shocked to see President Putin worshiping a Russian Orthodox Mass." The Russian government justifies their war with religion, which is frightening. However, Russia is not alone in this sinful mistake in our long human history.

About 2,000 years ago, something tragic also happened in Jerusalem. The Jewish religious leaders, who boasted of being God's people, incited the ignorant people to crucify God's only son, Jesus. It was the greatest sad event that mankind had ever committed with religion. But Jesus Christ, being truly God, rose from the dead on the third day. And with this, amazingly God's plan of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ was completed. Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945, a German theologian), who was martyred for his opposition to the Nazis, said, "The gospel of Jesus Christ is not a religion." The gospel of Jesus Christ is not a man-made religion. The gospel is the power of God that saves Jews, Greeks, Canadians, Japanese, Koreans and all the nations and gives them eternal life.

Look at verse 24. "As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." The sins of the Jewish Christian religious leaders, in turn, were defiling God's name among the Gentiles. Have you ever felt the contradiction of having defiled God's name by being too religious? Have you ever blamed or ignored your brothers and sisters in the church because of your religious zeal?

Finally, I would like to share with you the testimony of one African missionary's wife. She went to Africa on her husband's calling alone, not by her own calling from God and so she had a very hard time. This was in the 1980s, about 40 years ago, so unlike today, Africa must have been very poor at that time. The wife had a son, but her family was so poor that she could not feed him eggs or bread for days on end, which saddened her a lot. Furthermore, every week after the service, over 20 members of the church from children to adults, would come to her house, ate all the food in her house. This went on for a year every week. However, she had no idea why and felt bad for her brothers and sisters in the church. Because of this, she had heated fights with her husband every day. But during one of the services, she could hear her husband's announcement to the church's member. "Ladies and gentlemen, those who are hungry, please come to my house and eat together. I will share you all" Her husband was like Jesus. Until that day, she had always thought it was church's members fault because she could not understand the local language, but from that day finally she found out that her husband was the cause of it and she became even more angry to her husband. From that day on, she was more

and more vexed with her husband and they had a fierce fight every day. The missionary's house was like a battlefield, and her husband even escaped from her and slept in the church instead of going home. But they were still poor and eventually she lacked nourishment seriously and contracted malaria. Despite her suffering, she was still angry with her husband, saying, "If I die, bury me in my own country. I don't want to be buried in Africa." One day, when she was suffering between life and death because of high fever. At that time, she heard a voice, "My daughter, you have not yet been born again." As soon as she realized that was God's voice, suddenly her daily life was shown in front of her like a video. Some were even something she did not remember.

She was cutting bread in the kitchen. When she finished cutting them, she would give the thin one to the children in the church and the slightly thicker one to her own son. She did not remember this at all, perhaps because she always thought this was normal. But she was very embarrassed before God Father. Then God said. "I know you love your own son so much like that. But I love you enough to kill my son Jesus on the cross. And also I love the people of Africa too." When the missionary's wife heard these words of God, she repented with tears. And she apologized to her husband. And then they built hospitals and schools in Africa, and still minister as a missionary enthusiastically.

When we deeply understand and accept the love of the cross of Jesus Christ, we will stop judging others. 1 John 4:10, 11, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

Let's pray together.

Dear Heavenly Father. I pray that we will be filled daily with God's love and that we will be people who pray for and help our brothers and sisters in our church and also our families and other friends. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen