

### Jesus is the Perfect Judge

“Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?” When people take the witness stand, they speak these words promising that everything they say will be the truth. In a court of law this is important because the judge will base his decision on the truth that he hears and the evidence that is presented. Can a judge ever hand out the wrong sentence? Absolutely! He is human and can make mistakes.

There is one judge though that never makes a mistake; a judge whose decision will determine where a person is going to spend his eternity; a judge whom all people will stand before on the Last Day. This judge is Jesus himself. He can make a claim that no other judge can make. Jesus is the Perfect Judge. He is the perfect judge who will base his decision on the truth and on the evidence that is presented.

Prior to our text, Paul pointed out the sins of some of the Gentile people who wanted nothing to do with God. God finally had had enough and in a sense, washed his hands of them and let the devil have his way with them. It showed by all kinds of disgusting sins that God called indecent and perverted. After condemning homosexuality, Paul wrote. **They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.**

Paul was writing these words to people in Rome who were quick to condemn these Gentiles and their actions and rightly so. The problem was they did it in a self-righteous and arrogant way. Those Gentiles deserve God’s harsh judgment but we don’t. We are not guilty of those disgusting lifestyles so we don’t deserve to be condemned. When Paul wrote the words, **but for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil**, they thought, “Whew! Lucky he is not talking about us. He’s talking about evil people and we are not evil.”

Listen to how Paul deals with that kind of an attitude. **Now we know that God’s judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. 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?**

Instead of finding comfort in the kindness, patience and tolerance of God, they felt they didn’t need these attributes of God as badly as the other people did. Compared to those disgusting sinners, their sins were nothing to worry about. They didn’t need to repent because their sins weren’t bad enough to warrant repentance. The result was they had impenitent hearts because they were comparing themselves to the wrong standard. They were comparing themselves to other sinners when they really needed to compare themselves to their holy God and his standard for them to be perfect. Failure to be absolutely perfect meant facing God’s judgment of damnation in hell. That’s what Paul told them when he wrote. **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.** Paul wanted them to realize that they too needed the riches of God’s kindness, patience and tolerance just like everyone else. They needed to see their sins and repent just like

everyone else. For their eternal well-being, they needed to hear the truth and confess the truth about themselves.

Isn't it amazing how history repeats itself? What do I mean? I bet that the thought has crept into your mind more than once, "Other people need forgiveness more than I do. Other people deserve to go to hell more than I do. When Jesus comes, there is no way I deserve to be classified as a goat in Jesus' parable. I am a sheep. I try to obey God's commands. I listen to my shepherd's voice. I am not a member of that goat club so why do I need to repent?"

My friends, I'm afraid we can get real comfortable and satisfied with our lives and actions and think we are good enough and have done enough to avoid God's judgment of hell. That's why we need to continually ask ourselves this question. Can I honestly say that I have gone through an entire day without a sinful thought, a cruel or angry word, an unloving or selfish act? As hard as you may try, you can't do it. One impure thought, one unloving word, one act of anger makes you deserving of hearing Jesus say, **Depart from me you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.** That's the hopeless and eternal future we deserve as the Psalmist said in Psalm 130, **If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, who could stand?** That, my friends, is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

That would be the future for each one of us if it had not been for the kindness, patience and tolerance of our God. We saw that right away in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned. Did God send them directly to hell like they deserved? No. Instead he promised to send a Savior who would crush the devil's head. He did just that by having his Son come into this world as a man, put himself under God's law and keep God's command to be perfect. Then Jesus took his perfect life and sacrificed it on the cross of Calvary. There on the cross God the Father judged his own Son, found him guilty of sin, not his own but the sins of the entire world, and condemned him to suffer the pain of hell. When Jesus died, his mission of paying for the sins of the world had been accomplished. His resurrection from the dead proved that.

Then God showed his love and kindness to us in another way. He chose us to be his own and adopted us into holy family through faith in Christ Jesus. Even though we are sinners, we find comfort in knowing that our sins are forgiven; that when Jesus returns as Judge on the last day, he will say to us, **Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.**

Yet what will he base those words on? How will he determine who hears those words and who doesn't? Just as an earthly judge will look at the evidence of the case and then make his judgment, so too Jesus the Judge will look at the evidence and then make his judgment. Paul wrote. **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.** Isn't that basically what Jesus said in our Gospel lesson when he separated the sheep and the goats? So does that mean that the evidence Jesus will use to judge us is our good deeds? Yes. Does that mean then that we are saved by the good things in life that we do? I thought the Bible tells us we are saved by faith alone and not by our good works.

Yes, the Bible does tell us that in many places. Paul made it clear in other passages in Romans. **The righteous will live by faith. No one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law.** So what point was Paul making in our text and Jesus in his parable of the sheep and the goats? James answers that question for us. **Faith by itself if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, I have**

**deeds. Show me your faith without deeds and I will show you my faith by what I do.”** Faith is more than just saying “I believe in God.” There will be evidence. A good tree produces good fruit. A dead tree produces none. Jesus the perfect judge will look for deeds that come from a heart that has saving faith.

The deeds he looks for are not ones that will make the front page headlines in the newspaper. They are just the common, everyday things that we do. Being a loving and faithful spouse; children obeying their parents and teachers; parents bringing their children up in God’s Word; taking the time to help the needy neighbor; saying good morning to one another with a smile on your face; helping around the house; opening the door for someone; saying “I love you”, “I’m sorry,” or “I forgive you.” It’s taking time to pray for others, to worship and to give thanks. Deeds that automatically flow in our daily lives that come from a heart that knows the love of Jesus and what that love means; a heart that is truly thankful for that love.

I’m afraid that there are many people who believe that as long as they have a head knowledge of who Jesus is, they will be fine on Judgment Day. Some people say that they heard all about Jesus when they were younger and don’t need to hear about him any longer. They don’t need to follow Jesus or his Word. God would never send them to hell. They can be very nice and friendly people, many of their deeds looking like the deeds of God’s children. Yet what makes a deed pleasing in God’s sight is what he sees in the heart. Are the deeds coming from a heart of faith? When the Judge looks into their hearts for evidence of saving faith, will he see it? Jesus alone is the judge but you have to wonder. Before we are tempted to look down on them as though we were so much better, we also have to admit that at times, our fruits are pretty meager. Are you always excited about following God and obeying every one of his commands? Don’t you have to confess that you don’t always like to admit that what you are doing is sinful and then turn from it? I’m afraid we too often don’t produce fruit that is pleasing in God’s sight meaning we need forgiveness just like everyone else. Thank God we have it through Jesus.

My friends, Judgment Day is coming. The day is coming when you will stand before Jesus the perfect Judge. Do you have to be afraid? If you think you can stand before him and be found innocent of your sins because of the good things you have done, you should be terrified because the writer of Hebrews writes. **Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.** Relying on your own merits, the perfect Judge will base his judgment on the truth and the evidence before him and declare you guilty and sentence you to an eternity in hell. On the other hand, if your hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness, the perfect Judge will look at the truth and evidence before him. You will then see this big smile come on his face as he says, “Welcome! Welcome to my home, the home I have prepared for you with my life and death! Come and enjoy a perfect life in my perfect home, a life that will never end.” Hearing that, what a big smile you will then have! What a day that will be, a day you can look forward to with joy and eager anticipation! Amen.