

No Escape Except Jesus

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 August 2014

Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] The book of Romans, chapter 2. We will read the first 16 verses.! So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment?

Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

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.

God will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life.

But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.

[1:44] There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil, first for the Jew, then for the Gentiles. But glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

For God does not show favoritism. All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law. And all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.

For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

[3:18] Well, desperate people do desperate things, and sometimes you have to do what you have to do. You're walking through the parking lot after grocery shopping, and you notice the baby in the car, and the windows are all rolled up, and you try to open all the doors, but they're locked.

So what do you do? Well, you do what you have to do. Find a rock, find something, and you break the windows. Or maybe you wake up in the early hours of the morning, and your house is on fire, and your bedroom is on the second floor, and so you rush to your bedroom door, and the hallway is full of fire.

The window is your only chance. You have to jump. You're going to break your arms. You're going to probably break your legs. You're afraid, but it's all you can do.

So you do what you have to do, and you jump. In 2003, Aaron Ralston was hiking out in Utah when a boulder dislodged and crushed his right hand against the canyon wall, and he hadn't told anyone of his hiking plans.

No one knew where he was. No one knew that he was gone. No one was looking for him. So after three days of trying to lift and break the 800-pound boulder, he began experimenting with tourniquets and making some small exploratory cuts in his arm, and on the fourth day, he realized that in order to free his arm, he would have to cut through the bones in it, but the only tool that he had was this two-inch, very dull knife, and it wasn't going to do it.

[5:07] On the fifth day, he carved his name, date of birth, and presumed date of death on the rock, and he videotaped his last goodbyes to his family, but on the sixth day, he had an epiphany.

He realized that he could use torque from his own arm to break his own bones, and so he broke his own arm and then performed the amputation, and we ask, why?

Because there was no other way. There was only escape if he did that. Well, desperate people do desperate things, and sometimes you have to do what you have to do, and so I ask, what will make you so desperate that you will jump into the arms of Jesus and have him save you?

Well, it's only this, when you realize that there's no other escape. There's no other alternative, and this is how God saves us. If he saves anyone, this is how he does it.

He takes us to the very end of ourselves, to the very edge, where we realize that we can do nothing, we cannot save ourselves. It has to be Jesus.

[6:22] And so we are so trapped in the shackles and the chains of our self-righteousness, of our own confidence, that I can manage this. I can take care of this. I can save myself.

I can please God. That God has to push us and push us until we realize that our only hope of escape is Jesus.

Well, Paul, in Romans 2, which we began to read, is pushing people to the edge. He's laying out the situation.

He's showing his readers, and he's showing us, that there is no escape from God's judgment except for Jesus. There's no escape from God's judgment except for Jesus.

And he lays out argument after argument after argument. And so you need a picture of man, and maybe he's herding, he's crowding a cat into a corner, and the cat doesn't want to be there.

[7:18] And so it goes out one way, and Paul has to bring that man back. And again and again, he's saying, your only chance is Jesus. Everything you've been hoping in, it's no good.

Your only chance is Jesus. So he has five arguments in just the first 11 verses, and in the remainder of the passage, he sort of recycles these arguments.

He wants to nail it home. There's no escape for anyone from God's judgment except for Jesus. And he starts out with a bang. He starts out with a strange twist, a sudden twist, and in verse 1 he says, you do the very same things as the wicked do.

So he's talking. You can see it in Romans 2.1. You. He begins with that. You. That's singular. He's not talking about you plural. He narrows it down to you singular.

So imagine there's a target, and it's on your chest. Paul is just talking to you. You righteous man. You so-called righteous man.

[8:27] He's putting you in his sight. Not talking to anyone else. Just you. He says, you have no excuse. No excuse. No words.

No arguments. You can't say anything for yourself. He's already going through our pockets and taking out all the arguments that we have, and he's saying, you don't have any. So maybe you've come home one time, a long time ago for maybe some of you, and you came home too late. You broke curfew, and you sneak in. You're so quiet, but who is sitting in the living room except for your dad, and his arms are over his chest, and you look for something to say, and you have no excuse.

Paul's saying, you who judge other people, you have no excuse. You're speechless. You have nothing that you can say for yourself because in reality, the things that you accuse others of, the things that you judge others of, you're doing yourself.

So Paul's been talking about the Gentiles. That's Romans 1. He's talking about people who don't have the law. They're the Gentiles, and they've made idols. They've lived in sexual immorality. Their sin is apparent.

[9:42] You can read all about it in Romans 1. They have the law of God in their minds, and yet they suppress the truth and their unrighteousness. And the Jews were saying, yeah, that's right, Paul.

Those dogs, those evil people. And Paul turns the tables on them, and he says, you do the same thing. The gun that was pointed at the Gentiles, Paul takes and turns around at these self-righteous people.

So look over at verse 21. He says, you've been doing the same thing. You're no different. Look at what he says in verse 21.

You then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? So you know right and wrong. You know the law. You teach others, do you teach yourself?

You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? Someone says, I've been faithful to my husband or to my wife.

[10:46] And so Paul would say, oh, you've never done anything sexual outside of covenant heterosexual marriage.

That's what purity is. Sex inside of covenant heterosexual marriage. Everything else is immorality. Have you been pure? You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? You know what's right. And you can see how other people mess up. You can see quite well the sin in other people's lives. Well, do you do it? Or do you dishonor God by breaking the law?

And we have to say, if we're being honest with ourselves, that I don't live up to what I know. Isn't that true? I don't live up to what I know.

We're all in the same boat. Religious, non-religious. We're all lawbreakers. They lust. You lust. They hate. You hate. They sin.

[11:51] You sin. You might not do what other people do on the outside, but you do it on the inside. And the inside, you are no different. So Paul says, there's no escape from God's judgment because you do the same things.

You can't say, I live differently. God looks through that. He looks through you, and he sees that inside, not really, not really, you do the very same thing.

That's Paul's first attack, his first wave, his first argument against self-righteousness. And the second comes in the second verse, Romans 2.2. And he says, now we know that God's judgment is based on truth.

Why is there no escape from God's judgment except for Jesus Christ? Because, for this very reason, because God's judgment is based on truth. And this has to be one of the most shocking verses in the Bible if you think about it.

We live so much of our lives in this blurry vision where the truth is so unclear, we say to ourselves, somehow, or other, I will make it through the judgment because of this and because of that.

[13:07] We have such hopes. Why? Why are we so hopeful in our self-righteousness that we really will be able to pass the test? It's because we don't realize that God's judgment is based on the truth.

He's basing it on the things, the way things are. The way things really, actually are. He won't judge you based on what you hope to do.

He won't judge you based on what you thought you were going to do. He won't judge you on what you wish you could have or would have done. He won't give you the benefit of the doubt because there will be no doubt, only truth.

He won't judge you hypercritically, unfairly. He'll take everything into account. He'll know your situation perfectly. He'll know who your parents were. He'll know your work situation.

He'll know who your children were. He'll know every possibility, every detail. People judge unfairly and they're critical of others because they think they could have probably done better when they couldn't have.

[14:16] But God won't give you that unfair judgment. A hypercritical judgment. It will just be the truth. The truth. And He won't judge you relative to other people.

You notice that? That's what we naturally think the judgment will be based on. It will be judged on a curve. How I compare to other people. Now we judge ourselves to other people.

So maybe you're a little boy. Maybe you're not. Maybe you can remember being a little boy or a little girl. And you said to yourself, and you say to yourself, I am a fast runner.

I remember when I was in first grade, that's how I judged whether my class was good or not. Was I going to be the fastest boy in that class or not? And you say to yourself, I'm fast.

I'm the fastest kid in my class. And in gym class, we all line up on the line and we race down to the end of the field and I win. I am fast. But you have to see who are you comparing yourself to.

[15:24] And to be honest, it's to other people who are pretty small and they have little legs. And so now if we take that same little fast runner and we put him in comparison to an Olympic runner, well, you wouldn't be very fast at all.

You'd be very slow. Judging against other people is no way to judge accurately, to be judged fairly. And God, it says, won't be looking at other people.

He won't be putting you against someone else. He will be putting you against the truth. Not appearances. Not just what is on the outside.

Why not just on the outside? What we appear like to other people. And what we do on the outside. Well, because the truth is more than just the outside, isn't it? There's more to us than outside. We

are not only outside people.

We are inside people. We have hearts and motives and reasons and loves and desires. That all goes into the truth. And this judgment is based on the truth.

[16:30] And so God doesn't just take a superficial look at you. He takes all of you. And that means the only question you can really ask is, how then will I escape?

How will you escape? If God's judgment is based on the truth and I do the very same things the wicked do, how will I escape?

It's not hard to understand, but how we hate it. I'm not telling you anything you don't know, but how people hate it. And desperate men start grasping at straws.

And they say, and Paul pictures their argument. He knows what they're going to say. And so these men say, but isn't God kind? Isn't God good? How could a loving God send people to hell?

He's been so kind and good to me. God is so patient. I've enjoyed his goodness every day. Hell doesn't seem like anything that would come at the end of this kind of life. Could he really turn against me and do that?

[17:39] When all this time he's been so good to me. Would he really condemn me when he's been so nice to me for so long? And that's when Paul releases his third wave, his third attack.

The Jews were saying, but aren't we God's people? God loves us. We've enjoyed so many blessings. And so Paul is honest and he asks, what have you been doing with that?

What have you been doing with God's kindness? You've resisted God's kindness. You've resisted God's patience. Why is there no escape in Jesus?

Because you do the same things. His judgment is based on truth and on top of everything else you've sinned against his goodness. He's been wooing you.

He's been good to you. He's been saying, repent. I'm a good God. I'm a kind God. Repent. Give your life to me. And he's given you so much.

[18:44] He's given you life and food and family and joy. And he's done that all to lead you to the place where you'll give up your sin and embrace him. But have you repented?

Have you loved him? Have you given him your life? Have you stopped sinning? Have you started to trust him and live for him? Have you? Verse five is the answer.

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant hearts, you're storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath. So how have you received God's kindness?

Paul says you've done it with stubbornness, with resistance. You've resisted him. He wants to bring you to his feet. He wants you to embrace him in love.

He wants to embrace you to embrace him in faith. And you have resisted him. You've wanted to go your own way. And so what is the result?

[19:47] Well, every mercy resisted, every goodness pushed away and are accepted, but not saying thank you. God goes to the bank or rather you go to the bank with God and you make a deposit.

You store up for yourselves wrath. You deposit wrath. So you know what it is to go to the bank and deposit money.

Paul is saying every time you resist God's goodness, you live another day without repenting and believing in Jesus Christ. You're going to the bank and you're putting in there wrath.

And so on the last day when accounts are settled, what will God have to give to you? What will God have to give to you? Will there be any mercy?

You won't find any mercy there. See, to sin against God's law, where it says do this because it's right, that's one thing. But to sin against God's kindness is even worse.

[20:49] See, God's law clearly shows to us what is right. You owe God because he made you. You owe him love and worship with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul, all your strength.

That's what you owe him. That's what the law says because of who you are, because who God is. And to sin against that is one thing. But to sin against God's kindness, which every day God says, I am loving.

I not only made you, but I love you and I care for you and I'm good to you. Every day God's giving us reasons to love him, to repent and to believe. And so to sin against God's law is one thing, but to sin against his goodness is to slap him in the face.

So Paul says, how will you escape? How will you escape? If you're not only disobeying his law, but resisting his kindness. Well, Paul keeps going for you've sought the wrong.

Things. Why is there only escape in Jesus? Because here's the fact. You haven't been looking even for the right things. You've been living for all the wrong things.

[22:00] That's verses seven and eight. And the key word in these two verses is seeking. He breaks life down into two paths. God seeking and self-seeking.

God seeking and self-seeking. Everyone lives on one of those two paths. I'm either seeking God or I'm seeking myself. And so in verse seven, he says, to those who by persistence in doing good are seeking glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life.

Now that's seeking God. Glory is talking about God's glory. Honor is talking about honor and praise from God. Immortality is life with God.

And so the question is, is that why you've been living? For God and his glory? For the honor and praise that comes from God? For immortal life? Life with God.

Every day are you getting up and pointing your life to heaven and saying, I am living to live with God. Have you done things because you wanted God's praise?

[23:07] You know, that was the big problem the Pharisees had. That's the one problem. That's the big problem why they couldn't accept Jesus. Because they weren't even looking on the same path as where Jesus was.

And so Jesus said to the Pharisees, how can you believe? How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain praise that comes from the only God?

See, the Pharisees did lots of good things. Lots of good things. But it was all about getting praise from men. They were looking for the praise from man.

They weren't looking for honor from God. It was all about here and now. They lived in a closed world. It was just about me and the people around me.

It didn't include God. And so Paul says, you've sought the wrong things. If you would have sought God and life and you kept doing it and obeying him, you would have had life.

[24:06] But that's not what you've done. In verse 8, he says, you've been self-seeking. You haven't loved God and wanted to live with God.

It's been all about you. It's been all about making you feel good and for your honor. You've left God and you followed evil. And so he asked these self-righteous, these self-confident people. How will you escape?

Well, the Jews, the self-righteous, they have one last ditch effort, one last argument. And really, it's the ultimate argument for them. You remember when John the Baptist came and preaching repentance.

And John the Baptist said, don't even tell me that you guys are children of Abraham. If that's all that God wanted, God can raise children for Abraham out of the stones.

He's pressing them to repent. But this is what they are. They're saying, we're God's people. Abraham is our father. We're God's special people. He chose us.

[25:06] He called us. He rescued us out of Egypt. David is our forefather. Abraham is our forefather. The prophets, we've had them all. We're special. He would never do that to us.

He would never condemn us. And you see, that's the crutch that they're leaning on. And Paul kicks it right out from underneath him. And he says, there will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil.

First for the Jew. And then for the Gentile. Or verse 11 says, for God does not show favoritism.

God's judgment is based on truth. Not what group you belong to. Not your answer on the census for what religion you belong to.

Not your name in the church directory. God's judgment is based on truth. Not what group you are with. So a member of a church.

[26:08] My parents are Christians. I hang out with good people. My friends are not the troublemakers, but the good kids. And to all that, Paul says, but God doesn't show favoritism.

Doesn't show favoritism. He doesn't have these favorites. Trouble and distress for every human being who does evil. First for the Jew and then for the Gentile. There's no special opting out of judgment for some special group of people.

And so again, how will you escape the judgment? It can't be because you've done something good because you've done exactly what the wicked have done.

And it can't be because you be because you are someone because God doesn't show favoritism. And it can't be because God will cut you a break. Because God's judgment is based on truth.

And so Paul has kicked out all of the crutches. There's nowhere to turn. So here it is. This is what Paul is saying.

[27 : 19] You either justly go to hell. Or you come to Jesus. You throw yourself on Jesus. So Paul is saying, you're trapped in the canyon.

Your hand is trapped under the rock. Your house is on fire. You have to throw yourself on Jesus. And Jesus is standing underneath the window. And he is saying, jump into my arms.

So you have to accept God's free offer of righteousness. Because that's all you can do. There's no other escape. There's no other way of doing it.

And the free gift of righteousness is exactly what you need. Everything that failed you about your own self-righteousness, about who you were and what you've done and the group you belong to, and maybe God's judgment won't be so strict and I'll be able to squeeze through somehow.

All those false hopes, all that failure, Jesus and his righteousness is exactly what you need to pass the judgment. So the question is, how will you escape? The only answer is Jesus Christ and his righteousness.

[28 : 27] It's exactly what you need. And so I'm going to ask you to look over at Romans 3, verse 21. Romans 1 and 2 have been pushing us, and Romans 3 has been pushing us to this verse.

This verse. 3, verse 21. How can you escape God's judgment? That's the big answer of chapters 1, 2, and 3.

In verse 21, the answer comes. Now, apart from the law, that's good.

That's good because me under the law, that hasn't worked out because I've disobeyed it. I've sought the wrong things. I haven't kept the law. And so I need some other way of passing God's judgment.

I need it to be apart from the law. I need a different way, a different route. And here it is. This righteousness from God.

[29 : 32] And that's good. This righteousness comes from the judge. And if it's from him, then it's going to be good enough to pass the judgment, to pass his test.

And then he says, and it comes through faith in Jesus Christ. That's good, too.

It doesn't come from doing and working. It comes simply from trusting, from stopping all my doing and resting in Jesus.

See, I need a righteousness, a way of passing God's judgment, of escaping God's judgment, that doesn't depend on me working. Because me working isn't going to cut it.

It's not going to do it because I can't work hard enough. I have too much sin in my life, and it's going to come out. I don't have what it takes. But this righteousness doesn't come from working, from me doing anything.

[30 : 35] It comes from me trusting Jesus. It comes from Jesus himself. And so this salvation isn't crawling through the fire. It doesn't come from me cutting off my own arm. It comes from me falling into Jesus' arms.

And so he's under the window. And he's saying there's a great fire coming. The judgment is coming. You have to jump. You have to jump.

But is it for me? Is it for me? Could it be for me?

Because I've sinned so much. I've sinned for too long. I've been self-righteous for so long.

I've been wicked for so long. Could this be for me? Could salvation be for me? And look at what he says at the end of verse 22.

[31 : 37] It's this righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. To all who believe.

It's open to all. It's open to all. It's open to you. It's open to all who will believe. Everyone who believes receives this righteousness. And he says there's no difference.

There's no difference. There's no difference between anyone. It's for all. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

There's no difference. All have sinned. And all who believe receive. So all have sinned. And all who believe are justified.

So could it be for you? It's for all who believe. And the moment you trust in Jesus, you pass the judgment.

[32 : 40] You're declared righteous. The moment you trust in Jesus, the judgment happens and God says, you're righteous. So do you want to pass the judgment?

For all who come to Jesus, they can pass the judgment this very day. Do you want to hear God saying, you are righteous in my sight? Do you want to hear all your sins forgiven?

Then throw yourself on Jesus. Cling to him. He's your only hope. And what a hope he is. He's received hundreds, thousands, millions of people have called upon him.

Self-righteous people. Very wicked people. To all who believe, they receive this righteousness. And if you don't, if you don't, if you don't come to Jesus, then Paul's question is still outstanding.

It's a question you still have to answer. How exactly will you pass the judgment? If you reject the only way, how exactly will you escape God's judgment?

[34 : 00] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you that when we were, when so many of us were stubbornly in our sin and in our self-righteousness, in our own confidence, blind to the full extent of your law, coming up with all kinds of excuses, you called us out of darkness and into your wonderful light.

You backed us into a corner until we saw that we were the sinners. We were the ones who were guilty. We were the ones who needed Jesus.

And when we called out to you, you saved us. Thank you that this gospel is for all who will believe.

So I pray, Lord Jesus, show yourself to be a mighty Savior.

God, you say that you are the Lord of the harvest. So I pray that you would bring in the crops today and save sinners today, that they would flee from their self-righteousness and flee from their sin and run right into the open arms of Jesus, chase them into the arms of Jesus, and save them for your great name's sake.

We ask all these things in our mighty Savior, in our mighty Lord's name. Amen. Amen. Amen.