

## HOW WILL GOD JUDGE YOU? ROMANS 2:6–11

### INTRODUCTION

As we studied **verse 5** last Sunday, Paul introduced to us the **future and final judgement of God**.

By pointing to this future reality, Paul emphasised that while **the fullness of God's wrath is currently hidden from the world**, it will be unveiled as God **punishes sin in furious anger on the final day**.

**This raised the question for us** that was doubtless the question Paul wanted to raise for the unbelieving Jews of his day too—**Do good people go to heaven?**

Paul **emphatically answered that no**, good people **go to hell**.

That answer would have **surprised the unbelieving Jews** of Paul's day, just as it surprises many of the “good people” of our day who are expecting to escape God's judgement and go to heaven because of their **ethnic identity, relative morality, or religious activity**.

What becomes clear to us, then, is that there is yet **another misunderstanding** that **unbelieving religious people need to have corrected**.

As we've studied **chapter two**, we've already found that people **misunderstand God's justice** as well as **His mercy**.

Now we see Paul correcting the **third error**, the **misunderstanding of God's judgement**.

**The main purpose** that Paul has in this next section of **verses 6–11** is establishing the principle that **God's judgement is fair**.

He is particularly concerned to establish this principal in order to **convince his readers** that **God is righteous in judging unbelieving religious people** who violate His commandments.<sup>1</sup>

**The clearest example** of such unbelieving religious people who will be judged by God and punished for their sinful rebellion are the **Jews who reject the gospel** of Jesus Christ.

This principle that Paul establishes in **verses 6–11** is **particularly relevant** to us as we live in a culture that **doesn't give much consideration to God's judgement**.

If there is any thought given to this future reality, it betrays the **futile and foolish thinking** of those whose ideas of God have been **corrupted by their sinful rebellion**.

Simply put, we live in a culture that **does not believe God's judgement is fair**.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Joshua W. Jipp, Second Edition, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2018), 123, fn 11.

There are at least **two ways** in which the world **denies that God's judgement of sin is fair, or just.**

**Firstly**, many unbelievers hold to the **unrealistic and unbiblical optimism** that they will **escape God's judgement altogether.**

This is the same false thinking that Paul has already addressed in **chapter two.**

This **rejection of the fairness** of God's judgement **still alive and well today.**

As **Leon Morris** states, **the modern person**, "*has largely dismissed the thought of final judgment from his mind. He does not think of himself as accountable. The New Testament does not share his unreasoning optimism.*"<sup>2</sup>

For many, this **false optimism** that they will escape the punishment of their sin is rooted in the **wrong idea that God's love will override His wrath.**

To the world, it seems undeniable that God, in love, will save all people from His wrath, but that is not what Scripture teaches.

This is the **first way** in which the world denies that God's judgement of sin is fair, or just, but there is a **second.**

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<sup>2</sup> Leon Morris, *The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006), 65–66.

**Secondly**, many unbelievers **wrongly think** that even if there is a judgement, **God will let them off easy** with a lenient punishment.

Again, we've encountered this false thinking in **chapter two** in Paul's previous instruction.

Nevertheless, it remains just **as popular today** as it was in Paul's day.

If the world gives any thought to God's judgment at all, it thinks of the **final destruction of sinners** who reject God and His gospel as **unjust and vindictive**.<sup>3</sup>

This is the **second way** in which the world denies that God's judgement of sin is fair, or just.

Therefore, it is **particularly important** that we study Paul's **correction of the misunderstanding of God's judgement**.

**Contrary** to what the world, or even some within the church may believe, **God's judgement is fair**.

We need to know this because God's judgement is fair, **it also means** that He is **righteous in judging unbelieving religious people** who reject the salvation He offers in the gospel.

In other words, this section of Paul's argument **anticipates the response** of those who cry that **it is unfair of God to send good people to hell**.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Schreiner, *Justice and Goodness of God*, x.

Paul is going to **correct that misunderstanding** by convincingly demonstrating that **God's judgement is fair**, and therefore He is **righteous in sending good people to hell**.

**In order to establish the principle** that God's judgement is fair, Paul is going to **explain how God will judge people** on the future day of final judgement.

As he explains how God will judge people, **it may surprise many Christians** to learn that **we too will be judged**.

The final judgement of God will **determine the eternal destiny of all people**, including those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ according to the gospel.

**It is on this final day of judgement** that **God will announce** whether you will enjoy eternal life in heaven or suffer eternal damnation in hell.

Therefore, as we study our text today, you'll be confronted by the question, **How will God judge you?**

**How will God's judgement work**, and more importantly, **what will the outcome of His judgement be for you?**

## PROPOSITION

As we study the details of **Romans 2:6–11**, we'll see Paul **elaborate on three concepts** that **establish the principle** that God's judgement is fair:

1. The **standard** of God's judgement
2. The **scope** of God's judgement
3. The **sameness** of God's judgement

### 1. THE STANDARD OF GOD'S JUDGEMENT

As you look at **verse 6**, it's clear that Paul is **continuing to address the subject** of **God's final judgement**.

**The most obvious reason** we can say this is that **verse 6 continues the same sentence** that our English translations begin in **verse 5**.

Interestingly, in the original Greek that Paul wrote, **verses 2–11** are **part of one long sentence**.

That was **perfectly acceptable in Greek**, but makes for really difficult English.

So the translators seek to serve us by breaking up the long sentence into **shorter, clearer thought units**.

In both Greek and English, what is evident is that Paul is **continuing the thought unit** of **verse 5** as he writes **verse 6**.

**Verse 6** provides the **ground** for Paul's claim in **verse 5**.

That is, Paul gives **further explanation of God's final judgement**, and in doing so, he **appeals to the truth that supports his point** in **verse 5**.

Look at **verse 6** and you'll see what I mean. Paul writes—  
**who WILL REPAY TO EACH ACCORDING TO HIS WORKS:**

That clearly picks up from **verse 5** where Paul refers to,  
**“the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God...”**

So the statement in **verse 6 clarifies and supports** what Paul argues about the **judgement of God**.

Now as you may see in your Bible, some translations put **verse 6** in **capital letters** which signifies that Paul is alluding to an **Old Testament reference**.

The wording of **verse 6** is remarkably similar to two Old Testament references:

**Psalms 62:12**—**You repay a man according to his work.**

**Proverbs 24:12**—**And will not He render to man according to his work?**

**It's possible that Paul was quoting these verses**, but with the minor variations in wording and the fact that Paul doesn't use an introduction like, “it is written...,” it seems more probable that he was **referring to an axiom**, or a well-established and accepted truth.

The idea that **God judges according to works** was well **established in Judaism**, and in Paul's day, any Jew would certainly have **agreed with the statement**.<sup>4</sup>

For example, we read in **Jeremiah 17:10**—

**I, Yahweh, search the heart; I test the inmost being, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.**

This idea was also **central in the teaching of Jesus**.

In **Matthew 16:27**, Jesus declares—

**The Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EACH ONE ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.**

**This axiom**, this well-established truth is frequently referred to in the New Testament, proving that it was **accepted as a vitally important idea by the apostles**.

**Turn with me** in your Bibles and let me show you.

First in the **teaching of Paul**:

**2Corinthians 5:10**—**We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.**

**Colossians 3:25**—**He who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.**

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Frank Thielman, *Romans*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 129.

**2 Timothy 4:14**—Alexander the coppersmith showed me much harm; the Lord will award him according to his deeds.

**Peter agrees:**

**1 Peter 1:17**—If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your sojourn.

We find the idea referred to repeatedly by **John in Revelation:**

**Revelation 2:23**—And I will kill her children [referring to the followers of the false prophet Jezebel] **with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.**

At the **Great White Throne of judgement:**

**Revelation 20:12**—Then I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

**Revelation 22:12**—Jesus Himself says, “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to his work.”

So as you can see, this idea was **certainly axiomatic**—it was widely accepted and applied by **Old Testament Jews, by New Testament apostles, and by Jesus Himself.**

As you turn back to Romans 2:6, Paul refers to this **axiomatic truth** in order to **introduce the theme or topic** of this section from **verses 6–11**.

In doing so, Paul **elaborates on this concept** as **the standard of God's judgement**.

That's to say, when God judges anyone, **the measure He uses is their works**.

This has been **God's consistent standard** of judgement, as He says through the prophet in **Isaiah 3:10-11**—

**10 Say to the righteous that it will go well with them, For they will eat the fruit of their deeds.**

**11 Woe to the wicked! It will go badly with him, For what he has dealt out will be done to him.**

This was God's standard in the Old Testament, and it continued to be His standard in the New Testament.

Jesus referred to the future resurrection and judgement when He said in **John 5:28-29**—

**28 Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice,**

**29 and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.**

Therefore, **we should conclude** along with Paul that **God's standard for judgement is works**.

This is the **first concept** that Paul uses to establish that the **judgement of God is fair**.

As you look back at **verse 6**, you'll see that Paul **incorporates the other two concepts**, albeit in **seed form** that he will elaborate on in the following verses.<sup>5</sup>

As Paul writes in **verse 6**, **God's judgement is equated with Him "repaying"** those He judges.

**The Greek word here means** *to recompense, whether in a good or bad sense, so that we can translate it as, 'render, reward, or recompense.'*<sup>6</sup>

The idea is **not limited to** the **negative aspect** of judgement which is God's punishment of sin.

The idea of the word **"repay"** or **"recompense"** includes the **positive aspect** of **God's public declaration** that those who have received His justification through faith are indeed righteous.

Therefore, the **"repayment"** also includes the **positive aspects of both justification and reward**.

**This is the seed form** of the **second concept** of the **scope of God's judgement**, which has to do with **God judging both believers and unbelievers** at the final judgement.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Schreiner, *Romans*, 121.

<sup>6</sup> BDAG, ἀποδίδωμι.

We'll explore that more in a moment as we look at **verses 7–10**.

You can also see in **verse 6** that Paul refers to repaying “**each one**.”

That is, God will judge **each and every person, without exception**.

**Every person will be judged**, and the judgement will be **perfect in its justice and impartiality**.

**This is the seed form** of the **third concept** of the **sameness of God's judgement**, which has to do with God **judging both Jews and Gentiles** according to the same impartial standard of works.

Again, we'll explore this **third concept** as Paul elaborates on it in **verse 11**.

Keep in mind as we consider these **three concepts together—the standard, the scope, and the sameness** of God's judgement—that they **establish the principle that God's judgment is fair**.

Therefore, **as Paul seeks to prove, God is righteous in judging unbelieving religious people** who **reject Him and His gospel**, and violate His commandments.

## 2. THE SCOPE OF GOD'S JUDGEMENT

As Paul goes into **greater detail of how God will judge** people in the final judgement, he **clarifies that both believers and unbelievers** will be judged by God.

This is **particularly surprising to many Christians** today whose understanding of the future judgement has been **heavily influenced by the doctrine of justification** by faith alone.

Paul certainly affirms this doctrine, as we discovered in **Romans 1:17** where he wrote that, "**In [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'BUT THE RIGHTEOUS WILL LIVE BY FAITH.'**"

However, as he has just stated in **verse 5**, **judgement for all is according to the standard of works.**

So as Paul clarifies by **detailing the scope of God's judgement**,  
**justification is by faith and judgement is by works.**

Those **twin concepts** of **justification by faith** and **judgement by works for believers** are **NOT incompatible**, as many believe today.

Much of the contemporary **misunderstanding is rooted in misunderstanding justification and misunderstanding works.**

Paul will correct those misunderstandings for us as we work through these verses, but we should remember that if **judgement is for everyone, and it is according to works**, then it is **quite logical** for believers to be judged according to works.

**The key concept** that will help us **clear up the misunderstandings** is that of **fruit**.

**Turn with me** to **Matthew 7** where we see Jesus introduce this concept to us, beginning in **verse 16**—

**16 You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?**

**17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.**

**18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.**

**19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.**

**20 So then, you will know them by their fruits.**

Jesus is using the **analogy of fruit** that demonstrates the kind of tree it hangs on in order to teach us that **both God's judgement and ours**, as we discern who is a true and false teacher, should be **based upon evidence to support the conclusion or verdict**.

God's judgement is **always based upon the evidence**.

When it comes to **the final judgement**, we already know that **the evidence is the works or deeds of our lives**.

So just as a **tree is judged by its fruit**, a person is judged by his or her works.

**That is true whether they are a believer or an unbeliever.**

With that **concept of fruit or evidence in mind**, look at **verses 7–10** as Paul elaborates on the **SCOPE OF GOD'S JUDGEMENT**—

<sup>6</sup> **who WILL REPAY TO EACH ACCORDING TO HIS WORKS:**

<sup>7</sup> **to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life;**

<sup>8</sup> **but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and anger.**

<sup>9</sup> **There will be affliction and turmoil for every soul of man who works out evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek,**

<sup>10</sup> **but glory and honour and peace to everyone who works good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.**

What is **not immediately obvious** to us is the **structure** that Paul uses in these verses.

It's **an important feature** of this section because it helps us to **keep Paul's main point or "big idea" in mind**.

**Verses 7–10** form a **chiasm, or chiastic structure**.

What that means is that the **two outer verses** (**verses 7 & 10**) are in **parallel** and the **two inner verses** (**verses 8 & 9**) are in **parallel**.

We can see that as we observe that **the outer verses have to do with the judgement** of those who receive **eternal life**, and the **two inner verses** deal with those who receive **eternal damnation**.

What is important about a **chiastic structure** is that it communicates the **author's intended emphasis** on what is in the **centre of the chiasm**.

To put it simply, even though Paul **explains that believers will be judged**, **his emphasis is on the judgement of unbelievers** in order to establish **his “big idea”** that God is just or fair in condemning those who reject Him.

Paul's purpose in discussing the judgement of believers is to **demonstrate the consistency and balance of God's judgement**, and therefore to **emphasise the fairness of God's future judgment**.<sup>7</sup>

Now, with that in mind, let's consider the **scope of God's judgement** in more detail as we **first** examine His judgement of believers.

### a. Judgement of Believers

Look again at **verse 7**—

**to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life;**

This section is **admittedly one of the most disputed in the entire book of Romans**.

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<sup>7</sup> Thielman, *Romans*, 131.

**Even highly esteemed commentators disagree** with one another, but **what is decisive in the end** is that Paul speaks of the outcome the judgement of these people as “**eternal life.**”

This is **not a hypothetical demonstration** of the **futility of trying to earn** your righteousness and salvation.

As Paul will argue later in **Romans 3:20**, “**By the works of the Law NO FLESH WILL BE JUSTIFIED IN HIS SIGHT, for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.**”

Rather, Paul is referring to those who **persistently do good in order to receive “glory and honour and immortality”** which seems to be **synonymous with the outcome** of their judgement which is “**eternal life.**”

**Here some clarifications are helpful** in order to **accurately understand** what Paul is describing.

**Firstly**, we need to remember that **believers** who are united to Christ and justified by faith alone **will be subject to a future judgement.**

As Paul writes later in **Romans 14:12**, “**Each one of us [believers] will give an account of himself to God.**”

Earlier, we encountered this same idea in **2 Corinthians 5:10**—  
**We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.**

If you are familiar with the **future judgment of believers**, you are probably thinking of it in the **context of the reward** that God will give to each according to their faithfulness.

Turn to **1 Corinthians 3** where we find Paul teaching on this—

**8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.**

**11 For no one can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.**

**12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,**

**13 each man's work will become evident, for the day will indicate it because it is revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.**

**14 If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.**

**15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.**

So reward will **doubtless be one of the outcomes** of a **believer's future judgement**.

However, **as we turn back** to **Romans 2**, we need further clarification on what Paul is describing.

Notice that the **outcome described** in **verse 8** is **NOT reward**, but "**eternal life**" itself.

Therefore, **secondly**, we need to remember that believers are **justified by faith alone, but the faith that justifies is never alone**.

This is the **concept of fruit or evidence** that Jesus taught.

Jesus was not the only one, because **James taught the same**.

**Turn with me** to **James 2**, as we see him elaborate on the **concept of fruit or evidence** for **authentic faith that truly saves**.

Beginning in **verse 14**, James argues that **saving faith must be evidenced by works** such as the love of believers for one another—

**14 What use is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?**

**15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food,**

**16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?**

**17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead by itself.**

After using the **examples of Rahab and Abraham**, James makes his summary argument in **verse 26**—

**For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.**

For James, faith and works are **distinct, but inseparable**—just as inseparable as the body and spirit of man.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> “In both Paul and James faith and works are inseparable. Faith and works can be distinguished logically, but in life they are inseparable.” Thomas Schreiner, “Justification apart from and by Works: At the Final Judgment Works Will Confirm Justification,” in *Four Views on the Role of Works at the Final Judgment*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 91.

While many think of **James contradicting Paul**, they are **actually in complete agreement**.

**We are saved by grace through faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone.**

**There must be evidence** at the final judgement that **verifies your faith**, just like there must be **fruit on a tree**.

Therefore, **both Jesus and James** help us understand that **Paul is not contradicting himself** or the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

So as we can now clarify, **NEITHER justification, narrowly, NOR salvation, broadly**, are provided by God on the **basis of works**.

**You are saved and justified on the basis of faith alone**, but your faith must be **verified by the fruit** of persistently “**doing good**,” as Paul puts it in **verse 7**.

As **Tom Schreiner** argues, “*Paul, in agreement with James, did not think... works are the basis of justification. They are, rather, the necessary fruit and evidence of justification.*”<sup>9</sup>

The words “**necessary evidence**” are crucial as they clarify that believers are **justified by faith alone, but the faith that justifies is never alone**.

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Justification: An Introduction*, Short Studies in Systematic Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2023), 134.

**John MacArthur** states this point of clarity well—

*“Salvation is not by works, but it will assuredly produce works. The presence of genuinely good deeds in a person’s life reveals that he has truly been saved, and in God’s infallible eyes those deeds are a perfectly reliable indicator of saving faith. In the same way, the absence of genuinely good deeds reveals the absence of salvation. In both cases, deeds become a trustworthy basis for God’s judgment.”*<sup>10</sup>

This is the **second clarification** that we need in order to **accurately understand** what Paul is describing in this section.

Look at **verse 10** as we see the parallel with **verse 7**—

**but glory and honour and peace to everyone who works good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.**

Here Paul says much the same as he did in **verse 7**, though he substitutes “**peace**” for “**immortality**.”

In both instances he is clearly describing the **experience of eternal life**.

Once more, though, he emphasises that it is given, “**to everyone who works good**.”

At this point, a **third clarification** would be helpful.

We have already clarified that, **firstly**, **believers will be subject to a future judgement**.

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<sup>10</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *Romans*, vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 130.

Then we clarified that, **secondly, justification is by faith alone, but the faith that justifies is never alone.**

Now we must also clarify that, **thirdly, justification refers to God's verdict of not guilty on the day of judgment.**

Though a believer's judgement will **also include the allocation of reward**, the **primary purpose is to justify the believer** so that they receive the fullness of their salvation in eternal life.

To be clear, **justification is primarily an eschatological event** with an outcome that **believers are assured of even in the present.**

What we need to clarify, then, is **the timing of the our justification.**

Look just a few verses on in **verse 13** where justification is **clearly a future, eschatological event**—

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

Paul also places our **justification in an eschatological timeframe** in **Galatians 5:5** where he states—

**For we through the Spirit, by faith, are eagerly waiting for the hope of righteousness.**

As **Schreiner** explains—

*“Justification means that one is declared to be in the right by God as the divine judge. And the declaration as to who is acquitted and who is condemned will take place on the day of judgment, the final day.”*<sup>11</sup>

**Andy Naselli** agrees and offers his own explanation—

*“When God initially justifies a believer, that justification is definitive and once for all time. But it is private. When God resurrects believers in the future, he will publicly vindicate them at the last judgment.”*<sup>12</sup>

In other words, justification is an “**already but not yet reality**,” as theologians like to say.<sup>13</sup>

**Your justification as a believer is synonymous with your future judgement by God.**

It is an eschatological reality that you **experience and enjoy even now** in the present.

As a believer, **you are now justified through faith in Jesus Christ.**

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas Schreiner, *Faith Alone—The Doctrine of Justification: What the Reformers Taught... and Why It Still Matters*, ed. Matthew Barrett, The Five Solas Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 155.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew David Naselli, “The Righteous God Righteously Righteouses the Unrighteous: Justification according to Romans,” in *The Doctrine on Which the Church Stands or Falls: Justification in Biblical, Theological, Historical, and Pastoral Perspective*, ed. Matthew Barrett (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 235.

<sup>13</sup> Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 157.

**You are justified by faith alone** by virtue of Christ's death for your sins and His resurrection for your justification.

As Paul writes in **Romans 4:25**, “[Christ] was delivered over on account of our transgressions, and was raised on account of our justification.”

However, you still look forward to the day when the **declaration will be announced publicly** and to the entire world.

As **Schreiner** states again—

*“The verdict of the final judgment is declared in advance for those who belong to Jesus Christ, and on the day of judgment that verdict will be proclaimed to the world. What is remarkable is that believers enjoy now the end-time verdict.”*<sup>14</sup>

So the **third** important clarification is that **justification refers to God's verdict of not guilty on the day of judgment.**

As we take these clarifications together, we can now see that Paul is referring in **verses 7 and 10** to the **future judgement of believers**, which is **synonymous with their justification.**

**God has announced His verdict of “not guilty” to you in advance**, so that you can **enjoy the benefits of this reality in the present.**

As Paul has explained, then, you are **justified on the basis of faith alone**, but you will be **judged according to the works** which are the **necessary evidence of true, saving faith.**

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<sup>14</sup> Schreiner, *Faith Alone*, 157.

Now if God will judge believers according to the standard of works, then this **strengthens Paul's case** that **God's judgement is fair**, especially when He condemns those who reject Him.

So as we remember the **"big picture,"** let's continue to study **the scope of God's judgement** as we **secondly** examine His judgement of unbelievers.

## b. Judgement of Unbelievers

We already know from our study of **verse 5** that those who **reject God and His offer of salvation** in the gospel will be **punished in eternal damnation**.

Paul provides **more details on this future judgement** in **verses 8–9** which are at the **centre of the chiasmic structure**, meaning that this is **Paul's main focus**—

**8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and anger.**

**9 There will be affliction and turmoil for every soul of man who works out evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek.**

**Thanks to all the work we've done** to clarify the **preceding verses**, we'll find these at the heart of Paul's argument **much simpler to follow**.

Paul contrasts the **fruitful faith of believers** who receive eternal life with the **sinful rebellion of those who reject God** and His offer of righteousness through faith alone.

Paul **firstly** describes unbelievers as those who are “**selfishly ambitious.**”

**The Greek word** behind this translation may have originally been used to describe a **hireling or mercenary**—someone who does what he does for money regardless of how his actions affect others.<sup>15</sup>

The best way to understand it is in the context of **chapter one** where Paul described the **sinful rebellion** of those who **did not acknowledge God but rejected Him** in order to **elevate themselves** as the object of their worship.

So we should understand Paul to be referring to man’s **fundamental sin of exalting one’s self** and his aspirations above the Creator.<sup>16</sup>

Paul **secondly** describes unbelievers as those who “**do not obey the truth.**”

The words both here and in the next phrase that refer to obedience, refer to an **habitual course of conduct.**<sup>17</sup>

So in contrast with those who **persevere in doing good**, these unbelievers **persevere in a life of sinful rebellion.**

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<sup>15</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible: New American Standard Bible*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), Ro 2:8.

<sup>16</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 122.

<sup>17</sup> W. E. Vine, *Romans & 1 Corinthians: A Verse-by-Verse Commentary* (Nashville, TN; Bath, England: Kingsley Books, 2022), 45. Cf. Schreiner, *Romans*, 122, fn6.

This **second** description is probably best understood to refer to the **lifelong disobedience of rejecting the gospel**, which is the “**truth**” that Paul has in mind.

Later in **Romans 6:17**, Paul describes believers as those who have, “**obeyed from the heart that pattern of teaching to which you were given over.**”

Paul **thirdly** describes unbelievers as having a similar habitual life of “**[obeying] unrighteousness.**”

This is the same “**unrighteousness**” that Paul has used before in places like **chapter one, verse 18** and **verse 29** to describe **man’s general state of sinful rebellion.**

Therefore, **instead of bearing the fruit** that would prove saving faith, these unbelievers **bear the fruit that proves sinful rebellion** and a wilful rejection of God.

That is confirmed by the parallel statement in **verse 9** as Paul says that unbelievers are “**[working] out evil.**”

**Now**, look back at **verse 8** and you’ll see that Paul describes the **outcome of their judgment** as “**wrath and anger.**”

Given what we have learnt already from **verse 5**, it is **unsurprising** to see Paul describe the **eternal damnation of unbelievers in hell** as God’s “**wrath and anger.**”

In **verse 9**, he **extends the description** of God’s punishment of sin to include the **experience of it.**

He writes that unbelievers will experience “**affliction and turmoil**,” which is to say that they will **experience the eternal, conscious torment of God’s wrath**.

When we look at **verses 8–9** together, we can see a **clear picture of God’s judgement of unbelievers** as He punishes them for their sinful rebellion in the form of **eternal damnation in hell**.

Looking over **verses 7–10** again, Paul has elaborated on the **second concept** of the **scope of God’s wrath**.

In order to establish **the fairness of God’s judgment**, especially as He **punishes unbelievers who reject God and His gospel**, Paul described God’s judgement of both believers and unbelievers.

**Since God uses the same standard** of works to judge everyone, **the scope of His judgement supports the fairness of it**.

There is a **third and final concept** that Paul elaborates on, and it has to do with **God’s judgment being fair because it does not involve favouritism**.

### 3. THE SAMENESS OF GOD'S JUDGEMENT

Look at **verse 11** as Paul provides the **ground** for all that he has elaborated on in **verses 7–10**—

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

To show “**partiality**” literally means “**to receive a face,**” and it describes the **injustice of showing favouritism.**

To show partiality, then, is to **give consideration to someone** simply because of their **position, wealth, influence, popularity, or appearance.**

In this context, Paul is specifically concerned with proving that **God doesn't show favouritism** in His judgement between **Jews and Gentiles.**

That is why in the **previous verses**, Paul **explained twice** that whether in the judgement of believers or unbelievers, God's **judgement is impartial and fair** as He judges Jews and Gentiles **by the same standard of their works.**

In other words, Paul is elaborating a **third concept**, that of the **sameness of God's judgement**, in order to establish his main point that **God is fair as He judges all, even as He punishes those who reject Him in self-righteousness.**

**The Jews have no advantage** in God's final judgement because of the sameness of God's judgement.

Similarly, unbelieving religious people in our day **have no advantage**, good people have **no advantage**, because God's **judgement is fair and impartial**, as He refuses to play favourites.

**This third concept** of the **sameness of God's judgement** joins **the first concept** of the **standard of God's judgement** and **the second concept** of the **scope of God's judgement** in order to establish the **principle that God's judgment is fair**.

As Paul has convincingly demonstrated to all, but especially to those who reject God and His gospel, **such as unbelieving Jews and religious good people, God's future and final judgement will be perfectly just**.

On the day when God judges everyone, **no one will be able to complain that God is not judging fairly**.

## CONCLUSION

As we conclude, we're **left to consider the question** that we were confronted by in the introduction—

**How will God judge you?**

After studying the concepts of the **standard, scope, and sameness of God's judgement**, we now know **HOW it will work**.

Whether you are a believer or an unbeliever, you will most certainly **stand before God for a final judgement**.

That judgement will take into account **the fruit or necessary evidence of your life**, and God will **render His final verdict based on your works**—whether good or evil.

**God won't play favourites for you**, but will judge you with **perfect fairness and justice**.

Since you know **HOW God's judgement will work**, all that is left then is to discern **WHAT God's verdict will be** on that final day of judgement.

**How will God judge you?**

**What will God's verdict be as He considers the fruit of your life?**

## **BENEDICTION**

*Now to the One who keeps on loving us  
and who has set us free from our sins at the cost of His blood,  
glory and dominion belong to Him  
into the ages of the ages.  
Amen.<sup>18</sup>*

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<sup>18</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *Grace Be with You: Benedictions from Dale Ralph Davis*, New Edition (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2019), 61.

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## ADDITIONAL NOTES

“The reason why Scripture is willing to affirm a final judgment according to works is that good works being what they are—works (1) done by persons accepted by God through Christ, (2) which proceed from his Spirit, (3) and which are done in faith, (4) from the motive of love to God, (5) in obedience to God’s revealed will, and (6) for his glory—only Christians will manifest such works. But such works, as ‘the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith,’ only serve to underscore the truth that salvation is not ultimately grounded in good works at all but in the gracious salvific work of the entire Godhead.”

Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1998), 751.

2:6

[a] who will repay to each according to his works:

2:7

[b] to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality;

b

eternal life;

2:8

[c] but to those who

are selfishly ambitious

b

and

do not obey the truth,

c

wrath and anger.

but obey unrighteousness;

Explains 6 (chiasm form)

2:9

[c'] There will be affliction and turmoil

works out evil.

b

for every soul of man who

of the Jew first and also of the Greek,

2:10

[b'] but glory and honor and peace

works good;

to everyone who

to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

2:11

[a'] For there is no partiality with God.

Explains 9c and 10c, thereby also the reason for 6-10



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## Sermon Notes

### Introduction

As we study the details of Romans 2:6–11, we'll see Paul elaborate on three concepts that establish the principle that God's judgement is fair.

### 1. The standard of God's judgement

### 2. The scope of God's judgement

#### a. Judgement of believers

- i. First clarification: Believers will be subject to a future judgement.
- ii. Second clarification: Justification is by faith alone, but the faith that justifies is never alone.
- iii. Third clarification: Justification refers to God's verdict of 'not guilty' on the day of judgment.

#### b. Judgement of unbelievers

### 3. The sameness of God's judgement

### Conclusion